

CAREER HANDBOOK

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This career handbook is designed to provide sociology majors, sociology minors, and prospective students in sociology an overview of the skills they will obtain with a sociology major (or minor), and what kinds of jobs these skills can apply to. As such, this handbook is designed to act as a starting point for students to begin thinking about their future careers, and how their education in sociology can be applied in the job market.

This handbook does not provide an exhaustive list of career options. There are numerous additional careers that students can obtain with a major (or minor) in sociology. The goal of this handbook is to introduce students to the kinds of careers that sociology can open the door to, and provide students with a starting point for thinking about their future careers. The list of resources provided at the end of this handbook directs students to some additional resources in which useful information about careers can be obtained. In particular, the BSU Career Center is a useful resource that can provide students with personalized career coaching and exploration.

This handbook is intended for students who plan to pursue a career with their undergraduate degree. There are numerous additional career options available for students who wish to pursue graduate education. Students interested in continuing their education in graduate school (either within sociology or in another field) are encouraged to speak to their advisor to gain more insight into the graduate school application process and what opportunities can be achieved with a graduate degree.

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CAREER READINESS COMPETENCIES AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Ball State sociology students develop a number of career readiness competencies and transferable skills that are highly marketable to a wide range of employers across a number of industries. The career readiness competencies were developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and these are combined with a list of transferable skills that an education in sociology at Ball State provides. Each sociology course will enable students to practice and develop a unique set of these career readiness competencies and transferable skills, and the competencies/skills provided in each course can be found in the course syllabus. By graduation, sociology majors will develop mastery in each of these career readiness competencies and transferable skills and be able to articulate how/why these skills make them a qualified candidate for a particular job position.

Career Readiness Competencies

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving: Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.

Oral/Written Communications: Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

Teamwork/Collaboration: Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.

Digital Technology: Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. The individual demonstrates effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies.

Leadership: Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

Professionalism/Work Ethic: Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.

Career Management: Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is able to navigate and explore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.

Global/Intercultural Fluency: Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals' differences.

Transferable Skills

Comprehend group dynamics and social institutions: Taking a sociological perspective requires one to think about the bigger picture and understand how various social forces impact any outcome. Sociologists also understand social structures. Having this knowledge enables one to understand the contexts in which companies operate and identify how changing trends can impact industries, as well as how to manage groups consisting of diverse individuals.

Conduct research: Sociology students develop strong research skills, and employers increasingly value employees who can define a problem, carry out a project from conception to completion, and use that information to make recommendations based on the findings.

Perform statistical analyses and interpret data: An emphasis on data-driven decision making requires employees that can collect, analyze, interpret, and make recommendations based on data. Sociology students learn how to conduct and interpret statistical analyses – a sought-after skill that enables companies to make more informed decisions.

Synthesize research findings: Being able to understand and synthesize research demonstrates an ability to use evidence to support an argument. Organizations increasingly make data-driven decisions; being able to locate, interpret, and summarize research findings will help companies to make more informed decisions.

Civic engagement: Companies increasingly recognize that strong community relationships are vital to success and encourage civic engagement among employees. Sociology students learn to value civic engagement and get the opportunity to work closely with community partners to enact change in the community. In doing so, sociology students can attest to the benefits of building community relationships for organizations.

EMPHASES IN SOCIOLOGY

The sociology department has identified distinct emphases within the curriculum. These emphases are designed to provide students with an idea of how sociology courses may be packaged together to provide particular concentrations, or expertise, in specific areas of interest. These emphases are not required to complete a major or minor in sociology, and students are able to select any elective courses they desire to complete their degrees. However, these emphases may be particularly useful in working towards a career, as they may (a) enable students to develop areas of expertise that are particularly marketable to employers, (b) allow students to strengthen their transferable skills in specific areas, and (c) provide a clearer link to potential career opportunities.

As such, these emphases are utilized in this handbook to demonstrate the potential career opportunities that may be linked to these distinct emphases. Students are encouraged to think about courses that they have enjoyed, topical areas that they are interested in within sociology, and issues they are passionate about as a way of examining how these interests and passions may be (a) developed within particular emphases in sociology and (b) ultimately translated into future careers.

There are currently four emphases within the sociology curriculum: Diversity and Social Interaction, Health and Populations, Organizations and Institutions, and Social Action and Social Policy. Descriptions of each emphasis and potential career opportunities that each emphasis may lead to can be found on the next few pages.

Diversity and Social Interaction

This emphasis focuses on issues related to diversity and social interaction. As such, this emphasis focuses extensively on social inequality, and the social/structural barriers that help to reinforce and perpetuate this inequality. Particular focus is placed on diversity associated with race/ethnicity and gender. Courses within this emphasis also cover sociological perspectives on individuals, with particular emphasis placed on how social factors influence individual behavior.

