Sociology (M.A.), Medical Sociology (Ph.D.)

**View PDF of Medical Sociology Admissions Checklist**
Prospective students should use this checklist to obtain specific admissions requirements on how to apply to Graduate School.

**View PDF version of the Sociology catalog description**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Degree Offered:</th>
<th>M.A., Ph.D. in Medical Sociology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director:</td>
<td>Dr. Patricia Drentea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web site:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uab.edu/sociology/graduate-programs">http://www.uab.edu/sociology/graduate-programs</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Primary Faculty**

*Elizabeth Baker*, Assistant Professor (Sociology), Demography, Immigration, Quantitative Methods, Children and Adolescents, Family.

*Jeffrey Michael Clair*, Associate Professor (Sociology); Medical, Social Psychology, Ethnography, Applied, Sociological Practice.

*William C. Cockerham*, Distinguished Professor and Chair (Sociology); Medical Sociology, Theory, Mental Health, International Aspects of Health

*Shelia R. Cotten*, Professor (Sociology); Information and Communication Technologies, Mental Health, Medical Sociology

*Patricia Drentea*, Associate Professor (Sociology); Family, Gender, Aging, Methods

*Sean-Shong Hwang*, Professor (Sociology); Statistics and Methodology, Demography, Human Ecology and Urban Sociology

*Irena Stepanikova*, Assistant Professor (Sociology); health and health care, physician-patient communication, disparities, social psychology.

*Gail Wallace*, Assistant Professor (Sociology) Race, Class and Gender, Urban Sociology,

**Affiliated Faculty**

*Michael Flannery*, Associate Director for Historical Collections, Lister Hill Library

*Julie Locher*, Associate Professor (Center for Aging, Medicine, Gerontology, Geriatrics and Palliative Care)

*Michael Morrissey*, Professor (Health Care Organization and Policy); Health Policy

*Patricia Sawyer*, Associate Professor (Medicine; Center for Aging); Gerontology

**Sociology M.A. Program**
The Department of Sociology offers two plans (Plan I and Plan II) for the M.A. Degree

**Requirements for the M.A. Degree (Plan I)**
Plan I students pursuing the M.A. degree in Sociology must have been admitted into the Medical Sociology Ph.D. program. To be admitted in good standing, candidates must meet all Graduate School admission requirements.

Plan I applicants lacking 18 semester hours in social science courses will be evaluated individually for academic deficiencies. Supplemental coursework may be recommended by the graduate faculty. The program provides a Plan I (thesis) option. The M.A. degree is conferred upon the fulfillment of the requirements outlined below.

All of the following core courses are required for all students:

- SOC 701 Introduction to Sociological Research Methods
- SOC 703 Regression Analysis
- SOC 705 or SOC 711 Quantitative Methods/Qualitative Methods
- SOC 720 Classical Theory
- SOC 722 Contemporary Theory
- SOC 702 (3 continuous semesters) Proseminar on the Profession

2 or more substantive courses (these may be in areas outside of Sociology, subject to approval by the Sociology graduate program director)

Additional requirements for the Plan I M.A. degree include the following:

- 6 semester hours of thesis research (SOC 699);
- an acceptable research-based thesis; and
- a final oral examination based on the thesis.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree (Plan II)

Plan II is an Applied M.A. option which provides strong disciplinary training, along with internships and research experience, to prepare students for careers in business, non-profits, government agencies and the continued professional development of teaching careers. To be admitted in good standing, candidates must meet all Graduate School admission requirements.

The Plan II option is a non-thesis plan. A six-hour faculty-directed applied/community capstone project, undertaken at the conclusion of the program, provides an opportunity to synthesize all previous course material and meets the final requirement for the applied plan II MA degree in Sociology.

Students deciding to move into the Medical Sociology Ph.D Program will need to meet the core requirements from Plan I.

