

Sociology Undergraduate Handbook

Johns Hopkins University

Revised October 2024

Introduction

The Sociology Major at Johns Hopkins University helps students develop expertise by exposing them to research and teaching in several areas central to the discipline. These areas include social stratification, economic sociology, political sociology, international development, world-systems studies, cross-national research, race and ethnicity, urban sociology, medical sociology, sociology of immigration, sociology of education, human development over the life course, the family, and gender. Students completing the major become conversant with a wide range of theoretical perspectives, the logic of research design, and the tools of data collection and analysis. Additionally, writing and other communication skills are honed. As a small department, the faculty pride themselves on getting to know students, their interests, and learning goals at a deep level. Students also work closely with faculty and can become involved in their research.

The department offers a major in Sociology and a Senior Honors Program. The requirements of the major provide all students with grounding in sociological theory, research methods, and social statistics. Beyond these core requirements, elective courses are offered on a range of important sociological themes. The senior year Honors Program affords highly motivated and able students the opportunity to pursue, with faculty guidance, a research project of their own design. The Honors Program includes one-on-one advising with a Sociology faculty member, requires participation in the Honors Thesis Seminar and culminates in an Honors thesis, a substantial work of original scholarship.

The Department also hosts a chapter of the AKD International Sociology Honor Society, which is open to qualified undergraduate students with junior year standing and graduate students who have completed at least one year of graduate study.

A major in sociology prepares you for graduate and professional study, and lays the foundation for an exciting career. For those planning to go to medical school, the major can be combined with the required pre-medical course sequence. Graduates of the department have pursued advanced study in medicine, law, business, social work, public health, policy studies, education, urban planning, other Arts and Sciences disciplines, and too, of course, Sociology. Recent graduates who have gone directly into the workplace have obtained positions in financial organizations, consulting, teaching, non-governmental organizations focusing on international development, research departments of major corporations, and local government social service agencies.

Requirements for the Sociology Major

I. The Core Curriculum

Consisting of five courses, the core curriculum provides the methodological and conceptual foundation for advanced study in sociology. Introduction to Sociology introduces students to what is distinctive in a sociological approach to the study of social phenomena and introduces key concepts; Introduction to Social Theory acquaints students with the discipline's central figures (classical and contemporary) and their ideas, and a three-course methodological sequence covers essential research tools.

- **230.101 *Introduction to Sociology***

This course covers the basic concepts of sociology and applies these concepts to the analysis of human societies. (3 credits)

- **230.202 *Research Methods***

The purpose of this course is to provide a sound introduction to the overall process of research and the specific research methods most frequently used by sociologists and other social scientists. The major topics covered include (1) scientific inquiry and the role of theory in research, (2) causation, (3) conceptualization and operationalization, (4) research design- including experiments, survey research, field research, and comparative research. (3 credits)

- **230.205 *Introduction to Social Statistics***

This course introduces students to the application of statistical techniques commonly used in sociological analysis. Topics include measures of central tendency and dispersion, probability theory, confidence intervals, chi-square, ANOVA, and regression analysis. Includes hands-on experience using statistical software for the analysis of data from various fields of social research.

Students may be able to satisfy this requirement if they have taken another JHU statistics course and add an additional sociology elective to their degree plan.

Students who have already taken a JHU Level 1 statistics course (in the Sociology department or elsewhere) and did not get a "C" or higher in that course should register for 230.394 Social Statistics in order to satisfy the Sociology statistics requirement.

Students cannot use AP credit for EN.553.111 as a replacement for this course and should register for 230.394 in order to satisfy the Sociology statistics requirement.

