APPROVAL FORM FOR

DEGREE PROGRAMS

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

NOTE: This form is a cover sheet that must accompany the degree program change proposal. The actual proposal should be prepared in accordance with format requirements provided in the *Guide and Format for Curriculum Proposals* published by the UCCC. Both cover sheet and proposal should be submitted to UCCC Mail Stop 9702 (281 Garner Hall), Phone: 325-9410.

College Arts & Sciences **Department:** Sociology

Contact Person: Rachel Allison **Mail Stop:** 9562 **E-mail:** rallison@soc.msstate.edu

Nature of Change: Modification **Date Initiated:** 1/6/2025

Current Degree (BS, MS, etc.): PhD

Current Major: Sociology

Current Concentration(s):

Current Campus(es): ☑ Starkville ☐ Meridian ☐ Distance ☐ Gulf Coast*

*Gulf Coast campus for Bagley College of Engineering onl

New Degree (BS, MS, etc.): PhD

Effective Date:

Semester	Year
Fall	2025

**Any new program or modification desiring a starting semester other than fall must include a justification

Proposed Major: Sociology

Proposed Concentration(s):

Proposed Campus(es)

☑ Starkville
☐ Meridian
☐ Distance
☐ Gulf Coast*

*Gulf Coast campus for Bagley College of Engineering c

Summary of Proposed Changes:

We combined 2 areas of specialization and added 3 hours to area of specialization. We updated our Academic Catalog description to reflect an eliminated exam. We reduced the total number of degree hours from 70 to 68 to reflect the reduction of 2 courses from 4 to 3 credit hours (completed in 2023-2024). We removed 1 required methods course (SO 8223) and added a requirement to take either of 2 other methods courses (SO 8283 or SO 8533).

Approved:	Date:
Nicole Rader Department Head	01/06/2025
Dana Pongsfeld Director of Academic Quality	1/7/2025
Alicia Hall Chair, College or School Curriculum Committee	1/25/25
Melissa Luz Dean of College or School	2/3/25
Chair, University Committee on Courses and Curricula	
Chair, Graduate Council (if applicable)	
Chair, Deans Council	

FOR OIRE USE ONLY

- ☐ Substantive Change to SACSCOC
- ☐ Notification to SACSCOC
- ☐ No significant departure

OIRE Representative Initials _____

GRADUATE DEGREE MODIFICATION OUTLINE FORM

Use the chart below to make modifications to an existing Graduate Degree. All deleted courses and information should be shown in *italics* and all new courses and information in **bold**. Please include the course prefix, number, and title in both columns. Expand rows as needed.

CURRENT Degree Description	PROPOSED Degree Description
Degree: PhD Major: Sociology Concentrations:	Degree: PhD Major: Sociology Concentrations:
This department has graduate programs leading to the Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Sociology. **Admission Criteria** To apply to either degree program, the applicant must submit the following: 1. A completed application packet for graduate study at MSU 2. Official transcripts from previous institutions 3. A GPA of 3.00 on the last two years of baccalaureate work 4. An academic writing sample in English (a sample of the student's choice) 5. Three letters of recommendation (from people who are familiar the student's academic abilities and potential) 6. A statement of purpose (explaining why the student wishes to study Sociology at MSU and how the program at MSU will assist the student in attaining goals). **Master of Science** Continuous enrollment in the M.S. program in Sociology is dependent upon a satisfactory evaluation of academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree. Unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program. A student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory if one or more of the following occurs: • More than two letter grades below a B in a student's graduate coursework • Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA for two consecutive semesters • More than one unsatisfactory U grade for thesis research • Two failures on the M.S. exit examination • Two failures on the M.S. thesis defense Upon the completion of coursework for a student's program of study, a student must defend a thesis proposal. Once the thesis proposal is accepted by the student's thesis committee, the student may proceed to carry out the thesis research in close consultation with his or her thesis committee. The student must pass a public defense of the thesis. **Doctor of Philosophy** Continuous enrollment in the Ph.D. program in	This department has graduate programs leading to the Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Sociology. **Admission Criteria** To apply to either degree program, the applicant must submit the following: 1. A completed application packet for graduate study at MSU 2. Official transcripts from previous institutions 3. A GPA of 3.00 on the last two years of baccalaureate work 4. An academic writing sample in English (a sample of the student's choice) 5. Three letters of recommendation (from people who are familiar the student's academic abilities and potential) 6. A statement of purpose (explaining why the student wishes to study Sociology at MSU and how the program at MSU will assist the student in attaining goals). **Master of Science** Continuous enrollment in the M.S. program in Sociology is dependent upon a satisfactory evaluation of academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree. Unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program. A student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory if one or more of the following occurs: • More than two letter grades below a B in a student's graduate coursework • Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA for two consecutive semesters • More than one unsatisfactory U grade for thesis research • Two failures on the M.S. exit examination • Two failures on the M.S. thesis defense Upon the completion of coursework for a student's program of study, a student must defend a thesis proposal. Once the thesis proposal is accepted by the student's thesis committee, the student may proceed to carry out the thesis research in close consultation with his or her thesis committee. The student must pass a public defense of the thesis. **Doctor of Philosophy** Continuous enrollment in the Ph.D. program in Sociology

