

# **Undergraduate Handbook**

**Department of Sociology  
Johns Hopkins University  
Revised 9/2017**

## **Introduction**

Embodying the Hopkins tradition of selective excellence, the Department of Sociology's faculty concentrate their teaching and research in two broad areas. One, known as the Program for Global Social Change (PGSC) focusses on cross-national, comparative research and the study of long-term world-scale social change. The other, known as the Program for Social Inequality (PSI) focusses on social inequality and the major institutions in the United States and other societies that directly affect individuals' life prospects and well-being, namely family, education, and work, and more generally class, race, and gender. The department's small size affords students the opportunity to work closely with its faculty and to become involved in their research.

The department offers a major in Sociology and a Senior Honors Program. Students concentrate their studies in one of the two areas of particular departmental strength. These programs provide structure to the undergraduate experience, but within a flexible framework. Students select their elective courses strategically within the regular requirements of the major and in addition are obliged to obtain relevant research experience. 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, offers a 1-semester Honors Thesis Seminar, which is highly encouraged, 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.

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, including gender, family, education, race and ethnicity, urban sociology, immigration and migration, political sociology, international development, and the evolution of a world social system.

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, 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. Introductory 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 *Introductory 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 computer experience using statistical software for the analysis of data from various fields of social research. Students earning a 'pass' on the Department's placement exam must substitute another JHU statistics course with the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students who 'fail' or 'opt out' of the Department's placement exam must enroll in 230.625, even if they already have taken another introductory JHU statistics course. (4 credits)

- **230.213 *Social Theory***

This course provides an introduction to 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. 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. This course is suitable for both majors and non-majors, and fulfills the "research practicum" requirement for Sociology majors. Introduction to Social Statistics (230.205) and at least one substantive Sociology elective in the broad area of global social change are prerequisites. Instructor permission required for prerequisite exemptions for non-majors. This course is restricted to Juniors and Seniors only. Sophomores require instructor permission. (3 credits)

A grade of C or better is required in ALL courses.

**These courses must be taken as regular academic year courses (intersession courses CANNOT be counted toward major requirements) within the department. No substitutions are permitted (except in the case of 230.205 "Introduction to Social Statistics").**

## **II. The Elective Curriculum**

Six elective courses within the department and three elective social science courses in other departments enable students to customize their program of study. 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 advisor stands ready to assist as a willing and eager partner in the process.

Of the six elective courses in sociology of three credits or greater, at least four must be at the 300 level or above.

Three elective non-sociology courses carrying an “S” designation in at least two other departments or programs are required. These may be at any level.

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 of the departmental elective requirements (intersession courses may not). One and two-credit courses cannot be counted toward major requirements. Additionally, up to three of the six sociology electives and one of the three non-departmental electives may be independent study or independent research courses, so long as they are at least three credits, taught by Hopkins faculty, and the workload and standards of evaluation are equivalent to what is expected of students in regular “on the books” courses.

For such courses, the instructor must certify, in writing, that the course satisfies the “equivalence” stipulation and the student’s departmental advisor must accept that certification, again in writing (with a copy going to the department’s Director of Undergraduate Studies). It is preferable that this be done before the fact, but it sometimes may not be clear at the outset that a course will be of sufficient scope or rigor, in which case after-the-fact certification is permissible. In either event, the student’s faculty advisor, in consultation with the department's Director of Undergraduate Studies, has final authority in these matters.

Courses taught or supervised by faculty other than Hopkins Arts and Sciences and Engineering faculty occasionally may be used to fulfill the department’s elective requirements. These may be transfer courses from other institutions, study abroad courses, and courses taught by faculty of other divisions of the University. In all such instances, **PRIOR** written authorization by the student’s faculty advisor is required. However, in no instance may more than three departmental electives and one non-departmental elective be fulfilled by independent study courses, independent research courses, and approved courses taught by faculty other than Hopkins Arts and Sciences and Engineering faculty. Courses co-listed by Sociology and other Hopkins departments and programs are not subject to this restriction. For more information on these and related matters, the see the section below “Policy Regarding Substitutions.”

## **Honors Program**

Eligibility for the 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 end of the senior year, all students must complete all remaining core curriculum and elective course requirements.

The Honors program requires completion of an Honors Thesis under the supervision of a department faculty member and enrollment in the year-long Senior Honors Program (230.501/502). These requirements are in addition to the requirements for the major. These requirements also hold for students planning to graduate early; in these cases, students must begin the Honors Program in the spring semester of their Junior year. Honors students are also highly encouraged to take the 1-semester Honors Thesis Seminar, which will help walk them through the steps of crafting a research question, implementing the research, analyzing,

writing and completing the Thesis. Enrollment decisions in the Honors Thesis Seminar (including which year to take it in and whether to take it) must be made in consultation with the student's faculty advisor in Sociology and the Seminar Instructor.

For double majors doing Honors in both majors, the Sociology Department will accept a single Honors Thesis that is jointly supervised by faculty of the two departments. The topic and methods of the paper must be appropriate to both disciplines, as certified by the sponsoring faculty, and the student must fulfill all other requirements of both departments. Students who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity must coordinate the effort and secure appropriate faculty supervision.

