

Sociology, PhD

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Mentored Experience Implementation Plan

As part of their degree requirements, PhD students must complete a program-defined Mentored Experience Requirement (MER) as per these guidelines. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plan (MEIP) is the written articulation of a program-defined degree requirement for PhD students to engage in mentored teaching activities and/or mentored professional activities, collectively referred to as *MERs*.

Mentored Experience Requirements (MERs)

Philosophy of Teaching

We consider teaching to be a critical component of our role as sociologists, and the PhD program aims to prepare students to be effective teachers as well as scholars and researchers. Teaching also develops students' competence and confidence in exercising the following skill areas:

- Becoming effective public speakers
- Translating content, theory, and policy to both scholarly and public audiences
- Using classroom experiences to understand their own roles as scholars
- Becoming effective mentors to students

Sociology PhD students have varied preferences for eventual careers, including jobs at research-intensive institutions, teaching-intensive colleges or universities, or non-academic careers. Our flexible MER allows students to tailor their experience according to their eventual ideal career path. For students interested in careers that include teaching sociology, extensive teaching experience and skills are necessary to obtain faculty positions. These students would complete three Assistant in Instruction (AI) experiences and we encourage participation in the Professional Development in Teaching Program through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and teach their own class (though the latter two are suggestions, and not formal MER requirements). For students who have set their sights set on research-oriented careers, the program seeks to provide numerous transferrable skills through their mentored teaching and professional experiences, and to facilitate opportunities to progressively develop and apply them.

Preparatory Engagement

Preparatory Engagement activities are those that represent an introduction to the foundational skills associated with teaching or communication. Pedagogical preparation engagement activities are normally completed before students are permitted to engage in assisting or teaching in a classroom.

We require three preparatory engagement activities prior to students' assisting in the classroom, and a fourth activity to be completed concurrently with engagement in AI. These activities include the following:

1. Students complete the Sociology department's one-credit Professional Development seminar.
2. Students must participate in and successfully complete the Center for Teaching and Learning Mentored Teaching Orientation, usually held in August.
3. Prior to the beginning of each AI engagement, each student will meet with the course's instructor to discuss the goals and needs of the class, as well as expectations that students will fulfill as a part of their course role.
4. During the first or second AI, students will also be required to complete at least one Foundations of Teaching workshop offered by the CTL.

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs)

Assistant in Instruction (AI)

An Assistant in Instruction (AI) is a PhD student who is directly engaged in the organization, instruction, and/or support of a semester-long course *primarily taught by a faculty member*. An AI receives mentorship from a faculty member related to best practices in classroom engagement, instruction in the field, interpersonal engagement, and other relevant skills. Students and mentors complete a mentorship plan prior to the start of each AI experience. To complete each AI assignment and to ensure that it applies toward their degree requirements, students must register for the appropriate course number for each semester of engagement. Refer to the "Required Pathways for Completion" section below for course numbers and details.

Sociology AI engagements differ depending upon the nature of the course but count for 10 MER units, which is estimated to be 10 hours per week during the semester in which they undertake the AI. Students and faculty will be expected to check in with each other (formally and informally) to discuss expectations for the AI assignment and to develop opportunities for the student to grow within the scope of their assignment. Examples of student AI engagements include the following:

- Course administration and managing/facilitating student correspondence (between students, to/from faculty)
- Attending class meetings regularly and participating in course delivery/activities as appropriate

- Student assessment (i.e., grading assignments and providing feedback)
- Delivering guest lectures within the course
- Facilitating class discussions or acting as a classroom engagement coordinator
- Maintaining online course components and resources (i.e., keeping the course's Canvas page up to date)
- Holding regular office hours/meeting with students for assistance with coursework and content
- Providing and promoting course- and department-related student enrichment and engagement opportunities
- Coordinating and supervising the activities of undergraduate teaching assistants for those assigned to an AI in a large undergraduate course.
- Leading lab skills workshops (for quantitative methods courses)

Mentored Professional Experiences (MPEs)

The MPE is an unpaid professional experience for PhD students that allows students to develop skills and experiences relevant to their intended career outcomes. Students and mentors complete a mentorship plan prior to the start of each MPE. To complete each MPE assignment and to ensure that it applies toward their degree requirements, students must submit the Mentorship Registration Request form for approval and register for the appropriate course number (ASGS 8120) for each semester of engagement. Refer to the "Required Pathways for Completion" section below for more details.

In an effort to best suit students' personal and professional goals, the nature of approved MPE activities will vary widely. Generally, students undertaking an MPE will participate in a supervised and sociologically relevant off-campus experience at a community agency or nonprofit, private enterprise, research center, or scholarly organization. Regardless of the entity with which a student works and the roles that they will be expected to fulfill, students' main objective within the MPE will be to utilize sociological knowledge and/or methodological skill sets within practical, applied settings.

Students who elect to participate in an MPE will be required to identify two mentors. The first of these will be a faculty member in Sociology who will agree to be their mentor for the MPE. Students will meet regularly with their faculty mentor during the semester and complete a final project of some kind at the faculty mentor's discretion, such as a report, reflection, and/or public presentation, that draws from the knowledge and skills gained through their MPE, to be submitted to and evaluated by the faculty mentor.

The second mentor must be associated with the outside organization at which the student is completing the MPE. This site mentor will be asked in the Mentorship Registration Request form to identify and describe tasks to be completed as a part of the MPE assignment — as well as detail the total hours of engagement over the course of the

semester — which will be communicated with both the student and their faculty mentor. The site mentor will also be asked to complete an MPE assessment of the student at the conclusion of the semester. This assessment will be shared with the faculty mentor.

Required Pathways for Completion

Students work with their faculty mentor and their Director of Graduate Studies to plan how and when they will complete their MERs. Students register during the normal registration period for courses in accordance with one of these approved pathways.

Students complete between 30 and 40 MER units. This is dependent upon if they take three AIs for 30 MER units or two AIs for 20 MER units and one MPE for 20 MER units. Students follow this timeline.

Year 1: Preparatory Engagement starts. AI assignments will be made late in the spring term, ensuring AI expectation discussions between student and their faculty mentor prior to the start of the fall AI assignment.

Year 2: Students will enroll in ASGS 8010 for 10 MER units each in both fall and spring semesters. Students will receive informal feedback throughout their assignment from their faculty mentor, as well as a "formal" review upon completion of the term's AI assignment. Students will generate and submit reflective self-reviews in both the fall and spring terms. Students will complete at least one Foundations of Teaching workshop offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Year 3: Students will enroll as an AI under ASGS 8010 for 10 MER units or as an MPE under ASGS 8120 for 20 MER units in the fall or spring term. Students interested in teaching-focused jobs and would like opportunities to apply for graduate student lecturer opportunities are encouraged to complete the Center for Teaching and Learning's Professional Development in Teaching Program.

Years 4, 5, and 6: No MER requirements. Students interested in gaining further teaching experience are encouraged to apply to teach courses independently through the College of Arts & Sciences Summer Session or the School of Continuing & Professional Studies. However, this is not a requirement, nor is it guaranteed that every student will have the opportunity to teach as an instructor of record. Students who are hired to teach independently for compensation can only do so after they have completed their MER.

Pathway #1

ASGS 8010	Take three times
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Pathway #2

ASGS 8010	Take two times
ASGS 8120	Take one time