In 2017, the Sociology Department assessed departmental Learning Outcome #3. This objective states that “Students will be proficient in basic research methods including interviews, direct observation, content analysis, and surveys. They will know how to collect and analyze data, and how to identify appropriate methods for answering different sociological questions.”

The assessment plan comprised two strategies. First, the assessment committee evaluated department syllabi to assess which of sociology courses contribute to this learning outcome. Second, the assessment committee administered a survey to students in three sociology classes to evaluate their understanding of basic research methods.

In general we found that sociological research methods are addressed throughout the curriculum and that students with more exposure to sociology curriculum, especially curriculum focused on research methods, proved more proficient in basic research methods.

**Departmental Syllabi**

Instruction about research methods and design is concentrated in SOC 311, Research Methods, and SOC 312, Quantitative Methods in Sociology (both required courses for Sociology Majors). Sociology courses across the curriculum include various types of instruction about research methods, from a basic introduction, to requiring students to engage in specific research methods/research design, to evaluating sociological research.

In SOC 311, Research Methods, students learn the basic components of research design and methods used in sociological research as well as how to evaluate the appropriateness of a given method for a particular research question. SOC 312, Quantitative Methods in Sociology teaches students a range of components central to sociological research -- basic statistics, writing and fielding surveys, analyzing existing and original datasets with different statistical software packages.

Soc 204, Introduction to Sociology, and SOC 207, Social Inequality discuss methods. One of these courses is required for all Sociology Majors. Introduction to Sociology courses address a range of traditional sociological research methods. Both courses often require that students engage in basic forms of data collection such as looking up data about themselves or the attributes of a city in the American Community Survey (part of the Census) or engaging in content analysis, for instance. SOC 204, Introduction to Sociology, tends to emphasize research methods more so than SOC 207, Social Inequality.

Upper division courses focus less on introducing basic research methods and more on requiring students to gather original research or to evaluate existing research. Some 300 level classes, such as SOC 300, Family Sociology or SOC 328, Self and Society, require students to gather original qualitative research using interview or ethnography techniques. Most 400-level courses use a lecture and discussion model where students write reactions to readings. In these classes students read many data-rich, empirical studies. Some 400-level courses, ask student to collect and/or analyze data. Examples include, collecting network data and analyzing it with UCInet; collecting data on the urban environment and analyzing it with simple graphs; calculating simple demographic rates or indices. SOC 407, Honors Thesis, covers research design and the most common research methods, at an advanced level.
**Student Assessment**

We asked students in three classes to complete the attached assessment. Students were tasked with designing a research question, choosing a research method/briefly describing the research instrument and evaluating the strengths and weakness of their approach.

We received 151 responses, of which 143 were complete. The results were computed based on the 143 complete responses. Each individual answer was evaluated on a scale of 0-2. 0 designated an insufficient answer; 1 designated an adequate, but not complete answer; 2 designated a strong answer. The total number of points available was 6 (3 and 4 were treated as 1 answer).

Here are the mean assessment scores by student group:

- Mean assessment score: 5.4.
- Students how have taken 2 or fewer sociology classes: 5.2
- Students who have taken 3 or more sociology classes: 5.5
- Students who have taken SOC 311, Research Methods: 5.5
- Students who have not had not taken SOC 311, Research Methods: 5.3
- Sociology Majors: 5.6
- Non-Sociology Majors: 5.2

In general students improved their score the more sociology classes they took. Those students who had taken SOC 311, Research Methods, performed better than those who had not. Finally, Sociology majors performed better than non sociology majors/minors.

**Conclusion**

This assessment indicates that SOC 311 is accomplishing the goal of teaching research methods and design. These lessons are reinforced throughout the curriculum either through teaching students to gather their own data, to evaluate original or existing data and/or to evaluate and understand existing sociological research.
Assessment

Year: 1  2  3  4  5

Major: ____________________  Minor: ____________________

What sociology classes have you taken?