Students pursuing any of these options should speak with their Sociology mentor or the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

- **230.213 *Social Theory***

This course introduces classical sociological theories (with an emphasis on Marx, Weber, and Durkheim). Contemporary theoretical perspectives on social inequality, conflict, and social change are also explored. Emphasis is on understanding the theoretical constructs and applying them in the analysis of current social issues. (3 credits)

- **EITHER**

- **230.322 *Quantitative Research Practicum***

This course provides "hands on" research experience applying sociological research tools and a sociological perspective to problems of substance. Quantitative methods will be emphasized, as applied to census data, survey data and/or archival data. Students will design and carry out a research project and write a research report. Introduction to Social Statistics (230.205) and Research Methods for the Social Sciences (230.202) are prerequisites. This course is restricted to Juniors and Seniors only. Instructor permission required for prerequisite exemptions for all students (majors and non-majors). Sophomores require instructor permission. (3 credits)

OR

230.323 Qualitative Research Practicum

This course provides "hands on" research experience applying sociological research tools and a sociological perspective to problems of substance. Qualitative observational and/or interviewing methods will be emphasized. Students will design and carry out a research project and write a research report. Introduction to Social Statistics (230.205) and Research Methods for the Social Sciences (230.202) are prerequisites. This course is restricted to Juniors and Seniors only. Instructor permission required for prerequisite exemptions for all students (majors and non-majors). Sophomores require instructor permission. (3 credits)

OR

230.325 (S) Global Social Change & Development Practicum

This course provides "hands on" research experience in comparative and historical sociology. Sociological research tools and perspectives will be used to analyze social structure, conflict and change. Introduction to Social Statistics (230.205) and Research Methods for the Social Sciences (230.202) are prerequisites. This course is restricted to Juniors and Seniors only. Instructor permission required for prerequisite exemptions for all students (majors and non-majors). Sophomores require instructor permission. (3 credits)

A grade of "C" or better is required of all required courses. Core courses taken toward major cannot be taken Pass/Fail.

II. The Elective Curriculum

Six (6) elective courses within the department are required for the major. Depending on a student's interests and objectives, these courses may focus on a single theme, concentrate on a small set of themes, or sample the specific interests of the department's faculty. Whichever approach is taken, the goal is to craft an individualized program of study that will be a fulfilling intellectual experience. Constructing a personally satisfying roadmap through the major is ultimately the student's responsibility, but the student's faculty mentor stands ready to assist as a willing and eager partner in the process.

Of the six (6) elective courses in sociology at least four (4) must be advanced courses (at the 300 level or above).

Students must complete two (2) elective courses in the major with a "Writing and Communications" designation.

A grade of "C" or better is required of all elective courses. Elective courses taken toward major cannot be taken Pass/Fail.

Departmental courses offered as part of the Arts and Sciences Summer Program may be used to fulfill one (1) of the departmental elective requirements. Intersession courses and one or two credit courses cannot be counted toward major requirements.

No more than two (2) departmental electives may be fulfilled by independent study or independent research courses. See the “Experiential Learning” section below for more details on these types of courses.

No more than three (3) departmental electives may be fulfilled by independent study courses, independent research courses, or approved courses from other universities. For more information on these and related matters, the see the section below “Policy Regarding Substitutions.”

Honors Program

Eligibility for the Sociology Honors Program requires completion of at least four of the five sociology core curriculum courses and at least two 300 level elective courses in sociology by the end of the junior year, with a Sociology GPA of 3.5 or higher. Additionally, by the time of graduation, all students must complete all remaining core curriculum and elective course requirements. Students interested in pursuing the Senior Honors Program must spend a total of TWO SEMESTERS registered for the Program (230.511 and 230.512).

The Honors Program involves securing a faculty thesis advisor from the Sociology Department prior to the start of those two semesters, completing 1 semester of the Honors Research Seminar (230.511) in their first semester of the Honors program, enrolling in 1 semester of the Honors Independent Study (230.512) with their thesis advisor in their second semester of the Honors Program, and submitting a sole-authored Honors thesis. Students will earn a total of 6 credits for the Honors program. The Honors Research Seminar (230.511) is required in the first semester of the Honors program, because it is designed to assist students in the early phase of their Thesis and to provide a community of peers in the Honors Program. Note that the Honors Research Seminar is graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. The Honors Independent Study is taken for a letter grade. Both honors courses, AS230.511 and AS.230.512, are ineligible to count toward the required Sociology elective courses.

