

# SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR STUDENTS MATRICULATED AFTER JAN. 1, 2018 BUT BEFORE SEPT. 7, 2021

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## Purpose

To provide context for the area of study guidelines for area of study Social Science.

## Statements

The Social Science area of study includes a variety of academic disciplines and approaches. Social science traditions explore a range of social, political and economic issues. Students who develop programs in Social Science examine theories, methods, problems and solutions in their chosen concentrations.

Social Science students may pursue a single academic discipline or may design an interdisciplinary degree. Among the most frequent Social Science disciplines are anthropology, economics, political science and sociology. Many other concentrations are also possible, including, but not limited to, African-American studies, communications, community organization/development, criminology, environmental studies, ethnic studies, family studies, gender studies, gerontology, LGBTQ studies, Latino/a studies, Native American studies, organizational studies, peace and conflict studies, perspectives on social change, social or cultural geography, urban studies and women's studies.

While some of these concentrations could be pursued within another area of study, the key to approaching any field within the Social Science area of study is that the student's program relies primarily upon a social (rather than a literary, artistic, historical or psychological) perspective. At the core of this area of study is learning to think like a social scientist.

These guidelines encompass a wide range of topics, theoretical frameworks and approaches to research. Particular areas within the social sciences have their own theories and research methods. As they design individual programs, students and mentors should incorporate frameworks and methods that are most relevant to their area of focus.

## For Students Seeking Associate Degrees

Students who develop associate degrees in Social Science explore social science perspectives related to their personal, community, academic or professional interests. Associate degree students may design a concentration in a single discipline or in an interdisciplinary field, such as those mentioned above.

The associate degree establishes a solid foundation for further exploring the social sciences, earning a bachelor's degree in a social-science field, or pursuing a bachelor's degree in one of the professional fields that have roots in the social sciences (e.g., business and management, health services, human services).

At the associate level, the emphasis is on the first two elements of the Social Science guidelines: developing a broad social-science perspective, as well as recognizing historical and cultural differences. Associate level students also gain exposure to concepts and methods, as well as practice in reading, writing and analytical thinking skills. More focused

study of theory and research methods typically occurs at the bachelor's degree level.

## For Students Seeking Bachelor's Degrees

Students who develop bachelor's degrees in Social Science develop the capacity to think critically about the social world and act as informed citizens and community members.

Students will gain in-depth exposure to theories and methods that are most relevant to their chosen topics or questions. They develop advanced-level reading, writing and analytical thinking skills that are important to career success, community projects, intellectual development and graduate study.

The bachelor's degree provides a strong foundation for further exploring personal, academic and professional interests in social science, or for a graduate degree in a social-science field. The degree also prepares graduates for employment, community service and/or a graduate degree in a professional field that is rooted in, or benefits from, a social-science background (e.g., law, public health, social policy, human services).

## The Guidelines

### Broad Social Science Perspective

- Students identify questions and topics that social scientists typically pursue.
- Students recognize how social scientists look at those topics.
- Students build a social-science vocabulary relevant to their concentrations.
- Students examine relationships among different elements of social life (e.g., institutions, systems of belief, cultural patterns, or political and economic structures of society).

### Historical and Comparative Perspectives

- Students identify and analyze how key elements of social life vary across time, place and culture.
- Students identify and analyze the dynamics of power and privilege in relation to race, class, gender, age, sexuality, etc.
- Students identify and analyze sources of change in society.
- Students place their personal experiences within broader social and historical contexts.

### Theoretical Perspectives

In relation to their chosen topics, questions or problems:

- Students identify and describe relevant concepts and theories.
- Students assess the strengths, limitations and significance of relevant concepts and theories.
- Students apply concepts and theories to the topics and questions they are addressing.
- Students develop their own social-science ideas and present their reasoning, evidence and conclusions.

### Social Science Research Methods

In relation to their chosen topics, questions or problems:

- Students identify tools and processes used in social-science research.
- Students identify strengths and limitations of social-science research methodologies.
- Students accurately describe and assess the purposes, procedures and conclusions of examples of social-science research.

- Students identify and analyze ethical issues and political values embedded in social-science research.

### **Critical Thinking and Analysis**

In relation to their chosen topics, questions or problems:

- Students analyze, criticize, apply and evaluate key concepts, assumptions, theories and methodologies from a social-science perspective.

### **Communication and Information Literacy in Social Science**

In relation to their chosen topics, questions, or problems:

- Students demonstrate library research, academic writing and communication abilities appropriate to their degree level (e.g., associate, bachelor's).