

Citation for the Provost's Experiential Teaching Award

Andrea Noack and Paul Moore, together, have developed experiential and service learning as key components of the methodology and capstone courses in the Sociology B.A. curriculum. Through their efforts experiential learning is fully integrated into the foundation of the program.

Paul and Andrea teach research methods and statistics as a craft skill that is best learned experientially. Their courses incorporate first-hand experience, learning through trial and error, and community engagement as well as reflection and judgment; these skills are the methods for understanding and analyzing social action. This is an exceptionally rare and thoughtful approach to the teaching of research methods, especially statistics.

The result is that all Sociology program students have the option to learn research and statistics by participating in a project partnered with a community service organization, including Ryerson's Student Services. Their collaborative efforts have led Sociology students to experience personal, applied activities as fundamental to learning.

PAUL S. MOORE

Sociology, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
(416) 979-5000 x2064 psmoore@ryerson.ca

SELECTED EDUCATION

Doctorate, Graduate Programme in Sociology, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

Dissertation: *Rendezvous for Particular People: Showmanship, Regulation, and Promotion of Early Moviegoing in Toronto, 1906-1918.*

SSHRC PostDoctoral Fellow, Cinema and Media Studies, University of Chicago, 2004-2006

TEACHING POSITIONS

2006-present Associate Professor, Sociology, Ryerson University (tenured, 2009; promoted 2010)

ACS 301 - Research Design and Qualitative Methods

SOC 103 – How Society Works

SOC 107 – Sociology of Everyday Life

SOC 202 – Popular Culture

SOC 483 – Advanced Research and Statistics

SOC 490 – Sociological Practice: Capstone Course

CC 8920 – Theoretical Issues in Media and Culture

CC 9993 – Doctoral Group Directed Reading in Communications Methods

1998-2003 Teaching Assistant, Sociology/Social Sciences, York University

1994-1998 Instructor, Mathematics and Business Statistics, Centennial College, Scarborough (full-time, two years) and George Brown College, Toronto (part-time, two years)

SELECTED GRANTS

Paul Moore and Sandra Gabriele. “Animating Modernity: The Emergence of Weekend Editions in North America, 1889-1922”. SSHRC Standard Research Grant. 2008-2011. Value: \$93,000.

Paul Moore. Faculty of Arts Experiential Learning Grant. 2008. Value: \$4300. To support an undergraduate research assistant in producing a customized dataset for use in SOC 483.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Moore, Paul. (2008). *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Winner of the 2009 Robinson book prize of the Canadian Communications Association.

Moore, Paul, with undergraduate students P. Paul Hadian and Sasha Staples (2007). “Urban Campus, Urban Classrooms: Teaching and Learning Downtown,” *Conference on Experiential Learning,* Ryerson Learning and Teaching Office.

Moore, Paul, with undergraduate research assistant Nik Bhagat (2008). “Service Learning Options in Sociology,” *Conference on Community Building,* Ryerson University Learning and Teaching Office.

Moore, Paul, with undergraduate research assistant Hailey McCron (2008). “The Canadian Theatre Historical Project,” *Film Studies Association of Canada Annual Meetings.*

Moore, Paul, with undergraduate research assistant Greer Brabazon (2009). “Give-Away Gone: Ephemeral Inserts in Sunday Newspapers,” *Canadian Cultural Studies Ass’n Bi-Annual Meetings.*

Moore, Paul, with graduate research assistant Kimon Kaketsis (2010). “The Man’s Page: Manly Bodies and the Emergence of the Sunday Newspapers,” *Canadian Communication Ass’n Annual Meetings.*

SELECTED STUDENT TRAINING

Fall 2009-Winter 2010

Masters Supervisor (September 2009, Communication and Culture). Kendra Stanyon, “ ‘Victims’ of the Status Quo: Canada’s Ongoing Marginalization of Sex Workers”.

BA Thesis Supervisor (April 2010, Sociology). Tanya Farr, “The Interconnectivity of Research Methods, Service Learning and Program Evaluation”.

Doctoral Supervisor (in progress). Michael Thorn, Michelle Coyne, Margaret Mohr.

