About Essential Concepts and Competencies:

Over the past two years, each of the Measuring College Learning panels has defined a set of essential concepts and competencies for undergraduate-level learning in its discipline. Essential concepts and competencies are deep understandings and complex skills that faculty believe are fundamental to the discipline, valuable to students, and worth emphasizing given limited time and resources. Essential concepts and competencies should not be seen as fixed, universal, or comprehensive. Rather, they are meant to be reasonable and productive frameworks that can orient discussions about teaching, learning, and assessment.
**Students of sociology**

**should understand...**

**The Sociological Eye:** Sociology is a distinctive discipline. Students will recognize the following key theoretical frameworks and assumptions upon which the discipline is founded and differentiated from other social sciences: the founding theoretical traditions (Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead); a critique of rationality to explain human behavior; and how social forces affect individuals.

**Social Structure:** Social structure affects human action and social life at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Students will articulate the processes through which groups, formal organizations, and social networks influence human thought and action, and how hierarchy, power, and authority operate across these different contexts.

**Socialization:** Students will explain the relationship between the self and society, and how the self is socially constructed and maintained at multiple levels.

**Stratification:** Students will identify how social structures create and reproduce different forms of social inequality in human society through specific processes, and interpret empirical patterns and effects of social inequality.

**Social Reproduction and Social Change:** Students will comprehend how social structures reproduce themselves across generations, but also can change in cultural, social, political, and economic terms.

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**Students of sociology**

**should be able to...**

**Identify and apply sociological theories to understand social phenomena:** Move beyond “folk” explanations of social phenomena and invoke evidence-based theories of sociological phenomena. Employ the sociological imagination to analyze social problems in context, and to generate and evaluate solutions.

**Critically evaluate explanations of human behavior and social phenomena:** Identify and appraise basic assumptions underlying multiple theoretical perspectives; deductively derive theories from assumptions; inductively reason from evidence to theoretical conclusions; and effectively use sociological theories and evidence to suggest real-world solutions to social problems.

**Apply scientific principles to understand the social world:** Articulate the effective use of evidence; generate research questions and/or hypotheses from sociological theories and concepts; and identify the limits of the scientific method in understanding social behavior.

**Evaluate the quality of social scientific data:** Identify the characteristics of high quality data in sociological research, and evaluate multiple representations of data in public discourse.

**Rigorously analyze social scientific data:** Articulate and apply disciplinary standards for both the qualitative and quantitative analyses of data.

**Use sociological knowledge to inform policy debates and promote public understanding:** Use sociological knowledge and skills to engage with and change the world around them. This includes expressing sociological ideas in a clear and coherent manner in written and oral communication; demonstrating informational, technological, and quantitative literacy; and understanding the value that sociological knowledge and skills have for life, work, and citizenship.