Sociology is dependent upon a satisfactory evaluation of academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree. Unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program. A student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory if one or more of the following occurs: • More than two letter grades below a B in a student's graduate coursework • Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA for two consecutive semesters • More than one unsatisfactory U grade for dissertation research • Two failures on the Preliminary Examination Upon the completion of coursework for a student's program of study, a student must defend a dissertation proposal. Once the dissertation proposal is accepted by the student's dissertation committee, the student may proceed to carry out the dissertation research in close consultation with his or her committee. The student must pass a public defense of the dissertation.	is dependent upon a satisfactory evaluation of academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree. Unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program. A student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory if one or more of the following occurs: • More than two letter grades below a B in a student's graduate coursework • Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.00 GPA for two consecutive semesters • More than one unsatisfactory U grade for dissertation research • Two failures on the Preliminary Examination Upon the completion of coursework for a student's program of study, a student must defend a dissertation proposal. Once the dissertation proposal is accepted by the student's dissertation committee, the student may proceed to carry out the dissertation research in close consultation with his or her committee. The student must pass a public defense of the dissertation.

CURRENT CURRICULUM OUTLINE	Required Hours	**PROPOSED CURRICULUM OUTLINE**	Required Hours
College Required Courses		College Required Courses	
Sociological Tools[1] SO 8213 Research Design[1] SO 8103 Graduate Theory I[1] SO 8113 Graduate Theory II[1] *SO 8274 Graduate Statistics I* *SO 8284 Graduate Statistics II* SO 8233 Qualitative Analysis *SO 8223 Quantitative Analysis*	 3 3 3 *4* *4* 3 *3*	Sociological Tools[1] SO 8213 Research Design[1] SO 8103 Graduate Theory I[1] SO 8113 Graduate Theory II[1] SO 8233 Qualitative Analysis **SO 8273 Graduate Statistics I** **SO 8283 Graduate Statistics II or SO 8533Advanced Qualitative Methods**	 3 3 3 3 **3** **3**
Area of Specialization Coursework	15	Area of Specialization Coursework	**18**
Electives	12	Electives	12
SO 9000 Research Hours	20	SO 9000 Research Hours	20
Total Hours	*70*	Total Hours	**68**
[1] *After completing the seven courses, a Ph.D. student is required to pass a Ph.D. qualifying examination in the areas of theory, methods, and statistics. The student typically takes the qualifying exam during the third or fourth semester of study.* After completing all coursework, the student takes a comprehensive preliminary examination in the area of specialization. Areas of specialization include the following: 1. Criminology		After completing all coursework, the student takes a comprehensive preliminary examination in the area of specialization. Areas of specialization include the following: 1. Criminology **2. Communities, Environment, and Health** 3. Social Inequality and Stratification. After the completion of coursework for a student's program of study and the Ph.D. preliminary examination, a student is	

