



Career Information for the Sociology Student

What Kind of Job Can I Get with a Sociology Degree?

Regardless of the work setting you enter, your sociological insights will be valuable. You can “apply sociology” in any work environment. The sociological perspective gives you a unique way of looking at how society works and the intricate relationships between individuals and society. Sociology employs theories and concepts that help you understand communities, organizations, bureaucracies, families, and small groups.

A Bachelor’s degree in sociology provides you with an excellent liberal arts foundation for embarking upon the same wide range of career paths that many other liberal arts majors pursue. It also offers unique competencies such as: an understanding of social systems and large organizations; the ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from surveys or polls; the capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront our society today; the ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working; and insight into group dynamics, diversity, and human behavior.

Youth services and recreational programs

The many programs that deal with youth such as Girls Inc., Boy Scouts, etc. often employ directors and staff that have a sociological background. Increasingly youth services that deal with problems such as gangs, violence, and alienation, function more effectively with planners and leaders who have a sociological knowledge of deviance, family, and socialization.

Crisis prevention, safety and disaster management

Areas such as rape crisis, helplines, and support programs are often in need of workers who can place these problems in perspective using sociological analysis of gender, race, class, and family organization. Agencies that deal with natural disasters, such as Red Cross, FEMA, or international relief are organizations that recognize the need for cultural and social perspectives in planning and responding.

Polling, social trend analysis

Hundreds of organizations are constantly collecting data and analyzing social trends. Many who work in the corporate world, media, and government must have the skills to properly collect and analyze data. Expertise in research methodology directly prepares for these jobs.

Personnel services

Increasingly all types of businesses and corporations recognize the need for a broadly educated employee who can deal with complex issues common when humans are involved. Most corporations employ a significant number of individuals to work in hiring, benefits, employee resources, etc. Sociology is an excellent background for knowledge of how people work, think, and interact.

Medical administration and public health workers

All medical professionals must deal with diverse publics. Their technical training will only take them so far. Having a basis for interacting with and interpreting the background to people’s problems and how they communicate those problems, or, for example, to understanding some people’s suspicion of the medical community, is essential. These kinds of things can only be provided with extensive sociological training, through the minor or major.

Foreign service and international negotiation

A background in understanding culture and society can provide the insight that is necessary for successful representatives in international exchanges.

How Do Specific Courses Relate to Career Skills?

While all courses in the sociology program are designed to develop critical thinking skills and a sociological perspective, some substantive sociology courses may be specifically related to specialized job needs.

- **SOC 102 Analysis of Social Problems** - Addresses the most critical issues facing our society today, including crime, substance abuse, violence, poverty, homelessness, and AIDS.
- **SOC 105 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology and SOC 415 Sociology of Globalization** - Provide insight into societies that will be valuable in international trade or in foreign service, or any work setting that involves a culturally diverse work group.
- **SOC 303 Statistics for the Social Sciences and SOC 202 Research Methods** - Contribute to your ability to conceptualize problems and develop research strategies. Such courses help prepare you for working in government research offices, public opinion polling agencies, marketing firms, and other research or program development settings.
- **SOC 306 Sociology of Gender** - Offers valuable perspectives for working in agencies that serve women, such as shelters, rape crisis centers, government agencies, or family services.
- **SOC 319 Deviance and Social Control** - Offers valuable preparation for jobs in agencies that deal with criminal justice, law, probation, juvenile delinquency, and mental health.
- **SOC 320 Sociology of Religion** - Offers information that is imperative to anyone considering work in the clergy or ministerial counseling work.
- **SOC 325 Sociology of Education** - Provides knowledge useful in teaching, urban planning, educational administration, and youth services.
- **SOC 330 Sociology of Race and Ethnicity** - Helps develop an understanding of the complexities of diversity in modern society. This will benefit you in any position and specifically if you are seeking employment in the human resources department or a firm with a diverse work force.
- **SOC 350 Social Stratification** - Relates to many different social services, and assists one in assessing their career goals. Regardless of one's career decision, this course would help develop an understanding of the opportunity structures in the U.S. and insight into the barriers to success.
- **SOC 375 Social Psychology** - Increases your understanding of team dynamics and informal organization. It also help you develop interpersonal skills that assist in any work setting or personnel job.
- **SOC 410 Sociology of Childhood** - Includes information that would greatly assist anyone who is interested in working with youth or children. Whether as a teacher, a social services specialist, or recreational director, this course will provide insight into issues important to the field.
- **SOC 435 Sociology of Social Movements** - Offers valuable insight into the process of pursuing and achieving social change.

