GUIDE TO GRADUATE STUDY

INTERDEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Overview

The Masters degree in Sociology is offered as an Interdepartmental Program between the Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work (College of Liberal Arts, AU) and the Department of Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology (College of Agriculture, AU). The Program is administered by two Co-Directors, one from each Department.

Admissions Requirements

The Graduate School at Auburn University and our Interdepartmental Program in Sociology welcomes applications from serious students. Auburn University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer/equal opportunity educational institution.

Admission to our Program involves two steps: (1) application to the Graduate School, and (2) review of the application by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee. Application information and forms may be downloaded or obtained directly from the:

Graduate School
Hargis Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849-5122
Phone: (334) 844-4700
Web: http://www.grad.auburn.edu

The Graduate School requires that applicants provide all transcripts from all college or university work. Also applicants are required to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). All transcripts and official GRE score should be sent directly to the Graduate School. Three letters of recommendation from references who can comment on your likely success as a graduate student in our program should be submitted on-line through the Graduate School application system. A statement of interest should be sent either to Dr. Janice Clifford (Sociology) or to Dr. Michelle R. Worosz (Rural Sociology). Contact information can be found at the end of this Guide.

For purposes of admission, we consider Grade Point Average (GPA), Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, letters of recommendation, and the applicant’s statement of interest. For international students, we also consider the TOEFL score.

Regarding GPA, we are generally looking for at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. We use one of the formulas presented below which combines GPA and GRE scores to help evaluate all applications.

The GRE underwent a significant change in 2011. We continue to accept GRE scores from before 2011. Under the old scoring system, we generally are looking for minimum scores of 450 for both the verbal and quantitative components of the GRE. Under the new scoring system, we are looking for minimum scores of 150 for the verbal and 140 for the quantitative components.

Using the new system of GRE scores, we use the following formula to evaluate applications where GPA
stands for the undergraduate grade point average, the V stands for the verbal portion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), and the Q stands for the quantitative portion of the GRE:

\[4V + 4Q + 1500(GPA-1.0) = 4160\]

Using the old system of GRE scores, we use one of the following formulae to evaluate applications:

\[1.2V + 1.0Q + 1500(GPA-1) = 4000\] or \[1.0V + 1.2Q + 1500(GPA-1) = 4000\]

Using the old system of GRE scores, we use whichever of the above formulas was highest. A score of 4,000 or above on one of these formulas is required for admission consideration.

In addition, we consider the written portion of the GRE. Students admitted into our program with a score of 3.5 or less on the written portion of the GRE will be required to take an undergraduate writing course to strengthen their writing skills. Such skills are important because of the number of research papers (and of course the thesis) that will be written as a graduate student. International students will be asked to take and pass INTL 1800 (Writing Proficiency in English for International Students). All other students will be asked to take and earn at least a grade of B in ENGL 4000 (Advanced Composition).

Once a completed application has been received by the Graduate School, the application is forwarded to the Program Co-Directors who review the application. As you can see, there several pieces of information which we have to work with in making decisions on admission – GPA, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and your statement of interest. We use all of this information in making admission decisions. The Co-Directors will inform the Graduate School of their recommendation regarding admission to our Program. The final decision on admission to the Graduate School is made by the Dean of the Graduate School.

In some cases, students applying to the Interdepartmental Program have had limited undergraduate course work in Sociology. Where this is so, students may be required to take certain undergraduate courses. The Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology is particularly concerned that students have appropriate grounding in our three core areas: Statistics, Methods of Social Research, and Social Theory. If a prospective student has not had one or more of these courses as an undergraduate (or appropriate equivalents as determined by the Co-Chairs of the Interdepartmental Program) they will be required to pass corresponding undergraduate course work with a grade of at least a B before being allowed to take graduate courses in any core area.

For international students, the Graduate School requires a minimum score of 550 for the paper version of the TOEFL (range = 310-677). For the computer version of the TOEFL, the required minimum score is 213 (range = 0-300). For the iBT TOEFL, the Auburn minimum is 79 (range = 0-120).

### Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

**Thesis Option - Masters of Science (M.S.) in Sociology or Masters of Science (M.S) in Rural Sociology**

1. Graduate students pursuing the thesis option are guided through their program by an Advisory Committee consisting of at least three faculty members. Selection of this Committee, including the Committee Chair, is the student’s responsibility. Students are strongly encouraged to form four person Committees that have faculty representation from at least two of the three participating departments.

2. Once a student has established an Advisory Committee, the student should complete the Plan of
Study listing course the student will take to meet the requirements of the degree. After the Plan of Study has been completed (online at http://grad.auburn.edu/degree_works.html) each member of the Advisory Committee will electronically approve the Plan of Study.

3. Revisions to the Plan of Study and/or to the composition of the Advisory Committee are possible should the need arise.

4. Graduate students pursuing the thesis option are required to earn a minimum of 30 graduate-level semester hours, up to 6 of which may be thesis credits. Most graduate courses are 3 semester hours, meaning that the minimum credit requirement usually can be met by taking a total of 8 courses.

5. There are three required core courses for all graduate students in the Interdepartmental Program: SOCY 7000 (Advanced Sociological Theory), RSOC 7700 (Research Methods in Sociology), and SOCY 7100 (Statistical Analysis of Survey, Aggregate, and Large Data Sources).

