Course: SOC 105
Materials used, n: 20
Rubric/Scoring standard used: Gen Ed rubrics for writing, critical thinking and info. literacy
Date of assessment: February 2017
Report submitted by: Mehdi Bozorgmehr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Context of and Purpose for Writing</th>
<th>Content Development</th>
<th>Sources and Evidence</th>
<th>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average score</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students meeting benchmark</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Outcomes assessed:
✓ demonstrate an understanding of context and purpose for writing
✓ use appropriate content to demonstrate mastery of subject
✓ execute genre and disciplinary conventions
✓ demonstrate skillful use of sources and evidence
✓ use standard diction, grammar and mechanics of English

Strengths: In general, the sampled students stayed focused on the questions posed by the instructor rather than providing a summary of the book, an ethnography of second-generation Dominicans in the South Bronx. The students chose appropriate material from the book to support their statements, and in general developed sociological arguments rather than stating their opinions.

One of the best papers of the 20 under review displayed a particularly strong thesis and organization, thanks to the comments and instruction that the student received from a consultant at the Writing Center. A strategy should be developed to further encourage students to tap into this resource at the college.

Weaknesses/Concerns: In general, students were hesitant to provide their own analysis and relied on point-by-point descriptive evidence from the book. Although the papers tend to be readable, they contain basic errors of grammar and mechanics. Moreover, many of the arguments made are very broad and lack nuance.

Other comments: It is important to bear in mind that students in this class benefitted greatly from the presentation made on the book by about a dozen students who volunteered to do so. These presentations inspired the rest of the class to read the book carefully in order to competently answer the questions posed. Moreover, having a choice between two questions allowed the students to put their stronger foot forward.
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
Average scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Explanation of issues</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Student's Position</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average score</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% students meeting benchmark</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Outcomes assessed:
✓ clearly frame an issue or problem and consider it critically
✓ select, use, and evaluate information to investigate a claim or point of view
✓ present a position taking into account its complexities and limits as well as others points of view
✓ develop logical conclusions based on evaluation of evidence

Strengths: All of the essays engaged with the central issues raised by the questions posed about the book. In general, the essays displayed coherent analysis of the monograph, and came to logical conclusions, which were supported by evidence from the book. The questions asked the students to grapple with basic sociological concepts such as gender- and peer-group socialization and anomie, and overall the students managed to address these well by consulting the course textbook.

Weaknesses/Concerns: Sometimes, the students reported descriptive information from the book uncritically without any analysis. This was partly because they considered the author as an authority on the subject, despite the fact that the instructor had encouraged them to be critical in their evaluation of the book. The students often missed the opportunity to draw on their own relevant personal experiences, especially as children of immigrants in New York City, to check some of the assertions made by the author in his ethnography. This particularly applied to the second question, which dealt with the general concept of masculinity. In addition, the essays often lacked a clear-cut conclusion, and when conclusions were included, they tended to be oversimplified.

INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS
Average scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Use info ethically, provide appropriate quotations as required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average score</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>% students meeting benchmark</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Outcomes assessed:
✓ use information ethically, provide appropriate quotations as required

Strengths: The assignment required the students to refer to specific pages in the book and insert direct quotes in their essays. Most students followed these guidelines.
Weaknesses/Concerns: The students occasionally did not format long quotes from the book appropriately, thereby taking up a great deal of unnecessary space from the required 4-5 pages. Additionally, many students referred to this research monograph as a “novel,” which suggests that they cannot distinguish scholarly research from artistic production.

Other Comments: Part of the problem with the incorrect categorization of the book as a “novel” emanated from the personal narrative style used by the author.

CONTENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course learning outcomes assessed

• Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of sociology.
• Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
• Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.

Strengths: The students overall did well with identifying and applying the fundamental concepts in sociology, though they did not fully grasp the meaning of complicated concepts such as Durkheim’s “anomie.” The students were successful in addressing how the local contexts affected the outcomes of the subjects’ lives in the book.

Weaknesses/Concerns: The students were less adept at applying sociological methods. In all fairness to the students, this introductory course did not delve into methods of sociology in depth. The students had a hard time connecting the macro (societal) and micro (individual) issues together. Along these lines, they did not discuss the national and global contexts, in part because the author does not explicate these dimensions adequately.

Other comments: Admittedly, at this introductory level, students cannot be expected to connect sociological theory, concepts, and methods. This is a skill that requires taking several courses in the field and conducting independent research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Briefly summarize overall findings by identifying strengths and challenges in students’ accomplishment of learning outcomes.

One of the key factors in student success was that the assignment posed specific questions rather than requiring an overall book review. This allowed students to focus on the most relevant sections of the book rather than getting lost in various arguments made by the author. However, this proved challenging for those students who did not understand the narrow scope of the assignment and wrote their essays in general terms.

A key challenge was the general writing ability, which often distracted the instructor from following the students’ arguments. As noted above, the students were encouraged to make use of CCNY’s Writing Center, but only one student saw a consultant, and this resulted in a well-organized paper.

How useful are the text and other resources assigned to this course?

The award-winning monograph, based on which the students wrote their essays, supplemented the Introductory Sociology textbook by exploring key sociological issues in American society.
such as race, crime, violence, gender and social mobility. Furthermore, it allowed students a chance to practice writing while applying fundamental sociological concepts to an engaging case study.

### Already implemented “Closing-the-loop” efforts to improve student learning/success:

Since teaching this course, including this current semester, have you made changes in course content? If yes, please explain.

Yes, I have changed the assigned book for the essay question to a more topical one on the coming of age of undocumented children in America. Overall, it appears that more of my current students are able to relate to this topic than to the previous one, which focused on a small counter-culture group.

Since teaching this course, have you made changes in course delivery or other pedagogy? Please explain.

I have increasingly encouraged class participation from a larger number of students to break down the anonymity of a large class. I am also strictly enforcing a policy of no electronic device use in the classroom.

How exactly have the changes that you have implemented impacted student learning/student success? Please provide specific examples.

Unsurprisingly, the policy of no electronic device use has resulted in far more attentiveness on the part of the students and more frequent participation in classroom participation.

### Future “Closing-the-loop” plans to improve student learning/success

Based on your assessment of student learning, what changes do you plan to implement at instructional level to improve student learning? Specify topics and pedagogical changes, if applicable.

I am considering dividing the class into smaller groups, for a part of the class time, in order to facilitate more intensive and extensive discussion.

Please provide suggestions on what can be done on departmental and/or institutional level to improve student learning in Gen Ed courses.

* Scale 1-4 reflects the ability range from the beginning level to the accomplished level – it is meant as a “college span” scale; it is expected that the majority of freshmen would not be at the “accomplished” end of the scale.

1 – beginning 2- developing 3 – competent 4 – accomplished