NOTE: The thesis paper submitted for Honors in Sociology may not be used to also fulfill an honors thesis requirement in another major.

In order to enroll in the Sociology Honors Program, a student must complete an application: [Sociology-Honors-Thesis-Application_2022.pdf](#) BEFORE registration for the two semester program begins. Therefore, those graduating in the spring of their senior year, must submit their application during the spring of their junior year. Those graduating earlier, must submit their application earlier (for example, by the end of the fall semester of their junior year, for those graduating in the fall of senior year). This application includes a provisional thesis title, 3-5-page description of the project, and a calendar of deadlines agreed upon between the thesis advisor and student (these deadlines are also important because they allow the DUS to submit honors candidates to the university for the graduation program in April). Students must email their completed Honors application (signed by their faculty advisor) to sociology@jhu.edu.

The scope, obligations, and methods of evaluation for the final Honors thesis are worked out case-by-case between the student and the faculty thesis advisor. Guidelines and goals may vary and should be determined in consultation with the student’s advisor. The result is an explicit contract whose particulars are binding. If students do not meet the deadlines agreed to in the application they will not be able to register for the second semester and will not receive honors. In the first semester of the Honors Program, students should expect to further develop their research question, conduct a literature review, formulate their research design, collect data, and begin preliminary data analysis in close consultation with their advisor. The Honors Seminar will help guide students through these

steps, but students are also expected to maintain direct and regular communication with their thesis advisor through the first semester. By the end of the first semester, most students submit a 15- to 20-page paper to their advisor. The format or content of the paper will vary by faculty advisor, but generally include an articulation of the research question, a literature review, and a summary of the methods. The second semester of the Program is graded by the thesis advisor on the basis of the completed thesis, including an expanded literature review, revised research design, data analysis and conclusion, as well as any other revisions requested by the advisor. Completed honors theses are typically between 40 and 80 pages in length, double-spaced. An electronic copy of the honors thesis should be submitted as a Word document to the thesis advisor and to sociology@jhu.edu by 4:00 pm on the Friday before the last day of classes in the semester of graduation.

Human Subjects Approval

Any honors candidate whose research directly involves working with human subjects must receive approval for the project from the Homewood Institutional Review Board (HIRB) [see: <https://homewoodirb.jhu.edu/>]. Students should discuss the need for IRB approval with their thesis advisors, and be sure to allocate time for preparing and submitting an IRB application, if necessary. While many student research projects qualify for exemption, this can only be determined by the HIRB and thus requires a review by HIRB (which can sometimes take several months). Students proposing ethnographic work or other original data collection involving human subjects are encouraged to submit their proposal to the IRB as early in the process of the Honors Program as possible.

Coleman Award

The Coleman Award is typically given annually to the department's outstanding graduating senior. The award reflects academic achievements, departmental service, and engagement in public sociology. The recipient(s) of the award is chosen in two stages: first, the Undergraduate Committee will solicit letters of nomination and support from faculty and review these materials by the end of March; second, the Undergraduate Committee offers a candidate/slate of candidates and the faculty votes on the recipient(s) at the faculty meeting prior to the deadline for commencement. The deadline for submitting Coleman awardees for inclusion in the commencement program is mid-April. All Coleman nominees must be in the process of completing an Honors Thesis (as confirmed by their thesis advisor) and have a GPA of at least a 3.5 at the time of nomination.

Grandparenting Provision

The Department occasionally changes the requirements of its undergraduate major. When this happens, students are bound by the published statement of requirements in the Hopkins catalogue during their first year of study at Hopkins. However, those who choose to do so may elect to fulfill the new requirements.

Course Numbering

To help students plan their program of study, the department adheres to Arts and Sciences course numbering conventions. Course titles also often convey useful information. Courses designated "Seminar," for example, typically are limited to no more than 15 students and involve a high degree of student participation through class presentations and/or discussion.

