

TO: Undergraduate Curriculum Committee DATE: 1/13/04

FROM: Robert Aponte, Sociology

RE: Changes in Sociology Major and Minors

At the latest meeting of the Department of Sociology, the faculty voted in favor of the following changes to its requirements for Sociology majors and minors. We request that your committee consider these proposed changes as soon as possible.

I. For the Sociology Major, we want to make two changes:

- (1) Replace the current requirement of two theory courses (R356 Foundations of Social Theory and R357 Contemporary Sociological Theory) with the requirement of one theory course (R356, R357, or a new course to be developed which would combine the two into a single comprehensive theory course).
- (2) Reduce the number of required credit hours from 33 to 30.

Rationale for Proposal: Other Sociology Departments in the IU system as well as elsewhere typically require only one comprehensive theory course, so our requirement of two separate (classical and contemporary) theory courses causes problems for transfer students. Having to offer two theory courses reduces opportunities for faculty to teach substantive courses in their research specialties, and theoretical issues are covered extensively in these courses anyway. Since the Capstone requirement was added, students have had to do additional work that integrates their knowledge of theory with material covered in other courses.

We want to allow the “either R356 or R357” option as a transitional measure. Students who have already taken one theory course but not the other should not be made to take a new combined course which overlaps with what they have already had, and it is not realistic to think that we will continue to offer both combined and separate courses for several years to come, until we have no majors left who entered under the old rule but could benefit from the new one.

The 33-credit requirement began when the Capstone course was added to the list of required courses for the major. With the elimination of one required theory course, there is no compelling reason to keep the total at 33. Changing the required total to 30 would mean a return to the pre-Capstone situation, where students had to take 5 specified courses and 5 electives for the Sociology major.

II. For the general Sociology Minor, we want to make one change:

Drop the requirement of taking a methods or theory course (R351 Social Science Research Methods or R356 Foundations of Social Theory or R357

Contemporary Sociological Theory), to allow students to take an elective Sociology course instead.

Rationale for Proposal: With a less structured minor, students would have the opportunity to take more courses in substantive specialty areas (e.g., Family and Gender Studies; Medical Sociology; Work and Organizations; Crime and Deviance) that might be more interesting to them and more useful to them in their careers. If the general minor is changed to consist of R100 Introduction to Sociology and any other four sociology courses, totaling 15 credit hours (as before), this will reduce the need to offer as many sections of required basic courses, and free up the faculty resources to offer more courses in areas related to their research specialties.

III. For the Medical Sociology Minor, we want to make one change:

Drop the requirement to take both R381 Social Factors in Health and Illness and R382 Social Organization of Health Care, to allow students to take another Medical Sociology elective instead. Students would be required to take R381, R382 or a new course combining the material of these two existing courses.

Rationale for Proposal: We have not been able to schedule R381 and R382 as often as needed to make the fulfillment of the existing requirements for the Medical Sociology Minor sufficiently convenient. Other Medical Sociology courses have been developed, which would be quite suitable as part of a minor in this area. The proposed new structure for the Medical Sociology Minor would give students more flexibility in choosing which Medical Sociology courses they take, but they will still be required to take R100 Introduction to Sociology and four courses in this specialty area, for a total of 15 credit hours.