Sociology is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on the influence of social relationships upon people’s attitudes and behavior and on how societies are established and how they change. The scope of sociology is broad. Students of sociology study social groupings such as families, gangs, business firms, political parties, schools, religions, and work. Sociology students are also concerned with social issues such as poverty, conformity, discrimination, alienation, overpopulation, and community. Their common objective is to identify the underlying and recurring patterns of and influences on social behavior.

Admission Requirements
The general requirements for admission into the Department of Sociology and Anthropology graduate program are the same as those of the School of Graduate Studies. Applicants must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75 or a last two years’ GPA of 3.0 or higher. A personal goals statement is also required. Applicants should refer to the Graduate Studies catalog for complete details.

Degree Requirements
Our master’s program offers both a thesis and a non-thesis option. These two options are available to meet the wide range of student interests, needs, and future plans. These options should be discussed with faculty before making a final decision.

Thesis option: A minimum of 31 semester hours (sh), including the following:
• Sociology Proseminar, Classical Theory, Contemporary Sociological Theory, Statistical Methods, Quantitative Methods, Thesis Research, Thesis in Sociology, Directed Electives (9 sh)
• No more than 3 sh of readings (SOC 501) and 3 sh outside the department (6 sh for Peace Corps Fellows)
• No more than 6 sh of 400G-level courses
• 6 sh for thesis research and thesis writing

A thesis proposal must be approved by the student’s thesis committee before research is undertaken. A final oral defense of the thesis is required.

Non-thesis option: A minimum of 37 sh, including the following:
• Sociology Proseminar, Classical Theory, Contemporary Sociological Theory, Statistical Methods, Quantitative Methods, Sociology Non-Thesis Paper, Directed Electives (21 sh)
• No more than 3 sh of readings (SOC 501) and 3 sh outside the department (6 sh for Peace Corps Fellows)
• No more than 6 sh of 400G-level courses
• Oral presentation of a final paper synthesizing the student’s experiences with sociological theories and research while commenting on the relationship of substantive coursework in at least two graduate Sociology courses taken at WIU and the internship experience.

Internship option: A minimum of 37 sh, including all the CORE requirements and Directed Electives (21 sh). Successfully complete 16 sh of required coursework prior to registering for SOC 694 Graduate Internship (6 sh, max) and SOC 698 Internship Presentation.

Career Opportunities
Students with a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Sociology have an abundant choice of job possibilities. Some of our graduates teach in community colleges and universities across the country, while others hold governmental administrative positions such as those in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

The MA degree in Sociology qualifies individuals for jobs in government, human service agencies, and businesses which specifically call for a social science or behavioral science master’s degree. Community colleges employ MA graduates as teachers, and some universities employ them as entry-level, temporary teachers. The MA degree in Sociology also serves as a precursor to further study for a PhD degree in Sociology or other related fields.

Faculty Expertise
The graduate faculty of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology have been recognized at the local, state, and national levels for their outstanding performance as research and teaching professionals. Since the 1990s, more than two million dollars in research grants have been awarded to Western Illinois University’s sociologists from private, state, and federal agencies such as the Illinois DCFS, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Mental Health, Fulbright Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
Assistantship Opportunities

Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and provide a tuition waiver and monthly stipend. In return, students are expected to work 13 to 20 hours per week with assigned faculty. In addition, research assistantships are frequently available to students working on faculty research projects funded by grants and contracts.

Western Illinois University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversity. In that spirit, we are particularly interested in receiving applications from a broad spectrum of people, including, but not limited to, minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. WIU has a non-discrimination policy that includes sex, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, and veteran status.

Featured Alumnus

Rob Shelby is a doctoral candidate in Applied Sociology at the University of Louisville. He has served as a doctoral teaching fellow and doctoral teaching assistant for the department. In these roles, Rob has taught Social Theory, Introductory Research Methods, Social Problems, and Diversity and Inequality. He is the recipient of the 2015 Outstanding Research Award, 2014 Graduate Student Council Research Award, and the 2013 Graduate Teaching Assistant Outstanding Teaching Award from University of Louisville. He recently completed a program process evaluation for Southeast Christian Church, the seventh largest Protestant church in the U.S. His dissertation is an examination of the spread of large multi-site Protestant churches in the U.S. from an organizational perspective using Geographic Information Systems.

Rob received his Studies & Youth Ministry (2001) from Trinity International University. He earned his MA in Sociology from WIU in 2011. He will graduate with his PhD in Applied Sociology from the University of Louisville in Fall 2015.

Distinctive Features

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology, together with the Department of Political Science and the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, operates the Western Survey Research Center (WSRC). The WSRC is a service outreach of the College of Arts and Sciences and engages in survey, public policy, and opinion research for the University, the Macomb community, and the region. The WSRC provides Sociology students with an opportunity to develop their research skills through hands-on experiences.

The ongoing programs of applied and basic research, combined with a commitment to teaching excellence, provide the opportunity for Sociology graduate students to work side-by-side with award-winning faculty in an environment which reinforces the philosophy of “learning by doing.” Consider the following specific advantages:

- Excellent chance for assistantship funding
- Small classes
- Work closely with professors
- Teaching opportunities for advanced students
- Thesis or non-thesis options
- Increased job options and preparation for doctoral studies

Organizations

Students have the opportunity to actively participate in the Sociology Graduate Student Association (SGSA) and apply for membership in Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD), the International Sociology Honor Society.

Contact Information

For admissions process and general program information, contact the School of Graduate Studies, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1806, (877) WIU GRAD toll-free, Grad-Office@wiu.edu, wiu.edu/grad.

For specific program questions, contact the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455, (309) 298-1056, wiu.edu/sociology.