

SOCIOLOGY

Graduate Program Head	Michelle Frisco
Program Code	SOC
Campus(es)	University Park (Ph.D., M.A.)
Degrees Conferred	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Master of Arts (M.A.) Dual-Title Ph.D. and M.A. in Sociology and Demography Dual-Title Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Data Analytics
The Graduate Faculty	View (https:// secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/? searchType=fac&prog=SOC)

The graduate program in Sociology is for students seeking a Ph.D. degree. Students may either enter the program with an M.A. degree or earn that degree along the way to the Ph.D. program. The program offers advanced education for students who intend to pursue academic careers in sociology or who aspire to non-academic positions.

The graduate program emphasizes theory and research on social theory, research methodology, statistics, and substantive specialties: demography; family; social networks; quantitative methods; institutions and culture; social inequality; urban, community, and spatial sociology; immigration and incorporation; and health and life course.

Students may also elect to pursue a dual-title M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography; a dual-title Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Data Analytics; and a minor in Social Thought. A separate Ph.D. program in Criminology (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/criminology/>) is also housed within the department.

Course work outside the department is encouraged. Areas of study related to sociology, such as rural sociology; geography; economics; statistics; anthropology; political science; labor and employment relations; women, gender, and sexuality studies; biobehavioral health; and human development and family studies are available at the University.

Special department-related research and training facilities include the Population Research Institute (PRI).

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/>). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/admissions/how-to-apply/>). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Applications from students with either a B.A. or M.A. degree will be accepted for fall admission the following year. Selection is based on:

- official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (<http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>),
- three letters of recommendation,
- a résumé/curriculum vitae (CV),
- a personal statement,
- a sample of written work such as a term paper,
- and official Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) verbal, quantitative, and writing scores.

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students/>) for more information.

The best-qualified applicants will be accepted up to the number of spaces available. Students with limited prior training in the field may be accepted, with the provision that they make up background deficiencies in the early part of their graduate program in consultation with and under the supervision of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Acceptance into or continuation in the program is contingent on successful performance.

Degree Requirements

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Required courses for the M.A. are designed to enhance students' knowledge of substantive specialty areas in sociology, social theory, sociological research methods, and statistics and include:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
SOC 502 or SOC 503	Theories of Society I Theories of Society II	3
SOC 513	Sociological Research Methods	3
SOC 574	Statistical Methods for Social Research ¹	3
SOC 575	Statistical Models for Nonexperimental Research	3
SOC 596	Individual Studies (Computer lab accompanying SOC 574 and SOC 575.)	1
SOC 500	Introduction to Graduate Study in Sociology	1
Electives		
Students are also required to complete six elective graduate seminars, one of which must be a 500-level substantive seminar in Criminology, and two of which may be outside the department.		18
Culminating Experience		
SOC 600	Thesis Research	6
Total Credits		38

¹ Sociology department seminars in research methods and statistics assume a background gained through some combination of undergraduate course work and individual study. Students who are not confident of their basic statistical training may find it useful to pursue

foundational training at Penn State or elsewhere prior to enrollment in SOC 574.

For the M.A. in Sociology at Penn State, 38 course credits are required, no more than three of which may be for SOC 596. A minimum grade-point average of 3.00 for work done at Penn State is required for graduation.

Students must either complete an M.A. thesis by the end of their second year in the program or enter the program with an M.A. degree.

Doctor of Philosophy (ph.D.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Qualifying Exam

A qualifying examination is required of all students seeking the Ph.D. This evaluation by the departmental Graduate Committee is based on the student's seminar papers, their proposed dissertation research and record of course performance, and faculty assessments of the student's ability to complete a high-quality Ph.D. program. The qualifying examination occurs after the M.A. degree has been completed.

The Ph.D. committee

The student's Ph.D. studies are conducted under the supervision of a Ph.D. committee. The Ph.D. committee must comply with the Graduate Council Ph.D. committee requirements (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>). The committee must include faculty members having recognized expertise in the major and minor areas of specialization selected by the student, as well as expertise in general social theory, research methods, and statistics. One faculty member is designated chair of the Ph.D. committee; ordinarily this person also serves as general adviser and director of the dissertation. Students are strongly encouraged to choose a committee chair as early as possible. The student's chair can be of great help in selecting other committee members, especially members outside of the sociology department.

Students must identify and convene their Ph.D. committee no later than one semester following their qualifying examination. The Ph.D. committee supervises the Ph.D. student's course of study, comprehensive examination, and dissertation. This includes approval of proposed course work to meet requirements for the major and minor areas of specialty.

