What is Sociology?

Sociology is the study of the social forces that influence human behavior. A degree in sociology leads to a better understanding of people from a variety of social backgrounds as well as insight into all types of social interactions and group dynamics. For example, a sociologist might examine the changing roles of women and men both at work and at home. IU sociology students choose from a wide variety of topics and courses ranging from the study of media to the study of schools. Here are some examples of specialty areas and courses that students have focused on:

- Work/Business
  - Work and Occupations
- Medicine/Social Work/Counseling
  - The Family
  - Mental Illness
- Politics/Government/Law
  - Social Change
  - Race and Ethnic Relations
- Criminal Justice/Deviance
  - Deviant Behavior and Social Control

Alumni Voices

"Studying sociology helps you understand how all of our different characteristics—gender, race, class, religion—affect us and how they affect the society we live in."

Jennifer Baze

"As the study of any aspect of social interaction, sociology lets you explore these interactions in all sorts of settings—from the workplace and school to home and church."

Matt LaFontaine

"All of the classes open doors to more fields of study. There's no stopping the knowledge."

Joanna Murray
Skills and Knowledge Developed in Sociology

Sociology teaches students how to develop and support their own ideas using a variety of evidence. It promotes learning through active involvement with projects and in classroom discussions. Students gain the ability to work with people from different backgrounds and to apply what they have learned to real-life situations.

Sociology also offers a range of research techniques that can be applied in many specific areas—whether your concern is with crime and criminal justice, client satisfaction in a business firm, marketing medical care, or problems of poverty and welfare.

Sociology majors gain many assets through our courses including:

- critical thinking skills
- writing skills
- research skills
- knowledge of group dynamics
- understanding of diversity

Alumni Voices

“Sociology really brings life into the classroom. It brings out the humanness in us.”
Teriasha Fendie

“We all need to be prepared for a more diverse society. Sociology gives you the tools to analyze our changing world and not be afraid of these changes.”
Dietrich Willke

“Other majors stress book work with the mentality that ‘this is the method that we use, and this is how it is,’ and you learn it and apply it. In sociology, though, the knowledge is more hands on because you are involved in projects that require field work and interviews.”
Melissa Medina
Career Options

The study of sociology provides excellent preparation for students planning futures in professions such as law, education, medicine, and public administration. Our graduates are also well prepared for working in social agencies. Some are caseworkers while others are employed in community development programs, counseling agencies, and rehabilitation centers.

A large number of sociology graduates find positions in the private sector in business, consulting, insurance, and banking. Typically careers are in the fields of management, marketing, customer service, and public relations. Still others decide to pursue some type of advanced study such as graduate work in sociology. Recent graduates have found careers at the following companies and agencies:

- Apple Computer Inc.—human resource manager
- Health and Rehabilitation Services—family court mediator
- Bank of America—business analyst
- PricewaterhouseCoopers—manager
- Gary Community School Corporation—social worker
- Center for Women in Transition—staff coordinator
- Accenture—consultant

Alumni Voices

"Sociology opens up so many opportunities. I originally thought that I wanted to teach—and still think I do—but I've been able to look into business opportunities such as consulting work. I hear about people with sociology degrees doing so many different things."
Kyle Longest

"In the job market, employers emphasize research and analytical ability. During my summer banking internship, the analytical and research skills I've picked up as a sociology major really came in handy."
Jocelyn Chia

"Sociology broadened my spectrum and my flexibility. I'm much more prepared to go into places I don't know and be open and less quick to make judgments. This is critical in the business world where you'll be dealing with many people in one place."
Dietrich Wilke
Sociology Department Strengths

Sociology is one of the most esteemed departments in the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University Bloomington. Consistently ranked among the top programs in the country, the IU sociology department recently received a national award for excellence in teaching—the 2001 American Sociological Association's Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award.

The award is well deserved, as students consistently comment on the stimulating nature of classroom lectures and readings and often share what they have learned with their friends because the topics are so interesting. The core courses for the major range in size from 25 to 45 students and many report feeling a sense of community within the department.

Majors have opportunities to intern, work on a senior honors thesis, enter an essay competition with a financial award, and receive other academic honors. Students can also gain experience working on survey research projects.

Alumni Voices

"Coming to a big university, I wondered whether I would get lost in the crowd. Thankfully, the people of the sociology department take an interest in my individual concerns. Professors whose classes I've taken a few years ago will ask me how I'm doing and if I'm enjoying my work."

Kyle Longest

"The professors use examples from the world around us, relating them to what we're studying. This is easy to do because so much of what we study can be observed in real life. I found that my learning didn't end when the bell rang, but continued in my observations of the people and events around me."

Jocelyn Chia

"Sociology is not a subject you'll be bored in. You will enjoy it from beginning to end."

Melissa Medico
For More Information

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