

Behavioral & Social Sciences Department
Undergraduate Social Science Curriculum Revisions
Effective Summer 2009

The B&SS department is proposing changes to the curriculum of the social science major as part of its three year process of curricular reexamination, based on assessment of student outcomes and changes in the disciplines. The department set up a committee to review the major; its findings are attached following this letter.

In summary, the changes are as follows:

1. require 2825 research methods; recommend 2750 statistics
2. add courses from History, political science, economics and law.
3. Require ANSO 3550, and remove PSYC 3550 as an alternate selection.
4. Increase required credits to 60
5. Require 18 credits of electives at or above the 3000 level, divided among the disciplines and departments

The reasoning is detailed in the following letter.

Outcomes of Social Science Assessment Project: 2007-2008

The social science assessment committee used a three-pronged approach to examine the social science program. The three methods of data collection included a survey of graduating seniors majoring in social science along with a portfolio, a review of the courses completed by all social science majors, and a comparison between the social science major at Webster University and programs at other universities. Below we outline our findings and propose changes based on the results of the assessment.

The Social Science Major

The social science major offers an overview of the social sciences - the foundation for a strong liberal arts education - providing both breadth and depth in the social science disciplines. This non-track major (i.e., not designed to prepare students for a specific profession/career) allows students to gain a solid understanding of the social sciences. Furthermore, it encourages students to integrate those ideologies and decipher how each contributes to our understanding of human behavior. The major prepares students to critically consider, observe, and analyze behavior in many contexts and from multiple perspectives.

Survey Outcomes

A survey was administered to all graduating seniors majoring in social science (see Appendix A for sample survey). The results of this survey indicate that students feel well-versed in most areas of the social sciences. In addition, they believe their coursework has improved their reading and writing abilities, argument development, and their ability to work in groups. However, students expressed little confidence in the following areas: public speaking, research methodology, and understanding of concepts in legal studies, history, and political science.

Course Review Outcomes

The committee reviewed the degree audits of all social science majors at Webster University in Saint Louis. This included fifteen seniors, seven juniors, one sophomore, and one freshman. We found that students are taking a proportioned blend of Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology courses. It also became obvious that students were most interested in 2000-level "Issue" courses and 3000-level "Topics" courses. Finally, in the social science major students have the option of taking either Research Methods or Statistics. We found that the vast majority choose to take Statistics and only one student took both Research Methods and Statistics.

Review of Other Social Science Programs

Upon reviewing social science programs in other universities we found that although other programs require courses in anthropology, sociology, and psychology, they also require courses in history, political science, and economics. Our current curriculum only requires courses in anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

Proposed Changes

The changes we propose are based on the results of our assessment.

1. Issues and Topics Courses

It became apparent that students were relying heavily on Issues and Topics courses. This is problematic because the topic of the course does not appear on the transcript. In addition, students relied most heavily on 2000-level Issue courses. Given these concerns we decided to review those courses to determine which courses can be offered as official courses rather than Issues or Topics courses. We hope this will decrease the use of Issues and Topics coursework in our social science majors.

2. Lack of Knowledge and Confidence in Research Methodology

As previously stated, our social science majors are opting to take Statistics over Research Methods. In addition, students expressed a lack of confidence in their knowledge of research methodology. All members of the committee agreed that Research Methods is extremely important for a social science major. Therefore, we propose that Research Methods be a required course. Statistics will remain an option as an elective course for the major.

3. Lack of Confidence in Public Speaking

Students indicated that they do not feel their coursework enhances their ability in public speaking. In order to address this we are requiring some type of public presentation in at least two courses: Research Methods and Senior Seminar. Assessment will be ongoing. If this requirement fails to improve confidence in public speaking, we will consider making it a requirement in other courses.

4. Lack of Knowledge in Legal, Political Science, and History

Students indicated that they lack knowledge in the above-mentioned disciplines. This paired with the fact that all social science programs we observed require these courses motivated our decision to open the social science major to other disciplines including history, legal studies, and political science.

5. Necessity of History, Philosophy, and Systems of Psychology as a Requirement

Given the changes we are proposing in our curriculum we saw little reason for students to be required to take PSYC 3550 – History, Philosophy, and Systems of Psychology because it is so specific to only one discipline in the social sciences. This course may better serve as an elective for those who are interested.

**Proposal for a New/Revised
Major, Minor, Emphasis, Certificate**

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Prepare your proposal according to the following outline. (Hand written forms will not be accepted.)
 - Attach the new/current catalog copy with all affected changes clearly noted. List all courses and requirements, indicate new courses, deleted courses and/or course changes.
Note: *A form must be submitted for each change.*
 - Submit the signed proposal to the Office of Academic Affairs. All forms must be completed in full with appropriate signatures to be added to the agenda. You will be contacted by the Curriculum Committee Coordinator with a date and time to present the proposal.
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I. Identification of Department(s)/Program(s): Behavioral & Social Sciences revision to Social Science major

II. Is this a New or Revised Proposal? New Revised

Type of proposal: Major Minor Emphasis Certificate

Title of Proposal: *Revision of Social Science curriculum*

III. Rationale for the proposal:

- a. What research/evidence supports the need for the proposal?
See the attached report from a social science assessment committee.
- b. How will it support departmental philosophy/mission and existing curriculum? How will it support the philosophy/mission and existing curriculum of your School/College and the University?
By creating a broader curriculum for social science majors, we will be following the lead of most other universities that offer this curriculum.
- c. List the learning objectives/outcomes:

Learning Objectives for the Social Science Program:

1. Students will develop critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills in order to understand and make decisions regarding social and political issues.
2. Students will understand the use of interdisciplinary approaches to study, research, and analysis of social phenomena, and how those various approaches contribute to the different perspectives of social reality and methods of addressing social issues.
3. Students will demonstrate effective written and verbal communication of social science concepts, terminology, research analyses, and conclusions.
4. Students will be able to formulate an integrated analysis of social issues and/or social reality by synthesizing concepts and research methods from the different social science disciplines that relate to the particular social reality or social issue under investigation.