All Ph.D. students must have completed all courses required for the M.A. degree in Sociology at Penn State, or their equivalent. These include:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
SOC 500	Introduction to Graduate Study in Sociology	1
SOC 574	Statistical Methods for Social Research	3
SOC 575	Statistical Models for Nonexperimental Research	3
SOC 513	Sociological Research Methods	3
SOC 502	Theories of Society I	3
or SOC 503	Theories of Society II	
Total Credits		13

All Ph.D. candidates are also required to complete a one-credit Lab in Teaching Sociology (SOC 591). The lab in teaching sociology cannot serve to meet other Ph.D. requirements to be described subsequently, such as the requirement for a minimum number of seminars in Sociology.

Major and Minor Areas of Specialization

In addition to the specific requirements common to all Ph.D. students, students must complete courses in which they acquire competence in a major and a minor area of specialization. The major and minor should be chosen by the student in consultation with the Ph.D. committee. A record of the chosen areas must be filed with and approved by the graduate officer. The major area may be selected from the department's primary Ph.D. program strengths:

1. demography (including health and immigration),
2. family, life course, and aging,
3. criminology,
4. stratification and inequality,
5. sociology of education,
6. urban and community studies, and
7. quantitative methods.

Alternatively, students may develop their own customized areas that have included in recent years (but are not restricted to): race and ethnicity, social theory, sociology of organizations, sociology of religion, and collective behavior and social movements. Each student, no matter their choice of specialty areas, in consultation with the Ph.D. committee develops a program of course work necessary for preparation of the major and minor areas.

At least 12 credits of course work are associated with the major area of specialization. Course work is subject to the following constraints:

1. at least three courses must be listed in the sociology department;
2. at least two courses must be in formal 500-level seminars;
3. no more than one course may be in SOC 596.

The minor area of specialization is developed in the same manner, in consultation with the Ph.D. committee and with the approval of the Graduate Officer and the graduate committee. Students are required to take at least 9 credits of course work in the area selected as their minor. Earlier-named specific course requirements, such as seminars in statistics, research methods, and theory, cannot be used to meet the nine-credit minimum for the minor area. The minor course requirements also are subject to the following constraints:

1. at least two courses must be in sociology;
2. at least one course must be in 500-level seminars.

One course may be double-counted in the major and minor areas.

Comprehensive Examination

After completing all course work and before the period of intensive dissertation research begins, doctoral students must pass a comprehensive examination that includes written and oral components. Written components will be administered in a candidate's major and minor areas of concentration. Members of the Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination. The oral component of the comprehensive involves the defense of a dissertation prospectus.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

To earn the Ph.D. degree, doctoral students must also write a dissertation that contains original research and reflects their education in sociology. Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate also must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D.

degree. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

The Department of Sociology has no formal foreign language or communication requirement. However, students are encouraged to pursue additional training in statistics, computer science, foreign language, technical writing, specialized methods, or specialized theory that will further dissertation and career plans.

Dual-Titles

Dual-Title M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Admission Requirements

Students must apply and be admitted to the graduate program in Sociology and the Graduate School before they can be admitted to a dual-title degree program. Applicants interested in the dual-title degree program may note their interest in their applications to Sociology and include remarks in their personal statements, in which they address the ways in which their research and professional goals in sociology reflect related interests in Demographic research. After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Demography dual-title program. Refer to the Admission Requirements section of the Demography Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/demography/>). Students admitted to the Sociology program will be admitted to the dual-title program in Demography upon the recommendation of a Demography Program faculty member in Sociology. Ph.D. students must apply and be admitted to the dual-title degree program in Demography prior to taking the qualifying exam.

Degree Requirements

To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the degree requirements for the degree they are enrolled in Sociology. In addition, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Demography, listed on the Demography Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/demography/>).

Degree Requirements for the Dual-Title M.A.

Dual-title M.A. students must complete four courses in demography, one in each of the following pedagogic categories:

1. Demography Survey Course (if a population survey course was not completed as an undergraduate),
2. Demographic Methods Course,
3. Seminar in Demographic Processes, and
4. Population Studies Seminar.

Multiple courses are offered in each of these categories each year, and many of the courses can be taken within the sociology department and counted toward sociology degree requirements. Dual-title M.A. students must write a thesis on a topic that draws on research questions and literature from both sociology and demography.

Degree Requirements for the Dual-Title Ph.D.

Students pursuing the dual-title Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography select demography as their major area of specialization. However, dual-title students must complete a total of 24 course credits (12 credits, or 4 courses, at the M.A. plus 12 additional credits distributed among

pedagogic categories) in demography. Some of these courses must be completed in disciplines outside the Department of Sociology. All demography courses taken within the sociology department can count toward both the sociology and demography degrees.

Qualifying Examination Committee and Exam

The qualifying examination committee will be composed in accordance with rules of the Sociology Ph.D. and will include an evaluation of at least one Graduate Faculty member from the Demography Program. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role.