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 221	Race and Ethnic Relations
SOC 227	Spirituality, Self, and Society
SOC 235	Sociology of Gender
SOC 260	Social Interaction
SOC 312	Leisure
SOC 320	Social Inequality
SOC 333	Sociology of Media
SOC 343	Deviance
SOC 421	Racial and Cultural Minorities
SOC 434	Sociology of Human Sexuality

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields that deal with diverse groups of people. Courses within this emphasis will be especially beneficial for dealing with diverse groups on a more applied, individualized level. Students who are interested in working with diverse groups, perhaps on a more “hands on” basis, may want to consider this emphasis.

Health and Populations

This emphasis focuses on issues related to health and populations. As such, this emphasis focuses extensively on issues related to health both domestically and internationally, with a particular focus on how social structures influence health outcomes and how sociodemographic characteristics are linked to variations in health outcomes. This emphasis also provides students with experience in demography (the scientific study of populations), which focuses on understanding and analyzing changes, problems, and other issues related to human populations (both domestically and internationally).

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 328	Globalization
SOC 341	Health and Illness
SOC 355	Environmental Sociology
SOC 431	Aging and the Life Course
SOC 433	Sociology of Mental Health
SOC 434	Sociology of Human Sexuality
SOC 470	Population and Society

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields related to health. This is a career field that has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. The demographic perspective also offered within this emphasis further compliments careers in health-related areas. In addition, having a background in demography provides students with data analysis skills that can be tied to jobs related to research work, as well as careers focused on tackling global problems and issues.

Organizations and Institutions

This emphasis focuses on issues related to organizations and social institutions. In particular, many of the main institutions in society are explored in-depth within courses in this emphasis, focusing on things such as historical and contemporary perspectives on each institution, ways in which social factors help to shape each institution, and the role that each institution plays within society.

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 224	Family and Society
SOC 329	Work and Society
SOC 333	Sociology of Media
SOC 424	Family
SOC 425	Sociology of Law
SOC 427	Sociology of Religion
SOC 450	Sociology of Education

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields that are focused on organizational design, implementation, and evaluation. Courses within this emphasis will also be beneficial for students who are interested in working in labor or employee relations positions, as having a strong background in organizations and institutions will provide the background needed to succeed in these positions.

Social Action and Social Policy

This emphasis focuses on issues related to social action and social policy. Courses within this emphasis provide students with knowledge on social problems and issues both domestically and internationally. Particular emphasis is placed on the ways in which such problems and issues result in social inequality. In addition, courses within this emphasis will also consider ways in which social policies may help to alleviate these problems. As such, this emphasis provides students with some of the tools needed to work towards social change.

Courses in this Emphasis:

SOC 242	Social Problems
SOC 320	Social Inequality
SOC 328	Globalization
SOC 343	Deviance
SOC 355	Environmental Sociology
SOC 441	Social Change
SOC 422	Analysis and Social Inequality
SOC 472	Urban Dynamics and Problems

Experiences in this emphasis will provide students with the background needed to enter career fields related to social change and social policy. The knowledge gained from this emphasis is applicable to careers that involve active engagement with individuals and communities that need assistance, as well as careers that involve more passive engagement through research and analysis to work towards policy changes. Students who are passionate about particular causes, and working towards achieving those causes, may want to consider this emphasis.

CAREERS IN SOCIOLOGY

The career possibilities that students can obtain with a major (or minor) in sociology are numerous. They are so numerous, in fact, that it is not possible to provide a complete listing of careers here. Instead, what follows on the next few pages is a list of possible career options. These career options are organized by the particular emphases in the sociology curriculum to demonstrate how particular coursework may help lay the foundation for a future career. In addition, connections are made between some of the desired skills that employers are looking for within each career field and the transferable skills that students obtain in the sociology department. As such, students should get a sense of how work in sociology prepares them for these careers. The link between career skills and transferable skills also provides students with a starting point for thinking about how they can market themselves to potential employers and communicate to employers how and why they are qualified for these positions.