2. *Rural Sociology* 3. *Social Demography and Population Studies* 4. Social Inequality and Stratification. After the completion of coursework for a student's program of study, *the successful completion of the Ph.D. qualifying examination,* and the Ph.D. preliminary examination, a student is admitted into doctoral candidacy. A doctoral candidate must defend a dissertation proposal. Once the dissertation proposal is accepted by the student's dissertation committee, the candidate may proceed to conduct dissertation research in close consultation with his or her dissertation committee. After the dissertation committee unanimously agrees that the dissertation is defensible, the candidate must pass a public defense of the dissertation. NOTE: Thesis and dissertation research are subject to review and approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).		admitted into doctoral candidacy. A doctoral candidate must defend a dissertation proposal. Once the dissertation proposal is accepted by the student's dissertation committee, the candidate may proceed to conduct dissertation research in close consultation with his or her dissertation committee. After the dissertation committee unanimously agrees that the dissertation is defensible, the candidate must pass a public defense of the dissertation. NOTE: Thesis and dissertation research are subject to review and approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).	

Sociology PhD Program Modification

Description and Justification

This program modification makes five changes to the PhD in Sociology. First, we are combining two previous areas of specialization into one. Previous areas of Rural Sociology and Social Demography and Population Studies will now be Communities, Environment, and Health. We are making this change to better reflect current faculty expertise and graduate student interest, to align our concentration areas with trends in the discipline, and to clearly communicate our program expertise to the public.

Second, we are reducing the total number of required course hours for the degree from 70 to 68. This change reflects the modification of two statistics courses from 4 to 3 credit hours during the 2023-2024 academic year. We eliminated the lab component of what were SO 8274: Graduate Statistics I and SO 8284: Graduate Statistics II. This change came about following discussions between faculty teaching these classes and the Graduate Curriculum Committee and was supported by a vote of the Sociology faculty. This change took place because the lab component was no longer deemed necessary or helpful to the courses by faculty or graduate students, in large part due to students' current ability to access STATA statistics software off-campus on their personal computers.

Third, we are eliminating one methods course (SO 8223: Quantitative Analysis) from our list of required courses and replacing it with a requirement that students take either SO 8283: Graduate Statistics II or SO 8533: Advanced Qualitative Methods. SO 8533: Advanced Qualitative Methods is a new course that was approved by UCCC in the 2023-2024 academic year. The intent of this change is to bring greater balance in our methods training between quantitative and qualitative methods. While previously students were required to take 1 qualitative and 3 quantitative courses, they will now take 1 of each type of course and then 1 additional of their choosing (either qualitative or quantitative). This change better serves students who pursue dissertation projects using qualitative methods and does not preclude any student from taking additional methods courses as electives.

Fourth, we are adding 3 hours to area of specialization.

Fifth, we are amending our Academic Catalog listing to remove mention of a qualifying examination. The Sociology faculty voted to eliminate this exam requirement in the 2021-2022 academic year and PhD students no longer take this exam.

The program does not enroll distance students. Students benefit from these changes by having program areas of specialization that reflect faculty expertise, their own interests, and trends in the discipline. They also benefit from the replacement of the in-class lab with the ability to work on their statistics assignments from home on their own time. They benefit from an updated and accurate Academic Catalog listing. Finally, students benefit from having greater flexibility and freedom to choose methods course offerings that align with their intended dissertation project. These changes strengthen our program by bringing our concentration areas more in line with disciplinary trends, by advertising our current areas of faculty expertise, by enabling students to

use the software access they have through ITS, and by offering greater balance between training in quantitative and qualitative methods.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Social science research methodology and statistics - PhD students will demonstrate proficiency in basic social science research methodology and statistics.

Assessment Measures:

PhD students enrolled in SO 8233 (Qualitative Analysis) will complete a final writing assignment indicating understanding of qualitative research methodology.

