

The Whitman College Department of Sociology Departmental Guidelines on Professional Activity*

I. Statement

The Whitman College Department of Sociology strives for its faculty members to participate in professional activity that contributes to the overall academic mission of the College in the context of liberal arts teaching, and that furthers their own professional development and the larger intellectual enterprise within Sociology and related fields. Teaching is our most important professional activity, and professional activity is essential to effective teaching.

Being a faculty member at a small liberal arts college in a rural area is unique in that it both provides benefits for and places constraints upon professional activity that are not found in other kinds of colleges or universities.

The Sociology Department recognizes the importance of professional activity that reflects *diversity* and *breadth* in form, content, audience, and purpose. Additionally, professional activity *in interdisciplinary realms outside of Sociology* is increasingly likely and acceptable. Examples of these interdisciplinary areas include environmental studies, gender studies, culture and media studies, race and ethnic studies, social psychology, business research, politics, higher education research, religious studies, and criminology/criminal justice, to name a few.

The Department also recognizes that professional activity may shift in its focus over time – that faculty *at different career stages* may have different professional activity dossiers, in terms of form, content, audience, and purpose. Part of this may relate to faculty members becoming increasingly involved in applied sociology endeavors such as evaluation research, consulting, or serving on local committees devoted to social issues. It is not uncommon for local non-profit organizations to seek the expertise of a local reputable social scientist to assist with their own research and development efforts, and faculty in our department are often some of the first people who are asked to help. Because public sociology counts as professional activity, it is normative for faculty to participate in this kind of work.

Finally, Sociology faculty members at Whitman often participate in *collaborative research with students*. While this kind of work is considered part of teaching in the College's formal evaluation processes, it is important to note that this kind of collaboration can, and often does, result in professional activity in categories "A" and "B" below. This is especially meritorious, as it serves to professionalize the undergraduate student into Sociology and related fields at the same time that it keeps the faculty member involved in professional activity.

II. Guidelines

The Department of Sociology considers all of the following forms of professional activity to be valuable. However, faculty who are successful candidates for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor must be engaged in activities falling within Category "A" below, and will necessarily have demonstrated scholarly promise and progress in the area of peer-reviewed publishing. Thus, for example, it would be unacceptable for a faculty member going up for tenure to be missing any sort of accepted, in-press, or already-published peer-reviewed publication in his or her dossier. Faculty who are candidates for promotion to the rank of Professor will already have demonstrated professional activity sufficient to merit tenure. However, it is often the case that the more important scholarly work happens after tenure. Therefore, in order to earn the rank of full professor, Sociology faculty must present a record of continuing scholarly work, including but not limited to publications.

The following are considered meritorious professional activities in the Sociology Department at Whitman College:

A. Activities within and for the discipline of sociology and related fields that advance sociological knowledge in descending order. All listed activities demonstrate valuable contributions, but the College considers item #1 necessary for tenure and promotion:

1. Research and scholarship leading to peer-reviewed publication of books (including textbooks or articles or chapters in edited books), monographs, or professional journal articles in Sociology, or interdisciplinary work in related fields.
 - a. Journals: While Sociology Departments at Research I Universities have traditionally emphasized the importance of getting published in the “top-rated” sociology journals with very low acceptance rates (e.g., *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*), it is much more common (and no less desirable) for faculty members at institutions like ours to publish in more specialized and/or cutting edge sociology journals, journals that are published by regional professional sociology associations, journals that are devoted to sub-disciplines within sociology (e.g., theory, family, race, environment), and interdisciplinary journals. Journal articles in Sociology are usually between 8,000-12,000 words, and research notes are about half that. But the length of a manuscript is not necessarily related to merit.
 - b. Books/Edited volumes/Monographs: While acknowledging both the low degree of desirability generally assigned to publishing with vanity presses and the fact that the reputability of academic and popular presses changes over time, it would be appropriate for any individual faculty member to articulate and clarify the type of publisher for his or her book/edited volume/monograph.
2. Research and scholarship on the teaching of Sociology at the college level.
3. Serving as general editor of a book or monograph or series editor for journals and/or publishers; or serving as a guest editor for one or more issues of a journal.
4. Publication of book reviews or review articles in professional journals.
5. Publication of a manuscript in conference proceedings.
6. Writing peer-reviewed grant proposals and receiving grants from organizations that underwrite research and writing or other significant professional development. Writing a grant but *not* receiving funding is still a valuable form of professional activity. It is important for individual faculty members to be able to indicate what proportion of grants submitted by sociologists are funded regardless of the outcome of his or her particular grant application(s).
7. Participation in professional meetings including the presentation of papers, organizing and chairing paper sessions, leading workshops, and participation in panels.
8. Attending and participating in special workshops or seminars which are designed to assist the faculty member to keep up on current scholarship, pursue a new line of research, or develop secondary fields of scholarly interest.

