

SOCIOLOGY

Degree Requirements

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Required courses for the M.A. are designed to enhance students' knowledge of substantive specialty areas in sociology, social theory, sociological research methods, and statistics and include:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
SOC 502 or SOC 503	Theories of Society I Theories of Society II	3
SOC 513	Sociological Research Methods	3
SOC 574	Statistical Methods for Social Research ¹	3
SOC 575	Statistical Models for Nonexperimental Research	3
SOC 596	Individual Studies (Computer lab accompanying SOC 574 and SOC 575.)	1
SOC 500	Introduction to Graduate Study in Sociology	1
Electives		
	Students are also required to complete six elective graduate seminars, one of which must be a 500-level substantive seminar in Criminology, and two of which may be outside the department.	18
Culminating Experience		
SOC 600	Thesis Research	6
Total Credits		38

¹ Sociology department seminars in research methods and statistics assume a background gained through some combination of undergraduate course work and individual study. Students who are not confident of their basic statistical training may find it useful to pursue foundational training at Penn State or elsewhere prior to enrollment in SOC 574.

For the M.A. in Sociology at Penn State, 38 course credits are required, no more than three of which may be for SOC 596. A minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for work done at Penn State is required for graduation.

Students must either complete an M.A. thesis by the end of their second year in the program or enter the program with an M.A. degree.

Doctor of Philosophy (ph.D.)

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Qualifying Exam

A qualifying examination is required of all students seeking the Ph.D. This evaluation by the departmental Graduate Committee is based on the student's seminar papers, their proposed dissertation research and record of course performance, and faculty assessments of the student's ability to complete a high-quality Ph.D. program. The qualifying examination occurs after the M.A. degree has been completed.

The Ph.D. committee

The student's Ph.D. studies are conducted under the supervision of a Ph.D. committee. The Ph.D. committee must comply with the Graduate Council Ph.D. committee requirements (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>). The committee must include faculty members having recognized expertise in the major and minor areas of specialization selected by the student, as well as expertise in general social theory, research methods, and statistics. One faculty member is designated chair of the Ph.D. committee; ordinarily this person also serves as general adviser and director of the dissertation. Students are strongly encouraged to choose a committee chair as early as possible. The student's chair can be of great help in selecting other committee members, especially members outside of the sociology department.

Students must identify and convene their Ph.D. committee no later than one semester following their qualifying examination. The Ph.D. committee supervises the Ph.D. student's course of study, comprehensive examination, and dissertation. This includes approval of proposed course work to meet requirements for the major and minor areas of specialty.

All Ph.D. students must have completed all courses required for the M.A. degree in Sociology at Penn State, or their equivalent. These include:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
SOC 500	Introduction to Graduate Study in Sociology	1
SOC 574	Statistical Methods for Social Research	3
SOC 575	Statistical Models for Nonexperimental Research	3
SOC 513	Sociological Research Methods	3
SOC 502 or SOC 503	Theories of Society I Theories of Society II	3
Total Credits		13

All Ph.D. candidates are also required to complete a one-credit Lab in Teaching Sociology (SOC 591). The lab in teaching sociology cannot serve to meet other Ph.D. requirements to be described subsequently, such as the requirement for a minimum number of seminars in Sociology.

Major and Minor Areas of Specialization

In addition to the specific requirements common to all Ph.D. students, students must complete courses in which they acquire competence in a major and a minor area of specialization. The major and minor should be chosen by the student in consultation with the Ph.D. committee. A record of the chosen areas must be filed with and approved by the graduate officer. The major area may be selected from the department's primary Ph.D. program strengths:

1. demography (including health and immigration),
2. family, life course, and aging,
3. criminology,
4. stratification and inequality,
5. sociology of education,
6. urban and community studies, and
7. quantitative methods.

Alternatively, students may develop their own customized areas that have included in recent years (but are not restricted to): race and ethnicity, social theory, sociology of organizations, sociology of religion, and collective behavior and social movements. Each student, no matter their choice of specialty areas, in consultation with the Ph.D. committee

develops a program of course work necessary for preparation of the major and minor areas.

At least 12 credits of course work are associated with the major area of specialization. Course work is subject to the following constraints:

1. at least three courses must be listed in the sociology department;
2. at least two courses must be in formal 500-level seminars;
3. no more than one course may be in SOC 596.

The minor area of specialization is developed in the same manner, in consultation with the Ph.D. committee and with the approval of the Graduate Officer and the graduate committee. Students are required to take at least 9 credits of course work in the area selected as their minor. Earlier-named specific course requirements, such as seminars in statistics, research methods, and theory, cannot be used to meet the nine-credit minimum for the minor area. The minor course requirements also are subject to the following constraints:

1. at least two courses must be in sociology;
2. at least one course must be in 500-level seminars.

One course may be double-counted in the major and minor areas.

Comprehensive Examination

After completing all course work and before the period of intensive dissertation research begins, doctoral students must pass a comprehensive examination that includes written and oral components. Written components will be administered in a candidate's major and minor areas of concentration. Members of the Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination. The oral component of the comprehensive involves the defense of a dissertation prospectus.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

To earn the Ph.D. degree, doctoral students must also write a dissertation that contains original research and reflects their education in sociology. Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate also must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

The Department of Sociology has no formal foreign language or communication requirement. However, students are encouraged to pursue additional training in statistics, computer science, foreign language, technical writing, specialized methods, or specialized theory that will further dissertation and career plans.