The dual-title degree will be guided by the qualifying exam procedure of the Sociology graduate program. The qualifying exam for the dual-title degree will occur as soon as possible after completion of the M.A. requirements. There will be a single qualifying examination to assess both Sociology and Demography. Because students must first be admitted to a graduate major program of study before they may apply to and be considered for admission into a dual-title graduate degree program, dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study and, therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable.

Ph.D. committee Composition

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>), the Ph.D. committee of a Sociology and Demography dual-title Ph.D. student must include at least two members of the Demography Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the committee representing Sociology is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Demography, one member of the committee representing Demography must be appointed as co-chair.

Comprehensive Exam

After completing all course work, doctoral students in the dual-title doctoral degree program in Sociology and Demography must pass a comprehensive examination that includes written and oral components. Written components will be administered in a candidate's major sociology area of concentration in Demography and the chosen minor area. The Demography representative(s) on the student's Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination. The oral component of the comprehensive involves the defense of a dissertation prospectus, which must contain substantial Demographic content.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. Students enrolled in the dual-title program are required to write and orally defend a dissertation on a topic that reflects their original research and education in Sociology and Demography. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

Dual-Title Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Data Analytics

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Sociology doctoral students seeking to attain and be identified with an interdisciplinary array of tools, techniques, and methodologies for social data analytics, while maintaining a close association with sociology, may apply to pursue a dual-title Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Data Analytics.

Social data analytics is the integration of social scientific, computational, informational, statistical, and visual analytic approaches to the analysis of large or complex data that arise from human interaction. The dual-title Ph.D. program provides additional training with the aim of providing scientists with the skills required to expand the field of social data analytics, creatively to answer important social scientific questions, and communicate effectively with both academic and nonacademic audiences.

Admission Requirements

Students must apply and be admitted to the graduate program in Sociology and the Graduate School before they can apply for admission to the dual-title degree program. Applicants interested in the dual-title degree program may note their interest in the program on their applications to Sociology and include remarks in their personal statements, in which they address the ways in which their research and professional goals in sociology reflect related interests in Social Data Analytics-related research.

After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Social Data Analytics dual-title program. Refer to the Admission Requirements section of the Social Data Analytics Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/social-data-analytics/>).

To be enrolled in the dual-title doctoral degree program in Social Data Analytics, a student must submit a letter of application and transcript, which will be reviewed by the Social Data Analytics Admissions Committee. An applicant must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4-point scale) to be considered for enrollment in the dual-title degree program. Students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Social Data Analytics no later than the end of the fourth semester (not counting summer semesters) of entry into the primary Ph.D. program and before taking the comprehensive exam.

Degree Requirements

To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the requirements of the Ph.D. in Sociology. In addition, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Social Data Analytics, listed on the Social Data Analytics Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/social-data-analytics/>). Within this framework, final course selection is determined by the student in consultation with academic advisers from their home department adviser and Social Data Analytics.

The minimum course work requirements for the dual-title Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Data Analytics are as follows:

- Course work and other requirements of the Ph.D. in Sociology.
- SODA 501 (3 credits)
- SODA 502 (3 credits)
- 12 or more elective credits in Social Data Analytics from a list of courses maintained by the Social Data Analytics Committee. Collectively the elective credits must satisfy the following requirements:
 - (A) Core analytics distribution. 3 or more credits in courses focused on statistical learning, machine learning, data mining, or

visual analytics. Courses approved as meeting this requirement are designated (A) on the list of approved electives.

- (Q) Quantification distribution. 6 or more credits in courses focused on statistical inference or quantitative social science methodology. Courses approved as meeting this requirement are designated (Q) on the list of approved electives. (*A Sociology Ph.D. student would typically satisfy this distribution requirement as a function of completing the requirements of the Sociology Ph.D.*)
- (C) Computational / informational distribution. 6 or more credits in courses focused on computation, collection, management, processing, or interaction with electronic data, especially at scale. Courses approved as meeting this requirement are designated (C) on the list of approved electives.
- (S) Social distribution. 6 or more credits in courses with substantial content on the nature of human interaction and/or the analysis of data derived from human interaction and/or the social context or ethics or social consequences of social data analytics. Courses approved as meeting this requirement are designated (S) on the list of approved electives. (*A Sociology Ph.D. student would typically satisfy this distribution requirement as a function of completing the requirements of the Sociology Ph.D.*)
- Cross-departmental distribution.
 - 3 or more credits in approved courses with the prefix STAT or that of a primarily social science department. (*A Sociology student would typically satisfy this distribution requirement as a function of completing the requirements of the Sociology Ph.D.*)
 - 3 or more credits in approved courses with the prefix IST, GEOG, or that of a primarily computer science or engineering department.
 - 6 or more credits in approved courses outside Sociology.
 - 3 or fewer credits in approved courses at the 400-level.