Students interested in pursuing the Senior Honors Program **MUST** declare their intention to do so to their faculty advisor by the end of their junior year. Additionally, all prerequisites for this program **MUST** be fulfilled by the end of the junior year. Accordingly, it is incumbent of students who are interested in the Honors Program to plan ahead, preferably in consultation with their faculty advisor.

### **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 underclasspersons. These courses often assign readings from the professional literature not written specifically for undergraduate instruction. The 500 level series is reserved for experiential leaning 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.

### **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**

It happens frequently that students wish to substitute courses taken elsewhere for those offered in the Department. These might be summer school courses, study abroad courses, courses taken elsewhere in the University, or, in the case of transfer students, courses taken at another institution under its degree requirements. Such matters generally are left to the discretion of the faculty advisor in consultation with the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. It should be understood that the standard for granting substitutions is high. Substitutions are not ordinarily permitted for the department's "core curriculum" courses or 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) and for the non-Sociology elective courses. However, it generally is expected that courses offered by the department will be taken in the department.

A window of one year is allowed for presenting such requests. For courses taken before the major is declared the request must be made during the student's first year as a major. For courses taken while a major (typically these will be study abroad courses or summer school courses), the request ***should be made in advance, but no later than*** the next school year.

Candidates for substitutions must be comparable in rigor and scope to the courses in the regular Hopkins curriculum. A grade of "B" or better is required. Requests must be made in writing, with supporting documentation of rigor, scope, and grade performance.

Opting out of 230.205: Majors who have passed an introductory statistics course with a grade of "B" or better in another department at Hopkins and believe they are well prepared in statistics may place out of Introduction to Social Statistics (230.205) by passing the Sociology Department's Placement Exam with a grade of "S".

To avail themselves of this option, interested students must contact the DUS to arrange a time and date for the exam. The Placement Exam serves to evaluate a student's ability to

interpret and comprehend statistical information based on previous experience in an alternative course, but also understand statistical analysis from a sociological perspective.

The exam itself is a 4 hour, close-book, proctored exam, comprised of the following:

- 2 pages of background information relevant to the interpretation and analysis of the results. All information presented in this section is considered accurate.
- A 4 page 'report' with errors which you must correct. Only references to Tables in the appendix are guaranteed to be correct. All other information within the 'report' may contain errors and must be corrected where necessary.
- An appendix to the report which provides relevant statistical information for interpretation and analysis. All information within the appendix may be considered 'correct'.
- A document of various formulas and statistical procedures is included with the test for reference.

Students may use a calculator, pen or pencil, and scratch paper. Those who qualify out of Social Statistics are encouraged to take one of the Department's advanced courses in research methods or methods of statistical analysis

It is important that decisions regarding substitutions and other like matters be documented. This is the faculty advisor's responsibility. There should be a written memo documenting the decision and its basis, with copies to the faculty advisor's own file, the student, and the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **Experiential Learning**

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

- Independent Study (230.504; 230.505 or 230.509): Enables the student to pursue individual investigation and reading in a field of special interest, under the supervision of a member of the faculty, which results in a substantive paper or report containing significant analysis and interpretation of the topic.
- Independent Research (230.506): Scholarly research is work that involves scientific process/method, i.e. the collection of and analysis of data appropriate to the research problem.

Independent study and independent research courses may be used to fulfill departmental requirements, subject to the limitations already mentioned. 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). Projects that receive academic credit must be unpaid.
- 3). 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 and may not be used to fulfill departmental elective requirements.

Students often identify internship opportunities and opportunities for independent study and independent research themselves, but the Department is eager to help when help is needed. Students should consult with their faculty advisor and/or the Department's Director of Undergraduate Studies. The Johns Hopkins Career Center website, <http://www.jhu.edu/~careers>, contains useful information and resources for students interested in obtaining internships. Students may also visit the Career Center on the third floor of Garland Hall.

Undergraduates may register for these courses during the summer without paying additional tuition.

### **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 *Athronon 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 3.5, 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 the AKD Faculty Chapter Representatives: Meredith Greif ([mgreif1@jhu.edu](mailto:mgreif1@jhu.edu)) or Katrina McDonald ([kmcdon@jhu.edu](mailto:kmcdon@jhu.edu)).

### **Advising System**

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

A student's faculty advisor is his/her primary resource person in the department. The advisor is responsible for overseeing (and approving) each semester's registration and for making sure the advisee stays on track for graduation. That is the policing role of the advisor, and it is important to all concerned that it be discharged conscientiously. But advisors also are caring and knowledgeable members of the faculty, and students – all students — ought to take advantage of the help they can provide. Your advisor is available to discuss opportunities in the department beyond the formal requirements (e.g., the Certificate Programs; the Senior Honors Program), to help locate suitable experiential learning opportunities, and to talk with you about life at and beyond Hopkins. Students shortchange themselves when they fail to take advantage of this opportunity to engage their faculty advisor 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:  
Rina Agarwala  
Mergenthaler Hall 527  
(410) 516-5169  
[agarwala@jhu.edu](mailto:agarwala@jhu.edu)

Sociology Main Office:  
533 Mergenthaler Hall  
(410) 516-7626  
[sociology@jhu.edu](mailto:sociology@jhu.edu)