Diversity and Social Interaction

Possible Careers include Human Resources Management (e.g., Affirmative Action Coordinator, Equal Employment Opportunity Representative, Human Resources Coordinator)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Experience with diversity and affirmative action programs
- Knowledge of state and federal employment laws
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to analyze facts
- Ability in establishing policies and procedures to evaluate program effectiveness

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity
- Ability to analyze and interpret data
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Community and Social Services (e.g., Case Worker, Family Counselor, Youth Specialist, Community Services Specialist)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Knowledge of vulnerabilities due to various forms of disadvantage (depending on specialty)
- Experience working in services related to diverse groups (depending on specialty area)
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability and desire to work with diverse groups

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity
- Celebrate diversity
- Experience working on applied projects in diverse settings

*Other Possible Careers include work in Market Research
(e.g., Marketing Assistant, Market Research Analyst, Customer Insights
Researcher)*

Skills Required for Careers:

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Experience conducting research
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Strong analytical thinking
- Knowledge of statistics

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Problem-solving skills
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data

Health and Populations

Possible Careers include work in Case Management and Counseling (Suicide Prevention, Substance Abuse Counselor, Rehabilitation Coordinator, Prevention Educator)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Compassion for people
- Ability to develop and implement programs
- Ability to assess effectiveness of programs
- Ability to analyze facts
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to understand materials and communicate information to clients

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Celebrate diversity
- Value civic engagement
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to read scientific reports
- Ability to analyze and interpret data
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions
- Ability to assess the quality of information
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Research (e.g., Population Analyst, Research Specialist, Program Analyst)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Experience conducting research
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Strong analytical thinking
- Knowledge of statistics
- Ability to work with diverse groups

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Problem-solving skills
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data

*Other Possible Careers include work in Public Health
(e.g., Public Health Supervisor, Community Health Advocate, Public Health
Specialist)*

Skills Required for Careers:

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Identify barriers to health services and implement strategies to reduce barriers
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to understand and communicate scientific data
- Ability to make independent decisions
- Ability to work with diverse groups

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective
- Ability to read scientific reports
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Ability to use evidence-based arguments

Organizations and Institutions

Possible Careers include work in Labor Relations (Labor Relations Specialist, Labor Force Analyst, Employee Relations Representative)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Excellent problem-solving skills and ability to think analytically
- Knowledge of state and federal employment laws
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to use data to make informed decisions
- Experience with statistics

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills
- Possess problem-solving and analytical skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Research (e.g., Data Analyst, Planning Analyst, Program Evaluator)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Experience conducting research
- Identifying policy options from research
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Strong analytical thinking
- Knowledge of statistics

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Problem-solving skills
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to understand and use statistics
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Ability to use evidence-based arguments
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data

Social Action and Social Policy

Possible Careers include work in Counseling, Coordination, and Victim Services (Community Outreach Educator, Substance Abuse Counselor, Crime Victim Liaison, Victim Services Specialist)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Ability to understand and interpret scientific data
- Able to effectively communicate with diverse populations
- Knowledge of diverse groups (as well as laws/policies relevant to these groups)
- Ability to analyze information and use information to inform development of programs

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills, including a focus on diversity
- Ability to analyze and interpret data
- Ability to read scientific reports
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions

Other Possible Careers include work in Government and Public Employment (e.g., Human Rights Officer, Customs Inspector, Intake Coordinator)

Skills Required for Careers:

- Knowledge of legal and basic human rights
- Experience working with diverse groups
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to apply facts to make informed decisions
- Ability to understand structure, and how this knowledge can be used to develop strategies for change

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Knowledge about diverse groups and the ways in which social structure and social policies impact outcomes for these groups
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to use scientific data to make decisions
- Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically

*Other Possible Careers include work in Research
(e.g., Program Evaluator, Policy Analyst, Social Science Analyst)*

Skills Required for Careers:

- Knowledge of research trends and findings related to specific policy issues
- Able to communicate effectively in writing and orally
- Ability to compile and analyze data
- Strong analytical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Ability to translate complex messages into understandable messages
- Able to make independent decisions

Skills Obtained in Sociology:

- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to think analytically
- Writing and communication skills
- Ability to make hard decisions and think critically
- Ability to situate issues within a larger macro perspective
- Ability to read scientific reports and use this information to make evidence-based decisions
- Ability to conduct research and interpret data

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Other Resources for Information about Careers in Sociology

- Careers in Sociology: Information from the American Sociological Association
 - www.asanet.org/career-center/careers-sociology
- Lambert, Stephen E. 2009. *Great Jobs for Sociology Majors, 3rd Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
 - Available as an electronic resource through the BSU library

Additional Career Resources at Ball State University

- SOC 488 – Internship Experience
- Career Center
 - Intern Ready
 - <https://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/students/internready>
 - Career Ready
 - <https://cms.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/careercenter/students/careerready>
- Undergraduate Faculty Advisor
 - Dr. Richard J. Petts (rjpetts@bsu.edu)
- Upper Division Academic Advisor
 - Katherine Herbert (kjherbert@bsu.edu)

Useful Job Search Websites

- www.idealists.com
- www.socialservice.com
- www.usajobs.gov
- collegegrad.com
- www.careeronestop.org