Students interested in learning more about the Plan II Applied Sociology MA should contact Dr. Jeffrey Clair, Director, Applied Sociology MA plan, 205-934-8680, or write jclair@uab.edu.

All of the following core courses are required for all students (18 hour):

- SOC 713 Introduction to Applied Sociological Research Methods (3)
- SOC 725 Applied Sociology (3)
- SOC 726 Applied Social Psychology (3)
- SOC 727 Applied Sociological Theory (3)
- SOC 789 Capstone Project (6)

Four additional classes are required for all students to fully matriculate (12 hours):
Medical Sociology Ph.D. Program

This program is designed to provide students with the coursework and research experiences to become leading researchers and practitioners in medical sociology. Doctoral training in medical sociology exposes students to the central issues of the field through a variety of methodological techniques encompassing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Graduate students study the social and cultural bases of health beliefs and behaviors, organizational structures of health care delivery, and patient-practitioner relationships, to name just a few examples. Students acquire expertise in theory formulation and data analysis.

There are abundant opportunities for graduate students to work with faculty on research projects in medical settings across the campus.

Admission

Admission to the Ph.D. program in medical sociology generally requires a minimum overall score of 1150 on the GRE (verbal and quantitative); minimum GPA of 3.0 (A = 4.0), or a 3.2 GPA for the last 60 semester hours in a B.A. or B.S. program; and minimum GPA of 3.5 in all previous graduate coursework. Students should have completed at least 18 hours in social science courses, including social theory, statistics, and research methods. Students entering the program with a master's degree can receive up to 12 hours of transfer credit that were not used for any other degree program (see graduate school guidelines). They also have waived 6 credits of SOC 699 (thesis research credits). Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the Medical Sociology Ph.D. program, students with diverse backgrounds in social science and health-related fields are encouraged to apply. Students lacking adequate backgrounds in theory, research methods, or statistics may be required to make up deficits after enrollment.

Advising

The Graduate Director and/or the student's faculty mentor will provide continuous advisement on academic progress during the student's graduate study, including assistance with course selection and recommendations for research experiences that are consistent with the student's developing interests and abilities. In addition, each year the student will be formally evaluated by the Graduate Committee and will be provided with performance feedback.

Research supervision is provided by faculty whom students select to chair the master's thesis and doctoral dissertation committees. Typically, the student will select persons with whom a close, supportive relationship develops.

The placement of Ph.D. students in research sites within the Department and/or in areas across campus is an important part of the Medical Sociology Program. Such placements usually involve assisting faculty on research grants. Such experiences provide students with invaluable real-life exposure to medical sociology "in action." As such, they are important accompaniments to the coursework of the Ph.D. program. Teaching and research positions are offered to students based on department needs, funding available and student merit.
Curriculum

The components of the Ph.D. program are as follows:

1. Required Coursework

Medical Sociology Core (9 hr)

Required:

SOC 780 Medical Sociology

2 of 5 Required Electives:

SOC 734 Global Health
SOC 735 Special Topics in Global Health
SOC 755 Race and Health
SOC 756 Gender and Health
SOC 775 Place and Health
SOC 781 Sociology of Health and Illness
SOC 783 Health Care Delivery Systems
SOC 785 Family and Health
SOC 786 Health Disparities
SOC 787 Sociology of Mental Health
SOC 788 Social Medicine

Theory Core (6 hr)

Required:

SOC 720 Classical Theory
SOC 722 Contemporary Theory

Statistics and Research Core (15 hr)

SOC 701 Introduction to Sociological Research Methods
SOC 703 Regression Analysis
SOC 704 Categorical Data Analysis
SOC 705 Quantitative Methods
SOC 711 Qualitative Methods

Research Hours

Master's Thesis Research Hours (6 hr)
Doctoral Dissertation Research Hours (24 hr)

Sociology/Health Electives/Transfer Credits (30 hr--up to 15 hours outside department)

Proseminars (3 hr)