PhD students enrolled in SO 8284 (Graduate Social Statistics II) will complete a final statistical project demonstrating understanding of the applications and assumptions of the regression model.

2. Sociological theory - PhD students will demonstrate proficiency in the area of sociological theory.

Assessment Measures:

PhD students enrolled in SO 8113 (Graduate Social Theory II) will complete a final writing assignment demonstrating knowledge of contemporary social theory.

PhD students will defend their dissertation, indicating a mastery of the research process from beginning to end. Their performance will be rated as pass/fail based on a majority vote by the dissertation committee.

3. Sub-field knowledge - PhD students will demonstrate a mastery of knowledge of a subfield within sociology.

Assessment Measure:

PhD students will complete their Doctoral Preliminary Examination in a chosen subfield of sociology, indicating a mastery of the major theoretical frameworks in their area of specialization and their ability to construct an argument using those frameworks. The exam will be graded as pass-fail based on a majority vote by the examining committee. A passing exam will demonstrate depth of understanding, synthesis of assigned material, critical thinking, and independent scholarship.

4. PhD students will be readily prepared for employment in sociology or related fields.

Assessment Measures:

PhD students will complete the Graduate Exit Survey during their final semester.

PhD students will obtain discipline-related jobs. Records will be maintained in the sociology department.

Additional Questions

1. Will this program change meet local, state, regional, and national educational and cultural needs? If so, please describe.

Yes, this program modification will meet local, state, regional and national educational and cultural needs by offering enhanced training in qualitative research methods and by training students in concentration areas that reflect trends in the discipline.

2. Will this program change result in duplication in the System? If so, please describe.

No, this program modification will not result in duplication in the System.

3. Will this program change/advance student diversity within the discipline? If so, please describe.

This program modification may advance student diversity within the discipline by offering students greater choice in pursuing training in quantitative and/or qualitative methods. Specifically, enhancing course offerings in qualitative methods may attract new students to our program who may not have previously considered applying or enrolling.

4. Will this program change result in an increase in the potential placement of graduates in MS, the Southeast, and the U.S.? If so, please describe.

This program modification may result in the increased placement of graduates in MS, the Southeast, and the U.S. by enhancing training opportunities in research methods and by enabling students to select graduate concentration areas that more closely align with areas of the discipline in which jobs are more often available.

5. Will this program change result in an increase in the potential salaries of graduates in MS, the Southeast, and the U.S.? If so, please describe.

This program modification may result in an increase in the potential salaries of graduates in MS, the Southeast, and the US by training students in ways that enhance their competitiveness for jobs that pay higher salaries.

SUPPORT:

The modification has the support of the Department of Sociology. Please see the attached letter of support.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025

CIP NUMBER: 45.1101

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
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January 6, 2025

Dear University Committee on Courses and Curricula,

I write in my capacity as the Graduate Coordinator and chair of the Graduate Policies and Curriculum Committee in the Department of Sociology. The committee submits a proposal for modification to the Sociology PhD program.

This program modification collapses two previous areas of specialization into one, adds 3 hours to area of specialization, reduces the total number of required course hours in the degree from 70 to 68 in line with the elimination of 1-hour labs in two graduate statistics courses, updates the program's Academic Catalog listing to reflect the faculty's elimination of the qualifying exam, and removes a requirement of SO 8223: Quantitative Analysis and replaces it with the requirement of either SO 8283: Graduate Statistics II or SO 8533: Advanced Qualitative Methods.

The proposed modification to this program has been approved by a vote of the Graduate Policies and Curriculum Committee and by a vote of the entire Sociology faculty, including Department Head Dr. Nicole Rader.

If there is any additional information that you require, please let me know. Thank you for your review.

Sincerely,

Rachel Allison

Dr. Rachel Allison
Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator
Chair, Graduate Policies and Curriculum Committee
Department of Sociology
Mississippi State University

Graduate Curriculum Committee Members:

MISSISSIPPI STATE

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Sociology

Dr. Robert Boyd

Dr. Tara Sutton

Dr. Diego Thompson