

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Undergraduate Office

<http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/index.html>

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OVERVIEW of REQUIREMENTS

It may help you in planning your studies at Harvard to know the rationale of our requirements for concentrators. The Sociology department has designed the undergraduate major to prepare students to be able to understand and critique research and arguments about sociological topics, but most importantly to be able to actually conduct independent research.

Students generally begin first term of sophomore year with Sociology 128, which gives an overview of research design and all of the methods used by sociologists in research. In the spring or fall of sophomore year, students take the Tutorial in Sociological Theory (Sociology 97) to become acquainted with the ideas that underlie most research in the field. This is also an intensive writing course that teaches the logic of argument of our discipline. Also in the spring, you will continue developing your research skills by learning basic statistical methods (in Sociology 156) which permit you to analyze data.

In the junior year students take elective courses as well as the junior tutorial (Sociology 98) which covers one substantive subject in depth and offers more advanced training in one or more of the research methods you covered in Sociology 128. The junior tutorial gives students hands-on experience actually conducting research. In the senior year, students may choose to write a thesis, bringing all of these skills together in a year-long independent research project in sociology. About half of our concentrators do this. Those who do not write a thesis are encouraged to think about enrolling in a 91R, Supervised Reading and Research, where they pursue a topic independently. Alternatively students can use the skills they have acquired to write an ambitious paper in one of their elective courses.

Regardless of whether you write a thesis, by the end of your senior year it is our hope that the required courses in sociology will have given you the skills to gather empirical data, to analyze data of all sorts, to assess arguments and hypotheses, and to write about social science topics in a clear and informed manner. Your elective courses in sociology, as well as your related fields courses will give you knowledge in substantive areas of the discipline. The concentration's program is designed to cumulatively build your skills, while allowing you the freedom to explore substantive areas of interest to you. We have been very proud of the accomplishments of our graduates in many different professions and graduate studies and your course work in sociology provides a very good base for whatever you might choose to do after graduation.