Proseminar, SOC 702 - 1 hr Fall Research
Proseminar, SOC 702 - 1 hr Spring Professionalization and Proposals
Proseminar, SOC 702 - 1 hr Summer Teaching

*students may take up to 3 790-793 classes for credit as electives.
2. Graduate Proseminar Functions

The graduate proseminar series (SOC 702) is required of all entering doctoral graduate students for their initial three terms in the graduate program. These classes familiarize new students with departmental policies and procedures, as well as various facets of the profession of sociology. This series should not only help students become situated within the graduate program, but also give them an opportunity to become better acquainted with the faculty and graduate student body. Students should also gain experience with basic professional skills such as identifying appropriate journals, creating a curriculum vitae, identifying one's own research interests, developing basic classroom skills, and addressing ethical issues associated with the profession of sociology.

3. The Master's Thesis

Students pursuing the doctoral degree must follow Plan I (Thesis Plan) of the existing master's degree program by producing a research-based thesis, but two types of documents will be acceptable. The first is a traditional thesis organized in the form of an extensive book monograph. This option is especially appropriate for qualitatively based research.

The second acceptable type of document is a manuscript in the standard form of a journal article with appended materials. Specifically, this journal article thesis will consist of: 1) a forward which places the research in context, specifying the journal to which the article is to be submitted, delineating the rationale for co-authorship (if appropriate), and making acknowledgments; 2) a journal article manuscript with a text no longer than the page limitations of a journal selected by the committee, plus footnotes, references, tables, and figures; 3) an appendix with an annotated bibliography of relevant literature; 4) an appendix that details, in full, the methodological procedures; 5) an appendix of measurement instrumentation (e.g., survey instruments, in-depth interview schedules, observational logs, etc.); 6) an appendix of additional tables and/or samples of observational notes, and 7) an appendix of other research documentation such as survey cover letters, human subject review approval forms, and letters of support and approval from facilities at which the research was conducted.

The master's thesis process involves; 1) formation of the thesis committee; 2) oral defense of a written thesis research proposal; 3) oral defense of the completed thesis; 4) submission of the completed manuscript to the Graduate School, and 5) submission of the journal article for publication. The thesis committee consists of a minimum of three full-time faculty members, including one from outside the Department of Sociology. This committee will be responsible for guiding the research process, evaluating the final draft of the thesis, presiding over the oral defenses of the thesis proposal and the completed manuscript, and approving the journal article for submission for publication. In addition to meeting general M.A. degree requirements, before being admitted to candidacy for the M.A. degree, a student in the Ph.D. program in Medical Sociology must have completed the master's level core courses in theory (SOC 707 and 720) and two core methods courses (SOC 701 and SOC 703, or SOC 705 and SOC 711), completed two of the five courses in the medical sociology core, and made a successful oral defense of the thesis proposal.

For those students entering with a master's degree, the student's doctoral advisory committee will review the student's transcript, evaluate course transfers (if any), and devise a course plan. This committee also will handle the student's admission to candidacy and the requirement of submitting a journal article for review. The student with the master's degree will not be required to make oral defenses of his/her thesis work from another institution.

4. Comprehensive Exams
All doctoral students who enter the program in Fall 2010 or later must take a comprehensive examination no later than the end of the third summer after being admitted to the Ph.D. program. The comprehensive examination should be taken in a specialty area chosen by the student. The specialty area must be a combination of health and one substantive area reflecting the specialties of the faculty (e.g., aging and health, health behaviors, community health, health and demography, health and family, health inequality, health policy, etc.). The advisory committee will consist of three faculty members selected by the Graduate Committee. Prior to taking the examination, the student should meet with the advisory committee to develop a reading list based on the specialty area.

The comprehensive examination will include five questions decided by the advisory committee reflecting major theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues in the student's chosen specialty area. The student will answer four of the five questions as a take-home exam, which will be distributed at 4:00 p.m. Friday and will be due the following Monday at 9:00 a.m. The members of the advisory committee will grade the examination on a pass/fail basis. Students who fail the examination but wish to continue in the program must take a make-up examination in the following Fall Semester. Students who fail the make-up examination will be terminated from the Ph.D. program.