How Can a B.A. in Sociology Help Me with Specific Careers?

Sociology is excellent preparation for jobs in many types of fields that require a sophisticated knowledge of social organization, human behavior, or basic research skills. Some examples are:

Criminal justice and penology (corrections)

- Agencies such as the FBI, local law enforcement, and crime prevention units require an understanding of the social context in which crimes take place and a sociological perspective of deviant behaviors.
- The ability to use and interpret statistics on crime are utilized regularly in these workplaces.

Social work and social service

- Programs in drug rehabilitation, needs assistance, family counseling, etc., benefit from an expertise in sociology.
- The many non-profit organizations include a wide range of opportunities for working with children, elderly, the poor, and persons with disabilities.
- The planning and organization of help requires an ability to engage in research to assess the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of policies and programs.
- Sociology is perhaps the ideal preparation for graduate school in social work and related fields.

Broadcasting and journalism

- Knowledge of social and political issues: journalists are regularly called upon to interview those who work in social or political arenas and to write articles on social issues and social problems (e.g. violence, crime, etc.). A background in sociology is crucial to success and the ability to converse intelligently with individuals regarding what they do and the deep issues underlying their work.
- Interviewing/questioning skills through research training.

Government - all levels

- Whether one is interested in a federal political career, serving on their local city council, or working in one of the thousands of governmental agencies, a preparation in sociology provides the knowledge of social organization, power, and diversity that makes one successful in public service.

Law

- Sociology, philosophy, and political science degrees are perhaps the ideal preparation for work in law. Lawyers spend a great deal of their time learning about their clients, their backgrounds, etc.—that is, on things not directly related to laws and legal procedures. Only sociology will provide students with the background and tools to assess the “big picture”—the economic, cultural, and social context from which their clients are coming.
- Lawyers are often presented with data from social scientific sources—data that can either help or hurt their clients. It is important that lawyers be comfortable reading the tables and interpreting the data. That is a large part of sociological training as well.

Urban and regional planning

- Knowledge of demographic techniques and data analysis are very important to city planning.
- Facing many of the problems, advantages, and challenges to suburbs, inner cities, and small towns require knowledge of diverse political interests, the structures of traffic and building patterns, and the social needs of populations.

Market research and advertising

- Sociology provides numerous skills that are important to market research: (a) a sense of different population groups (i.e. target markets); (b) an ability to engage in research—interviews, surveys, focus groups; (c) an ability to interpret and utilize statistical and non-statistical data that come out of this research and (d) write reports on the research.

Teaching

- Beyond the crucial course “sociology of education,” sociology provides future teachers with the knowledge to develop skills for working with diverse student bodies, for understanding the social sources of many students’ problems. Without this basis, it is difficult to effectively deal with the problems themselves.

Ministry and church administration

- Those seeking to go into the ministry will confront people with all kinds of social problems in all kinds of different situations. Only sociology offers students the background for encountering such diversity.
- We also offer a course on the sociology of religion, by which students can become acquainted with the diversity of religions in the United States and how they are related to each other.

Where Do I Start Looking?

General Employment Resources:

www.search.com

An excellent point of departure for an internet job search. The employment table of contents contains links to several major online services.

www.monster.com

Amusing site offering a variety of services to users including resume help, employer profiles, and a job database.

www.careerbuilder.com

A flexible database that enables the user to search with a job description or job title, by a company name, by state, and even by country.

nationjob.com

Easy to use site with lots of services.

www.careerpath.com

Help wanted ads from 24 major metropolitan newspapers compiled into a single database that may be searched from your workstation.

Government Employment Resources:

joblink.alabama.gov/ada

Information on job opportunities in Alabama. Offers listings of current jobs, and often sociology is a relevant degree to these positions.

usajobs.opm.gov

Database of over 40,000 U.S. government job opportunities worldwide.

www.jobsfed.com

As the largest employer in the U.S., the federal government has positions for social scientists. Search for yourself or hire FJD's matching service.

For Further Suggestions...

For more information, speak to your friendly sociology professor, who will be glad to sit down and discuss your future with you. Visit us on the web at www.uah.edu/sociology. You may also find excellent career resources at the website of the American Sociological Association (ASA) at www.asanet.org.

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