The course numbering system signals the degree of prior preparation in Sociology expected of students. In general, higher numbers connote more advanced readings, level of discourse, and standards of evaluation. Courses numbered in the 100 range are intended for first year students;

those in the 200 range and are intended for first year students and sophomores. These courses presume little formal background in sociology. Three hundred and 400 level courses are intended for upper class persons, or especially well-prepared undergraduates. These courses often assign readings from the professional literature not written specifically for undergraduate instruction. The 500-level series is reserved for experiential learning courses – independent study, independent research, internships, and the Senior Honors Program. Six hundred level courses are for graduate students. Undergraduate admission into a 600-level course requires permission of the instructor.

JHU courses can only be cross-listed with Sociology if they are taught by a member of the Sociology department. All other requests should be sent to the DUS.

Foreign Language Study

Foreign language study is **not required**, but it is strongly encouraged, especially for students considering graduate or professional study.

There are many considerations that favor the inclusion of foreign language study as part of a well-rounded undergraduate experience. Study of a foreign language is an essential component of a broad general education, especially in today's interconnected world. Many Ph.D. programs in Sociology require foreign language proficiency. Our major should give students a solid preparation for graduate school.

Foreign languages are useful for research, no matter whether students will do research in the United States or outside the country. The point is obvious for research outside the US, in non-English-speaking countries. However, even in the US, given the major waves of immigration over the past several decades, a foreign language can be critical to conducting research in many settings.

Proficiency in a foreign language will help students' job prospects after graduation.

By being able to put themselves in the shoes of others, coping with a foreign language will be an asset to the development of students' sociological imaginations. Each language is constructed differently, revealing cultural diversity in the world. Moreover, struggling with a second language helps students understand what non-native English speakers are experiencing in today's world where English has become the "lingua franca."

Policy Regarding Substitutions for Courses from Other Universities

Sometimes students wish to substitute courses taken elsewhere for those offered in the Department. These might be summer school courses, study abroad courses, or transfer courses. Such matters are generally left to the discretion of the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. It should be understood that the standard for granting substitutions is high. Substitutions are rarely permitted for the department's "core curriculum" courses are not typically permitted for the four required advanced Sociology elective courses (courses numbered 300 or above). A bit more latitude is permitted for the two other elective Sociology courses (level unspecified).

Students wishing to substitute a summer or transfer course for one of the major requirements should consult with their Academic Advisor. Substitution requests must include a syllabus for the course that includes the topics covered, description of the assignments, and a detailed list of required readings. Candidates for substitutions must be comparable in rigor and scope to the courses in the regular Hopkins curriculum. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

For study abroad course requests, the same policy applies, however, the student must first request approval from the Study Abroad Advisor.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning outside the traditional classroom affords students an opportunity to individualize their experience as a major. In broad terms, there are three types of experiential learning available to Sociology majors:

- *Independent Study (230.500)-3 credits*: Enables the student to pursue individual investigation and reading in a field of special interest, under the direct supervision of a member of the Sociology faculty, which results in a substantive paper or report containing significant analysis and interpretation of the topic.
- *Research Assistantship (230.501)-3 credits*: Enables a student to work directly with a member of the Sociology faculty as a research assistant on an existing research project. Scholarly research is work that involves scientific process/method, i.e. the collection of and analysis of data appropriate to the research problem.
- *Internship (230.507) or Summer Internship (230.598)-1 credit*: Enables a student to craft a research-oriented internship that addresses an issue of sociological interest, under the direct supervision of a member of the Sociology faculty. This must conclude with a written reflection or presentation on the student's experience and its relevance to sociology.

NOTE: Independent study and independent research courses may be used to fulfill major requirements for an elective, while internships cannot.

Students wishing to take 500, 501, 507, or 598 must find a sociology faculty member to supervise the course. Students must also submit a proposal with their faculty supervisor to the DUS for approval by the UG Committee. The proposal should specify why the student wants to conduct this independent work, whether or not they are requesting this course to count toward a sociology elective major requirement, what the semester's work will entail, and how the work will be assessed by the faculty supervisor. The proposal should also explain how the program fits in their program of study and why current courses do not offer the same opportunities. Proposals must be submitted to the DUS by email 2 weeks prior to the add deadline for the course.