5. The Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation process is as follows: 1) formation of the dissertation committee; 2) oral defense of a written dissertation research proposal; 3) oral defense of the completed dissertation, and 4) submission of the completed manuscript to the Graduate School. In consultation with faculty, and near the completion of all substantive coursework, a student forms a dissertation committee consisting of at least five members, with two from outside the Department of Sociology. This committee will be responsible for guiding the research process, evaluating the final draft of the dissertation, and presiding over the oral defenses of the dissertation proposal and the completed manuscript. A student is admitted to candidacy after successful oral defense of the dissertation proposal and no earlier than the term in which the required substantive coursework is completed.

Financial Aid

All students admitted to the Ph.D. program will be considered for financial aid. Sources include graduate fellowships and assistantships.

Additional Information

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<tr>
<th>Deadline for Entry Term(s):</th>
<th>Fall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for All Application Materials to be in the Graduate School Office:</td>
<td>March 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Evaluation/recommendation Forms Required:</td>
<td>Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entrance Tests</td>
<td>GRE (TOEFL and TWE also required for international applicants whose native language is not English.)</td>
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Ph.D. Program in Medical Sociology [http://www.uab.edu/sociology/](http://www.uab.edu/sociology/)

For detailed information, contact UAB Department of Sociology, HHB 460A, 1401 University Boulevard, Birmingham, Alabama 35294-1152.

Telephone 205-934-2562

E-mail pdrentea@uab.edu
Course Descriptions

Unless otherwise noted, all courses are for 3 semester hours of credit.

Sociology (SOC)

701. Introduction to Sociological Research Methods. Overview of the methodologies used in social science research; major emphases include components of the research process, problem conceptualization, research design, measurement, sampling, questionnaire development, modes of data collection, and ethical issues in both quantitative and qualitative research. Prerequisite: SOC 410 or permission of instructor.

702. Proseminar on the Profession. Introduction to the profession of sociology. 1 hour.

703. Regression Analysis. Bivariate and multivariate statistical analysis. Prerequisite: SOC 701 or equivalent or permission of instructor.

704. Categorical Data Analysis. Analysis with dichotomous, ordinal, and multinomial (polytomous) dependent variables. Topics include contingency table analysis, logistic (logit) models, probit models, Poisson models, negative binomial models, loglinear models, models for counts, and models for limited outcomes. Prerequisite: SOC 701 and SOC 703 or permission of instructor.

705. Quantitative Methods. Prerequisite: SOC 703 or equivalent. Developing sociologically important research questions and identifying appropriate strategies to answer these questions in ways that are scientifically valid.

706. Advanced Longitudinal and Multi-Level Data Analysis. Topics in advanced longitudinal analysis including techniques such as repeated cross-sections, time series regression, event history analysis, and growth curve modeling.

711. Qualitative Methods. Gaining access to research settings; ethnographic field strategies; developing and analyzing field notes; in-depth interviewing and focus groups; the interrelationships between research and thinking theoretically; writing research reports.

712. Theory Construction. Logic of constructing theories; issues in the philosophy of science.

713. Introduction to Applied Sociological Research Methods – Overview of methodologies used in applied social science research; major emphases include components of the research process, problem conceptualization, research design, measurement, sampling, questionnaire development, modes of data collection, and ethical issues in both quantitative and qualitative research.

714. Survey Research Methods. Survey design, sampling, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and report writing.

SOC 715. Program Evaluation (3) – Topics associated with the use of social sciences to evaluate programs, including appropriate measures of quality; selection of evaluation methodology; accuracy, reliability and validity of measures.

716. Social Stratification. Theories of inequality; race and ethnic inequality, gender inequality, and international inequality.

720. Classical Theory. The major works of classical sociological theorists, including Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and
Simmel.