6. Students interested in additional coursework in statistics may want to consider STAT 7000 (Experimental Statistics), ERMA 7300 (Design and Analysis in Education), or ERMA 7310 (Design and Analysis in Education II). Students interested in developing an expertise in qualitative research methodologies might consider taking ERMA 7210 (Theory and Methodology of Qualitative Research) and ERMA 7220 (Applied Qualitative Research).

7. In addition to the three core graduate courses, students must take at least three additional courses earning a total of at least 9 semester credit hours within the program area (defined as ANTH, RSOC, SOCY, SOCI). Exceptions to this requirement may be granted with approval of the Co-Directors of the Graduate Program if supported by the student’s advisory committee. Students should work with the Chair of their Graduate Advisory Committee to select other

8. A grade of B or better must be earned in each of the three core courses listed above.

9. Undergraduate courses in the three core areas do not count for graduate course credit.

10. No more than 6 credit hours of directed readings, including SOCY 7930 (Directed Studies) and RSOC 7960 (Special Problems in Rural Sociology), or comparable courses in other departments, will be accepted to meet the required minimum of course hours earned.

11. Graduate students are required to develop a research proposal for their thesis research and to present this to their Advisory Committee for review and counsel. Research proposals typically include a statement of the problem, a set of clear research objectives, a preliminary review of the relevant literature, and a discussion of the proposed research methodology. Only when the proposal has been approved by the Advisory Committee will the graduate student be considered ready to begin thesis research.

12. Graduate students are encouraged to present their proposals as part of periodically scheduled program colloquia where several students discuss their proposed research projects.

13. Once the thesis is complete and Committee members have had an opportunity to review and comment on its contents, a thesis defense is scheduled which is open to any interested person. After passing the thesis defense, final changes required by the Committee are made and the thesis is turned into the Graduate School. It is the responsibility of graduate students to meet format and other requirements of the Graduate School with regard to the final version of the thesis.
Non-Thesis Option - Master of Arts (M.A.) in Sociology or Masters of Science (M.S.) in Rural Sociology

1. Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option are required to earn a minimum of 36 graduate-level semester hours. Most graduate courses are 3 semester hours, meaning that the minimum credit requirement usually can be met by taking a total of 12 courses. Students following the non-thesis option cannot include SOCY 7990 (Research and Thesis) or RSOC 7990 (Research and Thesis) to meet the 36 hour requirement.

2. Students following the non-thesis option are required to take the same core graduate courses as thesis option students (see above). The remaining course work is selected by the individual student in consultation with the student’s Graduate Advisory Committee.

3. A grade of B or better must be earned in each of the core courses referred to above.

4. Undergraduate courses in the three core areas do not count for graduate course credit.

5. No more than 6 credit hours of directed readings, including SOCY 7930 (Directed Studies) and RSOC 7800 (Special Problems in Rural Sociology), or comparable courses in other departments, will be accepted to meet the required minimum of course hours earned.

6. Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option are guided through their program by a member of the graduate faculty selected by the student who will serve as the student's major faculty advisor. An initial advisor will be assigned at time of admission. Students may select a different advisor at any time during the first year.

7. Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option will work together with their major faculty advisor to select two additional members of the graduate faculty to serve on her or his advisory committee. We strongly encourage selection of faculty from two or more of the units within our Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology.

8. Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option will prepare a major “capstone” paper of approximately 8,000 words (including references, tables and other materials). The student will make a formal presentation of this paper to their advisory committee followed by discussion by the committee and the student, and an evaluation by the committee of the paper’s acceptance as a “capstone” paper. The timing of this examination will generally be in the student’s last semester of course work and after all three of the core course requirements have been met.

8. Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option are strongly encouraged to identify a Plan of Study (http://grad.auburn.edu/degree_works.html) for course work by the end of their first year. Revisions to the plan of study are possible should the need arise.

Financial Assistance

A variable number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) and Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) are available on a competitive basis to support graduate students in the Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology. Strong preference is given to funding students pursuing the thesis option.

Admission to our program is done collectively by the co-Directors of the program (see below) but funding decisions are made by individual departments. To be considered for funding, please send three letters of reference to the co-Director in the appropriate department.
Most GTA and GRA positions involve the commitment of 13-15 hours of work per week. Given these responsibilities, graduate students holding GTA and GRA positions are expected to take no more than 9 hours of graduate credit course work per semester. Experience indicates that a heavier course load leads to an erosion of performance both on the job and in the course work.

GTA positions are associated primarily with the Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work (College of Liberal Arts) and involve working with faculty teaching in the undergraduate core curriculum. Students seeking funding in the form of a GTA are to have a completed application by March 1st to be included in the review process regarding funding decisions for the following academic year. However, occasionally, funds for GTA positions may become available later in the year and applications are then reviewed accordingly.

GRA positions are associated primarily with the Department of Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology (College of Agriculture) and involve working with faculty conducting research on a variety of topics dealing with rural development. Funding from grants becomes available at different times of the year. There are some limited funds available for GRA positions through the Department, and these awards generally are made in February or March. Please contact the co-Director for Rural Sociology for further information on funding.

For additional information, please contact one of the Co-Directors of the Graduate Program:

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