___ 204 Introduction to Sociology  ___ 445/545 Sociology of Race Relations
___ 207 Social Inequality  ___ 446/546 Issues in Sociology of Work [
___ 301 American Society  ___ 447/547 Issues in Sociology of Organizations
___ 303 World Population  ___ 450/550 Sociology of Developing Areas
___ 304 Community, Environment & Society  ___ 451/551 Social Stratification
___ 310 Development of Sociology/Social Theory  ___ 452/552 Issues of Migration
___ 311 Intro to Social Research/Research Methods  ___ 455/555 Issues in Sociology of Gender
___ 312 Quantitative Methods in Sociology/Statistical Analysis  ___ 456/556 Feminist Theory [
___ 313 Social Issues and Movements  ___ 457/557 Sex and Society
___ 328 Introduction to Social Psychology/Self & Society  ___ 461/561 Sociology of Religion
___ 345 Race, Class & Ethnic Groups/Race & Ethnicity  ___ 464/564 Systems of War and Peace
___ 346 Work and Occupations  ___ 465/565 Political Sociology
___ 347 Complex Organizations  ___ 467/567 Economic Sociology
___ 355 Sociology of Gender  ___ 475/575 Marxist Sociological Theory
___ 370 Urban Sociology  ___ 480/580 Crime and Social Control
___ 380 Intro: Deviance, Control, and Crime  ___ 484/584 Issues in Deviance, Control, and Crime
___ 399 Special Studies  ___ 491/591 Sociology of Education
___ 408 Careers in Sociology  ___ 401 Research
___ 412/512: Sociological Research Methods  ___ 404 Internship
___ 413/513: Sociological Research Methods  ___ 405 Reading
___ 415/515 Social Demography [  ___ 406 Supervised Field Study
___ 416/516 Issues in Environmental Sociology  ___ 407 Thesis for Honors Students
___ 420/520 Political Economy  ___ 442/542 Issues in Urban Sociology
___ 425/525 Issues in Family Sociology
The University of Oregon has hired you, a talented sociology major, to conduct a study that will describe student drinking behavior, student feelings about drinking, and possible solutions to problematic college drinking. According to the Princeton Review, Niche and Newsweek, University of Oregon has been declining in its party school status. However, students, parents, and administrators alike are still concerned about excessive drinking among UO students.

Drinking at college has become a ritual that students often see as an important part of their higher education experience. Many students come to college with established drinking habits, and the college environment can exacerbate the problem. According to a national survey, almost 60 percent of college students ages 18–22 drank alcohol in the past month, and almost 2 out of 3 of them engaged in binge drinking.

About 1 in 4 college students report academic consequences from drinking, including missing class, falling behind in class, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall. In a national survey of college students, binge drinkers who consumed alcohol at least 3 times per week were roughly 6 times more likely than those who drank but never binged to perform poorly on a test or project as a result of drinking (40 percent vs. 7 percent) and 5 times more likely to have missed a class (64 percent vs. 12 percent).

While some see college drinking as a harmless rite of passage, it often results in adverse consequences for students and their schools. Consequences for students include missed classes, poor school performance, withdrawal from courses, and dropping out. Health problems include alcohol use disorder and other alcohol-related problems, such as sleep issues and depression. Acute risks include impaired driving, unsafe sex, fights, sexual assaults, suicide attempts, unintentional injuries, overdoses, and death. Even students who don’t drink may experience secondhand effects, such as disrupted study and sleep, or being the victim of an alcohol-related assault.¹

In answering the following questions, draw upon your sociological expertise in research methods to briefly design a research study that would examine the problem of student drinking on your campus by addressing the following four prompts.

¹ This was taken from National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ’s “Alcohol Intervention Matrix”
1) Write a research question that would enable you to address some of the problems related to harmful or excessive drinking.

2) What research method would you use to answer your question? (Circle one)

   Survey
   Experiment
   Interviews
   Ethnography
   Content Analysis
   Network Analysis

3) How would you go about collecting the data to answer your research question? Include a discussion of the following aspects of research design, if appropriate: where you would gather the data, who would you gather the data from, and what types of questions or observations or other research instruments would be used?

4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of this method versus another method used by sociologists?