725. Applied Sociology – An overview of the field of applied sociology with special attention to current trends and issues in the application of social science in both for-profit and not-for-profit sectors.

726. Applied Social Psychology – Examination of how social psychological theory and evidence are applied to understanding and addressing social and practical problem on such topics as health, education, criminal justice, community, environment, and diversity.

727. Applied Sociological Theory. 21st century sociological theory at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

728. Teaching Sociology – Using current knowledge about cognition and learning styles to improve classroom techniques for teaching sociology.

729. Consumer Culture – An exploration of theoretical understandings of consumer culture from Georg Simmel to Jean Baudrillard and their application to consumer research.

730. Health Disparities among Children and Adolescents. Seminar focusing on socioeconomic and race/ethnic differentials in the health and well-being of infants, children, and adolescents, as the policies and programs aimed at improving children's health and reducing disparities. Draws on the scholarly literature in the interrelated fields of demography, public health, health policy, and sociology.

734. Global Health. Cross-cultural, comparative analysis of health and health care delivery systems in both industrialized and developing countries.

735. Special Topics in Global Health. Analysis of selected topics in the field of international health and medical sociology.

740. Deviant Behavior. Contemporary social psychological theories of deviant behavior; recent empirical findings.

745. Sociological Practice – Advancing sociologically-informed research and practice, to further public discussion of sociological issues, and to promote the use of sociology to inform public policy.


759. Social Gerontology. Structural and behavioral implications of older adulthood; relationship of older adults to political, economic, educational, medical, religious, and other structures in society.

760. Sociology of Death and Dying. Sociological, social psychological and existential perspectives on death and dying; recent trends in definition, distribution, and practices surrounding death and dying.

765. Patient Care Relationships and Ethics – The use and potential impact of applied social science research in the delivery of health care services.

770. Practicum in Innovation, Creativity and Applied Sociology – Directed activities that allow students to develop innovative ways to apply social sciences to challenges faced by society, business, and government.
775. **Place and Health.** Population distributions and spatial patterns in cities, the ecology of risk, neighborhood disorder and disadvantage and its impact on the health and wellbeing of populations and individuals.

778. **Demography.** Effect of population processes such as birth, death, migration, and marriage on growth, decline, composition, and distribution of populations.

780. **Medical Sociology.** Theory and research in medical sociology; systematic overview of relevant literature.

781. **Sociology of Health and Illness.** Social causes of health and illness.

783. **Health Care Delivery Systems.** Sociological methods and concepts in health care institutions; health care policy.

785. **Family and Health.** Effects of family structure and family process on health outcomes.

786. **Health Disparities.** Prevalence, causes, and consequences of health and mental health problems for disadvantaged populations; the stratification of service delivery systems

787. **Sociology of Mental Health.** Impact of life events and social supports on depression and other mental disorders; racial minorities, women, elderly, homeless.

788. **Social Medicine.** Socioenvironmental factors in etiology of disease; social movements and health policy; medical ethics and broad ethical issues; place of social science in medical care.

789. **Capstone Project (6) –** A faculty-directed research project, undertaken at the conclusion of the program, that provides an opportunity to synthesize all previous course material.

790-793. **Seminar in Sociological Substantive Areas.** Prerequisites: Permission of advisor and graduate education director. 3 hours each.

795. **HIV/AIDS and Society.** The social impact of HIV/AIDS in local, national, and international contexts; how society has responded to and changed as a result of HIV/AIDS, including public health surveillance and interventions, policies and funding for prevention/research, and broader cultural changes.

798. **Nonthesis Research.** Mentored research. 1-9 hours.

799. **Thesis Research.** Prerequisite: Admission to M.A. candidacy. 1-6 hours.

798. **Nondissertation Research.** Mentored research. 1-9 hours.

799. **Dissertation Research.** Prerequisite: Admission to Ph.D. candidacy. 1-9 hours.