Doctoral Committee (in progress). Mattieu Feagan, Adam Miller, Sara Swain.

Masters Committee (in progress). Michael Novis, Caitlin O’Donovan, Juan DaVilla.

Matthieu Feagan (PhD Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Catherine Jenkins (PhD Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Kimon Kaketsis (MA Student, Communication and Culture). Research Assistant.

Rebecca Merchant (BA Student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.

Hellen Vryllesselas (BA Student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.

Louis Pelletier (PhD Student, Concordia). Research Assistant.

Caelin Lobay (BA Student, University of Manitoba). Research Assistant.

Fall 2008 - Summer 2009

Masters Supervisor (December 2008, Communication and Culture). Alica VandeWeghe, “Making ‘My Bed’: The Abject Art of Tracey Emin”.

Karen Aagaard (MA Student, Communication and Culture). Research Assistant.

Jeff Biggar (MA Student, Communication and Culture). Research Assistant.

Ellery Swinkels (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

Tanya Farr (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

Nik Bhagat (BA Student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.

Ashley Thorne (BA Student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.

Fall 2007-Summer 2008

Johanna Laing (MA Student, Immigration and Settlement Studies). Teaching Assistant.

Alicia VandeWeghe (MA Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Nik Bhagat (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

P. Paul Hadian (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

Hailey McCron (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant, Arts Experiential Learning Grant.

Fall 2006-Summer 2007

Matt Flisfeder (PhD Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Nick Anderson (PhD Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Alicia VanderWeghe (MA Student, Communication and Culture). Teaching Assistant.

Hailey McCron (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

Nik Bhagat (BA Student, Sociology). Research Assistant.

SELECTED SERVICE ACTIVITIES

2008-present *Faculty of Arts SRC Committee, Ryerson University*

2008-present *Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee, Sociology, Ryerson University*

2008-present *Student Experiential Learning Grant Selection Committee, Faculty of Arts, Ryerson*

2007-2009 *Curriculum Committee, Sociology, Ryerson University*

2006-2008 *Student-Faculty Liaison, Sociology Department, Ryerson University*
(precursor to the Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee).

ANDREA NOACK

Sociology, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
(416) 979-5000 x2249 anoack@ryerson.ca

SELECTED EDUCATION

Doctorate, Graduate Programme in Sociology, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 2008.

Dissertation: *Regulating Adolescence through National Surveys of Youth*.

Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, Inter-university Consortium for Social and Political Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, United States, July 21- August 15, 2003

Summer Programme in Data Analysis, Institute for Social Research, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, June 11-22, 2001.

TEACHING POSITIONS

2007-present Assistant Professor, Sociology, Ryerson University

SOC 104 - Understanding Society

SOC 411 - Introduction to Quantitative Data Analysis

SOC 481 - Survey Design and Analysis

SOC 482 - Sociological Methods of Media Research

SSH 301 - Research Design and Qualitative Methods

2004-2007 Instructor, Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University

1998-2003 Teaching Assistant, Sociology/Social Sciences, York University

1995-1997 Teaching Assistant, Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University

SELECTED GRANTS

Ornstein, Michael, Michael Baker, Robert Cribbie, David Flora, John Fox, Michael Friendly, Bryn Greer-Wooten, Georges Monette, and **Andrea Noack**. "Summer Programme in Data Analysis 2008-2010". Canadian Initiative on Social Statistics (CISS) Data Training Schools Grant (SSHRC/Statistics Canada). 2008. Value: \$150,000.

Milner-Bolotin, Marina, Tetyana Antimirova and **Andrea Noack**. "Students' Backgrounds & Attitudes toward Science as Predictors of Conceptual Learning" Ryerson SSHRC Institutional Grant (SIG). 2008. Value: \$6935.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Noack, Andrea, Tetyana Antimirova & Marina Milner-Bolotin (accepted). *Creating Positive Attitudes Towards Physics: Figuring out what Works*. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Toronto: June 23-26, 2010.

Noack, Andrea. (accepted). Assembling our Toolkit: Interrogating Representations and Discourses. In *Power and Everyday Practice* (undergraduate textbook), eds. D. Brock, R. Raby and M. Thomas. Toronto: Nelson.

