

## Summary of Sociology Department Retreat, May 7, 2008

In attendance: Ginetta Candelario, Rick Fantasia, Leslie King, Eeva Sointu, Marc Steinberg, Nancy Whittier

We discussed the following topics:

### **1. Overall goals for student capacities:**

We want students to be able to formulate analyses and arguments, and to understand and practice the use of evidence in making sociological claims. To this end, we focus on developing students' capacity for "doing" sociology. This entails methodological skills, quantitative skills, and the ability to assess and deploy qualitative evidence. Substantively, we expect that our students will develop an understanding of sociological approaches to social structure, power, and connections between the micro and the macro.

### **2. Theory and methods courses and sequences:**

We discussed the issues with teaching of theory and methods, brainstormed possible solutions, and discussed developing closer links between 250 (theory), 201 (statistics), and substantive classes.

We decided to work toward a closer link between 250 and 201 by selecting common reading selections. The readings in 201 that exemplify particular statistical techniques could also address some of the same core concepts that 250 deals with.

Our hope is that students' research projects in 202 and 203 (quantitative and qualitative methods, respectively) might build on the core concepts and questions they address in 250.

### **3. Methods**

We agreed to delay in depth discussion of statistics/methods sequence, because our new hire, Tina Wildhagen, has not arrived and will be responsible for quantitative methods. We hope to discuss this in more depth during our Decennial Review and over the next few years.

### **3. Senior/capstone experiences**

We discussed the possibility of a proseminar either following completion of or concurrently with theory and methods. There are logistical and staffing difficulties with this. We discussed the possibility that the seminar we currently require in the senior year might serve the same purpose, allowing students to integrate and apply their learning from methods and theory.

### **4. Introduction to Sociology**

We agreed to request CAP permission to make 101 a variable topics course. Instructors could retitle their intro sections to reflect their focus. Possible titles might include “Race, Class, and Gender,” “Self, Society, and Power.” These would not be major changes in the content of the course as it currently exists, but would give greater transparency to students as they selected sections. The focus and title of sections would be subject some consultation with the department, particularly in the case of adjuncts.

In all sections of 101, we would cover the same core concepts. We do this currently, but will move to making this more explicit. These might include some of the core concepts addressed in 250, as well as ones that currently appear in all our 101 sections such as the sociological imagination, cultural capital, and inequality. We will develop a checklist of these core concepts over the 2008/09 academic year. We did not determine the timeframe for requesting CAP permission to make 101 a variable topics course. Most likely, the revised course would roll out in 2009/10.

We agreed to have a yearly discussion of 101. We also agreed to continue the informal practice of coordination among instructors for each semester and a 101 movie night once a semester.

## **5. Honors**

We agreed to raise the minimum GPA for honors to 3.5 in the major and 3.3 outside the major. We also agreed to require the completion of 201, 202 or 203, 250, and at least one course related to the topic of the thesis prior to beginning the thesis. Students will be reminded that their thesis topic must relate to faculty interests and expertise. We will require submission of honors proposals for preliminary approval by May 1 of the junior year, so that we can work with students on data collection over the summer. Students should also submit IRB requests at this time.

In regard to workload, we agreed that normally no faculty member should direct more than one honors thesis per year. While we may supervise special studies in addition, we will ask that students propose special studies by the pre-registration period, so that faculty can balance workload.