B. Applied professional activities using sociological expertise:

1. Participation as an applied sociologist in consultation, publication, and research for general or policy-making audiences, organizations or communities, or presentations at local forums and public gatherings.
2. Formal participation in disciplinary and academic organizations, including holding offices and active committee and/or mentoring work for national, regional, and local professional and/or social issue-related organizations.

3. Participation in academic administration that requires theoretical and/or methodological skills utilized in sociological investigations (e.g., teaching evaluation, assessment, survey design, organizational analysis, etc.).
4. Evidence of expertise used in public media forms (e.g., interviews with newspapers or other media forms; citation of a faculty member's research in media form; serving as an "expert" in a popular media outlet).
5. Creative work that utilizes skills and methods present in sociological research and theorizing (e.g., art displays, publishing creative work, incorporating creative forms into traditional research projects).

III. Disciplinary Norms

In addition to information pertaining to form, content, audience, and purpose of professional activity, it is important to articulate publishing norms in Sociology and related fields. The following sections discuss norms about authorship, peer review, and online publishing in our discipline.

A. *Authorship*: Co-authorship is normative in Sociology. Usually in Sociology and related fields, if someone is listed as a first author, he or she is considered to be the primary author (unless otherwise noted). Sometimes it is the case that a pair or small group of authors publishes more than one manuscript together, and they simply rotate the authorship order for each publication. Sometimes authors are listed alphabetically (this is usually noted). The term "corresponding author" is not used frequently in Sociology, but if it is, it refers either to the primary author or to the author who is in charge of email/mail correspondence with an editor and subsequent readers. There is variation within the discipline of Sociology about whether students or other research assistants who perform data collection are entitled to be authors. This is something that individual faculty members would want to address in descriptions of their own work.

B. *Peer Review*: As with many disciplines, peer review is a criterion upon which considerable merit is based in publishing. However, it is also common for sociologists to participate in edited volumes, special issues of journals, and other professional tasks that are *invited* by scholars in the field. This kind of location for publishing may be regarded as equivalent to peer review, especially if the candidate can make a good case for it.

The peer review process in Sociology journals is most often double-blind peer review (the authors do not know names of reviewers, the reviewers do not know names of authors), except in cases when an editor invites submissions and does one or more rounds of reviewing her or himself. Usually between two and four reviewers provide feedback and recommendations to an editor to decide whether a manuscript should be rejected, asked to be revised and resubmitted, or accepted. It is very unusual for a manuscript to be accepted without any revision. The review process for journal articles can take between 6 and 18 months, depending on the editor, time of year, and reviewer delays. The review and writing process for books is necessarily longer and varies by publisher and project.

C. *Online v. traditional publishing*: Open access or online-only publications are increasingly common in Sociology. These publications take many forms and involve various types and levels of scholarly peer review. Individual faculty members who publish in open access or online-only publication should offer an explanation of the type of peer review their work underwent and any other relevant information. Recent presentations and workshops at our regional and national meetings are in the midst of addressing questions surrounding concerns about peer review in digital publishing venues, the wide range of open access journals now available, and other questions pertaining to online venues that are meant to offer sociologists ways to engage their scholarship more publicly. Publishing items listed in

category “A” above in an online format is the same as publishing them in paper version. Participation in blogs, news stories, or popular websites can be considered professional activity (with some justification from the individual faculty member), but would not be considered peer reviewed. Just as with other norms that vary within the discipline, the reputability and purpose of this kind of professional activity is something that individual faculty members would want to address in descriptions of their own work.

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**Some items borrowed or revised from Kenyon College’s and St. Olaf College’s Departments of Sociology and Sociology/Anthropology Guidelines for Professional Activity*