- d. How will these outcomes be assessed?

Assessment Measures

Direct:

Each student will create a portfolio including four elements (e.g., papers, presentations, or poster) from various courses. The three main disciplines (i.e., sociology, anthropology, and psychology) must be represented in the portfolio. The most important element is the final project completed in the Senior Seminar course. These portfolios will be examined by an assessment committee biannually.

Indirect:

Graduating students will complete a survey that will assess their experience of the major. Specifically, the survey will determine the students' perception of how well the program achieved the stated goals.

- e. Why is this being proposed?

As a result of the assessment committee's findings. See attached.

- f. Will this proposal have an impact on other Webster departments, schools/colleges or campuses (including overseas)? Yes No. If yes, please provide a brief explanation.
History/Politics/IR have approved the revision, which incorporates several of their courses.

- g. What Campus(es) will offer this?

Webster home campus and London Regents.

- h. Does this proposal require a new course? Yes No. If yes, what course(s)?

- i. Does this proposal require a new prefix? Yes No. If yes, what prefix?

Note: A New Course Proposal Form and/or Course Change Form must be submitted with this proposal for any course(s) affected by this change (including those that are converting to the new prefix.)

IV. Staffing Information:

- a. What additions or changes in staffing are necessary for this proposal?
none

- b. How will this be coordinated?

By the usual B&SS departmental procedures

- c. Who will coordinate this program? (name, title and department)

Don Conway-Long, Chair, B&SS; Allan MacNeill, chair, HPIR

V. Feasibility information:




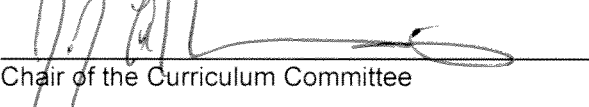
- a. What are the resources necessary for this proposal? (space, equipment, etc)
Nothing additional

- b. What are the projections for enrollment and growth for this upon implementation?

We expect to attract more students to the major, since it responds to many comments we have received from past majors about improving the major.

VI. Endorsements & Approvals:

Please have the Chair of the Department/Committee, Dean of each School/College and other programs that may be affected by this proposal, review prior to submission to the Office of Academic Affairs.

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|--|-------------------|
|  _____ | <u>24 Nov 08</u> |
| Petitioner | Date |
|  _____ | <u>24 Nov 08</u> |
| Chair of the Department/Committee | Date |
|  _____ | <u>25/11/08</u> |
| Dean of the School/College | Date |
|  _____ | <u>2 Dec 2008</u> |
| Chair of the Curriculum Committee | Date |

Distribution:

Academic Affairs
Registrar

Dean, School/College
Chair, Department

Chair, Committee
Academic Advising (UG)

Social Sciences

60 Required credit hours
27 General education credit hours
41 Elective credit hours

The social science major offers an overview of the social sciences - the foundation for a strong liberal arts education - providing both breadth and depth in the social science disciplines. This non-track major (i.e., not designed to prepare students for a specific profession/career) allows students to gain a solid understanding of the social sciences. Furthermore, it encourages students to integrate these disciplinary approaches and decipher how each contributes to our understanding of human behavior. The major prepares students to consider, observe, and analyze behavior critically in many contexts and to form multiple perspectives.

Learning Goals for the Social Science Program:

Upon completion of the program, students should:

- Have developed critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills in order to understand and make decisions regarding social and political issues.
- Understand the use of interdisciplinary approaches to study, research, and analysis of social phenomena, and how those various approaches contribute to the different perspectives of social reality and methods of addressing social issues.
- Be able to demonstrate effective written and verbal communication of social science concepts, terminology, research analyses, and conclusions.
- Be able to formulate an integrated analysis of social issues and/or social reality by synthesizing concepts and research methods from the different social science disciplines that relate to the particular social reality or social issue under investigation.

Students are required to take the following courses:

| | |
|---|---------|
| ANSO 1010 Introduction to Sociology | 3 hours |
| ANSO 1070 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology | 3 hours |
| PSYC 1100 Introduction to Psychology | 3 hours |
| ECON 2010 Principles of Macroeconomics | 3 hours |
| LEGL 2080 Topics in Law | 3 hours |
| ANSO 2825 Introduction to Research Methods | 3 hours |
| ANSO 3550 Theories of Social Science | 3 hours |
| ANSO 4900 Senior Seminar | 3 hours |

One course from the following:

| | |
|---|---------|
| INTL 1500 World Systems since 1500 | 3 hours |
| POLT 1050 Introduction to International Relations | 3 hours |
| POLT 1060 Introduction to American Politics | 3 hours |

Additional Requirements:

ANSO Electives: Students must complete nine additional credit hours in anthropology/sociology. Six of the nine credit hours must be at the 3000 level or above.

PSYC Electives: Students must complete nine additional credit hours in psychology. Six of the nine credit hours must be at the 3000 level or above.

HIST/INTL/POLT: Students must complete 15 additional credit hours from History, International Relations, or Political Science. Six of these 15 credit hours must be at the 3000 level or above.

Students are strongly encouraged to take ANSO 2750 Introduction to Measurement and Statistics

Special Requirements

No more than 6 credit hours obtained in practica, independent learning experiences, reading courses, and assessment of prior learning may be applied toward the 60 credit hours required for a major.

Transfer students must complete a minimum of 36 approved credit hours of academic work at Webster within the major.

Courses completed with a grade below a C- do not count toward fulfilling the specific course requirements of the major.