Students or faculty may request that the Social Data Analytics Committee consider approval of elective designations for any course, including temporary approvals for experimental or variable-title courses. Students are encouraged to take interdisciplinary courses that carry multiple (A), (Q), (C), (S) designations, as well as to select SODA electives that also meet requirements of the primary program. In particular, the 12 elective credits can be met with as few as 6 credits of appropriately chosen course work. Within this framework, final course selection is determined by the student in consultation with academic advisers from Sociology and Social Data Analytics. There is no formal maximum number of credits from the primary SOC degree that can be double-counted toward the SODA degree. For those meeting the SODA elective requirement with the minimum of 12 credits, the outside-program minimum effectively limits the number of primary degree SOC credits that count toward SODA at 6. Ph.D. committees may limit the number of credits taken for the SODA degree that can count toward the primary graduate program degree requirements.

Qualifying Exam

The qualifying examination in Sociology satisfies the qualifying exam requirement for the dual-title degree program in Social Data Analytics.

Ph.D. committee Composition

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>), the Ph.D. committee of a Sociology and Social Data Analytics dual-title doctoral degree student must include at least one member of the Social Data Analytics Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments

in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the committee representing Sociology is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Social Data Analytics, the member of the committee representing Social Data Analytics must be appointed as co-chair.

Comprehensive Exam

After completing all course work, doctoral students in the dual-title doctoral degree program in Sociology and Social Data Analytics must pass a comprehensive examination that includes written and oral components.

Written components will be administered in the student's major sociology area of concentration and Social Data Analytics (acting as the minor area). The Social Data Analytics representative(s) on the student's Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination.

The oral component of the comprehensive involves the defense of a dissertation prospectus, which must contain substantial Social Data Analytics content.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. Students enrolled in the dual-title program are required to write and orally defend a dissertation on a topic that reflects their original research and education in Sociology and Social Data Analytics. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

Minor

A graduate minor is available in any approved graduate major or dual-title program. The default requirements for a graduate minor are stated in Graduate Council policy GCAC-218 Minors (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-218-minors/>).

Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/funding/>) section of the J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants/>) set by the Fox Graduate School.

All students admitted to the program are supported with stipends and tuition waivers for either four years (students entering with a master's degree) or five years (students entering with a bachelor's degree). Support may be in the form of research assistantships or teaching assistantships, with most students receiving a combination of types of support across their graduate careers.

Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Sociology (SOC) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/soc/>)

Learning Outcomes

Master of ArtS (M.A.)

1. **Know:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate conceptual understanding of theoretical concepts, proficiency in quantitative analysis for continuous and discrete outcomes and predictors, and understanding of sociological approaches to a major substantive area at the level required to contribute to the discipline of sociology.
2. **Know:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate conceptual understanding of the ethical practice of research and research protections.
3. **Critical Thinking:** Graduates will be able to critically conceptualize and define the sociological aspects of a problem as part of sociological research.
4. **Critical Thinking:** Graduates will be able to critically analyze both strengths and weaknesses of competing sociological arguments at the level required to contribute to the discipline of sociology.
5. **Research:** Graduates will demonstrate the ability to design and execute a research strategy appropriate to answering a significant question having real-world applications in the field of sociology.
6. **Communicate:** Graduates will be able to effectively communicate a sociological argument, research design, analytic strategy, findings, and conclusions in formal presentations and in written works to scholars in the field as well as students at different levels.
7. **Professional Practice:** Graduates will demonstrate a commitment to active citizenship in the discipline, including engagement in service to the profession and society at large.
8. **Professional Practice:** Graduates will demonstrate a strict adherence to the ethical practice of research and professional honesty.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

1. **Know:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of major sociological theories, concepts, research designs, and analysis strategies appropriate to their MAJOR and MINOR areas of specialization.
2. **Apply/Create:** Students will demonstrate an ability to evaluate and critique empirical research and theoretical approaches in their MAJOR area of specialization; identify questions and testable hypotheses that will make a contribution to the literature in their MAJOR area of specialization; and formulate their own arguments based on integrating the literature in their MAJOR area of specialization.
3. **Communication:** Students will demonstrate an ability to communicate (in oral and written form) effectively to scholarly and student audiences; argue persuasively their positions; and contribute to the discipline through clearly written, well-organized manuscripts, proposals, and formal presentations.
4. **Research Skills:** Students will demonstrate an ability to devise a research design, conduct an analysis, and interpret results appropriate to the argument being made and the hypotheses being tested.
5. **Professional Practice:** Students will demonstrate an awareness of professional norms and rules of civility in their personal interactions and communication; awareness of and compliance with the ethical practice of research; and awareness of and compliance with

expectations of good citizenship in the organizations with which they are associated.

Contact

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