The scope, obligations, and methods of evaluation for such courses are worked out case-by-case between the student and the supervising faculty sponsor. The result is an explicit contract whose particulars are binding. The following rules apply to independent study and independent research courses:

- 1). Each credit hour should reflect 40 hours of work on the project.
- 2). A maximum of three credits for experiential learning courses may be earned in a semester or summer.

The same guidelines apply to Internships, although Internships must be taken Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.

Students usually identify internship opportunities and opportunities for independent study and independent research themselves, but the Department is here to help when needed. Students should consult with their faculty mentor and/or the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies.

The Sociology Honor Society - AKD

In spring 2006, the Sociology department was awarded a chapter of the AKD Sociology honor society. The chapter welcomed eleven new initiates that year, two faculty members, two graduate students, and seven undergraduates.

AKD stands for Alpha Kappa Delta. It is an open, democratic, international society of scholars dedicated to the ideal of *Athropon Katamanthanein Diakonesein* or "to investigate humanity for the purpose of service." AKD seeks to acknowledge and promote excellence in scholarship in the study of sociology, the research of social problems, and such other social and intellectual activities as will lead to improvement of the human condition.

AKD was founded at the University of Southern California in 1920 and affiliated with the Association of College Honor Societies in 1967. There are more than 50,000 lifetime members and over 500 chapters of the Society. These are persons with academic records showing excellence in sociology.

Initiates receive an AKD Handbook, a Chapter pin, a certificate of membership, and a membership activation form. Members who submit completed activation forms receive a one-year subscription to *Sociological Inquiry*, the official journal of the Society, the Alpha Kappa Delta Newsletter, election materials, and other services. In addition, the Society sponsors student paper contests, provides honoraria for initiation speakers, provides funds for student travel to regional sociological meetings, funds research symposia, sponsors a distinguished lecture series at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, and contributes annually to the ASA Minority Scholarship Fund. AKD members wear AKD honor cords at graduation ceremonies.

AKD Chapters are important in the academic, professional, and social lives of student and faculty members. They provide opportunities for initiating and sharing activities in keeping with the purposes of the Society. Our local chapter affords the opportunity for faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students to interact informally and to plan together events to enrich the intellectual and social life of the Department.

To be eligible for membership, majors must have at least junior year standing, an overall GPA of at least 3.0, a sociology GPA of at least 3.5 and have taken at least four courses in sociology.

Election to Alpha Kappa Delta is without regard to race, creed, or national origin. For more information, interested students should contact AKD Faculty Chapter Representative:

sociology@jhu.edu

Mentoring System

The department maintains a two-tiered mentoring system. Each major is assigned an individual faculty mentor; additionally, the Director of Undergraduate Studies is available for consultation when the faculty mentor is unavailable and to adjudicate problems.

A student's faculty mentor is his/her primary resource person in the department. All mentors are caring and knowledgeable members of the faculty, and students – all students — ought to take advantage of the help they can provide. Your mentor is available to discuss each semester's course

options, plans for on-time graduation, opportunities in the department beyond the formal requirements (e.g., the Certificate Programs; the Senior Honors Program), help locate suitable experiential learning opportunities, and to talk with you about life at and beyond Hopkins. It is up to the student to reach out to their mentor to discuss any of these topics. Students shortchange themselves when they fail to take advantage of this opportunity to engage their faculty mentor in planning their program of study while at Hopkins and in planning for the next stage of their life after Hopkins.

Resources

The Hopkins Sociology community consists of the department's faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, and staff. Undergraduates are encouraged to involve themselves in the life of the department beyond course taking. Majors are notified by e-mail of outside speakers, social events, and other special occasions. *These are excellent opportunities for engaging Sociology beyond the classroom.*

Contact Information

Director of Undergraduate Studies:

Julia Burdick-Will
Mergenthaler Hall 437
(410) 516-7633
jburdickwill@jhu.edu

Sociology Main Office:

533 Mergenthaler Hall
(410) 516-7626
sociology@jhu.edu