Noack, Andrea, Tetyana Antimirova & Marina Milner-Bolotin (2009). Student Diversity and the Persistence of Gender Effects on Conceptual Physics Learning. *Canadian Journal of Physics* 87: 1269-1274.

Antimirova, Tetyana, Marina Milner-Bolotin & **Andrea Noack** (2009). The Effect of Classroom Diversity on Conceptual Learning in Physics. *2009 Physics Education Research Conference Proceedings* 1179: 77-80.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS (CONT'D)

Tetyana Antimirova, Marina Milner-Bolotin & **Andrea Noack** (2009). *The Effect of Classroom Diversity on Conceptual Learning in Physics*. 2009 Physics Education Research Conference, Ann-Arbor, MI: July 29-30.

Noack, Andrea, Marina Milner-Bolotin and Tetyana Antimirova (2009). *Closing the Gender Gap in First Year Introductory Science Courses: What Instructors Should Know and What it Means for Women in Science*. Ryerson University Teaching and Learning Conference, Toronto, ON: May 12-13.

Noack, Andrea and Jessica Ringrose (2000). *Teaching and Learning at the Interstices: The Possibilities of Queer and Anti-Racist Pedagogies*. Things Fall Apart? Bodies, Boundaries and Institutions: Sociology Graduate Student Conference, York University: Toronto, Mar 11-12.

STUDENT TRAINING

Fall 2009-Winter 2010

Sonya Basarke (MA student, Psychology), Teaching Assistant.
Samantha Bezic (BA student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.
Stephen Broomer (PhD student, Communications & Culture), Teaching Assistant.
Emma Colucci (MA student, Communications & Culture), Teaching Assistant.
Adrienne Landry (MA student, Immigration & Settlement), Teaching Assistant.
Rebecca Merchant (BA student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor & Data Manager.
Gaetano Nufrio (BA student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.
Janna Pushkar (MA student, Immigration & Settlement), Teaching Assistant.
Ashley Thorne (BA student, Sociology). Statistics Peer Mentor.
Eva Woyzbun (PhD student, Communications & Culture), Marker/Grader.

Fall 2008 - Summer 2009

Nathan Bugden (BA student, Sociology) Statistics Peer Mentor.
Ashleigh Ellis (BA student, Sociology). Experiential Learning OWSP: Undergraduate Committee.
Anne Herteis (MA student, Immigration & Settlement). Marker/Grader.
Sasha Mohamed (BA student, Sociology) Statistics Peer Mentor.
Vivian Ngai (BA student, Sociology). Experiential Learning OWSP: Undergraduate Committee.
Sergio Ortiz-Penarredonda (BA student, Sociology). Research Assistant.
Sang-Mi Suh (MA student, Immigration & Settlement). Marker/Grader.
Eva Woyzbun (PhD student, Communications & Culture), Marker/Grader.

Fall 2007-Summer 2008

Katherine Bulgarski (BA student, Sociology). Research Assistant.
Emma Colucci (MA student, Communications & Culture). Teaching Assistant.
Lynn McDonough (MA student, Immigration & Settlement). Teaching Assistant.
Vivian Ngai (BA student, Sociology). Experiential Learning OWSP: Website Designer.
Elisabeth Schieck (MA student, Communications & Culture). Teaching Assistant.

SELECTED SERVICE ACTIVITIES

2008-present *Curriculum Committee*, Sociology, Ryerson University

2008-present *Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee*, Sociology, Ryerson University

2008-2009 *Experiential Learning Grant Development Committee*, Arts and Contemporary Studies, Ryerson University

2008-2009 *Reviewer, "Arteries"* Undergraduate Conference, Faculty of Arts, Ryerson University

Collaborative Teaching Philosophy

We share an understanding of teaching that, unsurprisingly, is built around collaboration: amongst colleagues and peers, between instructors and students, and amongst students themselves. Our coordination of experiential learning across the Sociology curriculum is successful, in part, because we largely share an approach to teaching that has an *intentional* goal of professional independence for students; incorporates a *reflective* understanding of knowledge; *integrates* theoretical knowledge and technical skill with personal experience; *iterates* these principles across a curriculum; and ultimately has students *engage* with statistics as a ‘craft skill’ and a professional practice. Altogether, our teaching philosophy takes the practice of arts and sciences together as the production of knowledge, understood as a collective human effort that cannot be accomplished in isolation.

INTENTIONALITY – Our overall approach is to mentor students toward independence as researchers: observers, readers, interpreters, writers, and producers of knowledge. We conceptualize all of our teaching as collegial, if in a future or hypothetical sense. The aim of teaching is to see peers emerge out of students. Students’ ability to surprise us with new and interesting ideas and approaches to complex issues is there from the start, and emerges as they develop confidence in us as teachers and themselves as researchers.

REFLECTION – One of the ways confidence is nurtured is through reflection within an experiential approach to learning. Our design for undergraduate courses in research methodology includes independent research, combining comprehensive observations and reading with interpretive nuance in writing the essay or report. In the classroom, we model reflexive approaches to research and prompt students to do the same throughout their projects. When students understand how ‘scientific knowledge’ is produced and validated, they are better able to understand and critically assess more of the material that they encounter.

INTEGRATION – In coordinating our teaching of statistics, we strive to bring potentially dry numbers and formulas to life by linking them to meaningful elements of students’ lives. For example, in Noack’s course, students investigate the effect of a having university degree on future wages, and in Moore’s course, a more complex model is used to estimate the effect of having a social science degree, relative to other disciplines. We also strive to disrupt the ‘truth’ that many students perceive in quantitative or statistical reports by encouraging them to understand these facts as a cultural production.

ITERATION – This approach needs sustained, iterative reinforcement—it must be instituted as a curriculum, not just a series of courses. Our teaching philosophy puts collaboration at the centre, even as we maintain responsibility and independence in our individual classrooms: this is not team teaching; this is integrated, sustained cooperation between two professors. The success of our approach is evident on a daily basis in that students often treat us as interchangeable, dropping in to ask the one a question if the other is not in the office at the time. We also encourage our students to collaborate with each other – again, this is not simply groupwork, but a more sustained form of peer mentoring, discussion, and sharing of ideas, advice and results.

ENGAGEMENT – A key component of teaching the production of quantitative knowledge is conceiving of statistical analysis as a ‘craft skill’ that can only be learned through experience. Much as a student cannot become a good painter by reading a book about painting techniques; a student cannot become a good social statistician by reading a book about statistical techniques. In contrast to the idea of statistics as a mechanical practice, statistical modelling is treated as a nuanced, complex skill that is shaped by practical limitations and sociological ideas about how the world works. In our courses, students are actively engaged in the practice of creating knowledge, and thus they are motivated to learn and to succeed. The applied knowledge that students gain through this approach is not just practical, it is integral to what makes the knowledge gained truly sociological, in that students reflexively recognize their own power in continually creating and re-creating knowledge.

These ideas inform our overall approach to teaching, our integration of Service Learning components in our courses, and the initiatives we have developed – such as the Statistics Peer Mentor program. We believe that the voices of our students and colleagues in the following pages speak for themselves.

Experiential Learning in the Sociology Research Methods Curriculum

We strongly believe that research methods can only be learned through the experience of doing research. As such, we have integrated experiential learning – focussing on independent decision-making and reflexive assessment – throughout the Sociology research methods curriculum. Between us, we teach all of the methodology courses in Ryerson's Sociology program and in collaboration, we have created a logically sequenced experiential curriculum in these courses. All of the courses are required, and the prerequisite structure ensures that courses cannot be taken out of sequence. Our goal is to provide a strong foundation for the remainder of the program curriculum and to prepare students to become professional social researchers. Together, these courses give students the skills and opportunities they need to progress from doing relatively 'naive' research to becoming analytically-nuanced and critically-engaged independent researchers.

'Research Design and Qualitative Methods' (SSH/ACS 301; Moore & Noack), second-year social science platform

- Introduction to strategies for the empirical investigation of the social world and the research process
- Students engage in their own small-scale research projects, to understand concerns around the validity and reliability of knowledge
- Highly-structured research projects involve observational, interview and content analysis methods, but limit students' choice of research questions and sites of inquiry
- Essay-style writing combines descriptive reports, cultural interpretation, and evaluation of methods

'Introduction to Quantitative Data Analysis' (SOC 411; Noack), second-year, statistical analysis

- Develop analysis skills by learning basic statistical techniques
- Emphasis is on using statistics as a tool for understanding social relations, extensive 'real-world' examples
- Students' complete directed investigations using data from the Canadian Census & General Social Survey
- Service Learning option: teaching basic statistical concepts to students in a local public school, to increase confidence and reduce 'math anxiety' for both the university and the public school students
 - 2008: measures of central tendency and graphing; Grade 8 students at Ryerson Community PS
 - 2009: proportions, percentages and probabilities; Grade 6 students at Nelson Mandela Park PS

'Survey Design and Analysis' (SOC 481; Noack), third-year, active move into the role of researcher

- Designing and implement a small-scale survey project to answer a unique research question
- Emphasis is on independent, iterative assessment and decision-making, not on creating a 'perfect' project
- Reflexive evaluation of the effects of researchers' decisions on their analytic outcomes
- Service Learning option: students use small-scale survey research to evaluate a community program and experience the connection between research and downtown/campus communities
 - 2008: partnered with St. Christopher House (Youth Job Corps, New Hope Drop-in, Adult Learning Program and Newcomers Program)
 - 2009: partnered with Ryerson Students Services (ROLL, Tri-Mentoring & Academic Link)

'Advanced Research and Statistics' (SOC 483; Moore), third-year, multivariate regression analysis

- Doing independent research, selecting research question, Statistics Canada data set and analytic plan
- The 'craft' skill of data analysis becomes apparent to students, who learn to contend with the 'real'-world messiness of data and the resulting limitations on their own interpretation and conclusion
- Service Learning option: statistical analysis of a research question developed by a community partner, including site visits, interim consultation, and collaborative report writing and presentation
 - 2008: Lifelong Learning and Social Ties, for St. Christopher's House
 - 2009: Digital Inequality, for St. Christopher House
 - 2010: Mental Health and Housing Security, for Mainstay Housing

'Sociological Practice' (SOC 490; Moore), fourth-year capstone, integrate skills and interests from entire degree

- Independent proposal for major research project (which may become a thesis)
- May be related to plan of study and statement of interest for career or professional degree
- Service Learning option: explore an aspect of sociological research through targeted partnerships
 - 2009: Program Evaluation, consulting and mentoring Service Learning students in SOC 481

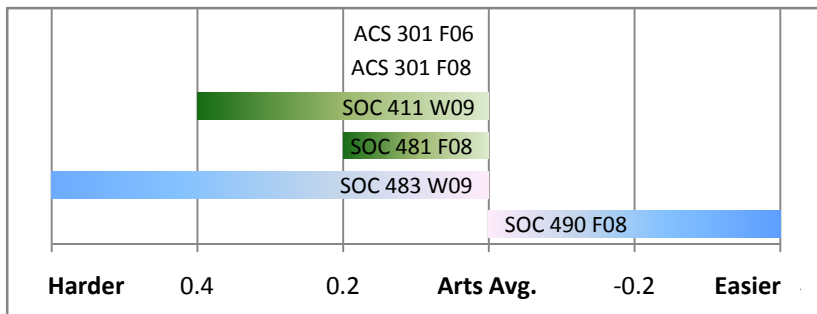
Summary of Teaching Evaluations 2006-2009

The tables and graphs below highlight our Faculty Course Survey results for research methods and statistics courses. The '0' point on each graph represents the Faculty of Arts average for each term. In Ryerson's evaluation scale, '1' represents Agree/Easier/Ligher and '5' represents Disagree/Harder/Heavier, and thus lower (negative) scores represent a better evaluation. Moore's courses are shaded blue and Noack's courses are shaded yellow.

As you can see, students rate the level of material in research methods courses as very difficult, and indicate that these courses require an above average amount of work. Despite this, students clearly feel supported in their work by both our own enthusiasm in the classroom and the amount of constructive feedback that we provide, which require an effort that goes beyond the faculty average. Although our course content often stretches students to the limits of their ability, students feel that they are treated with respect and that we are effective teachers.

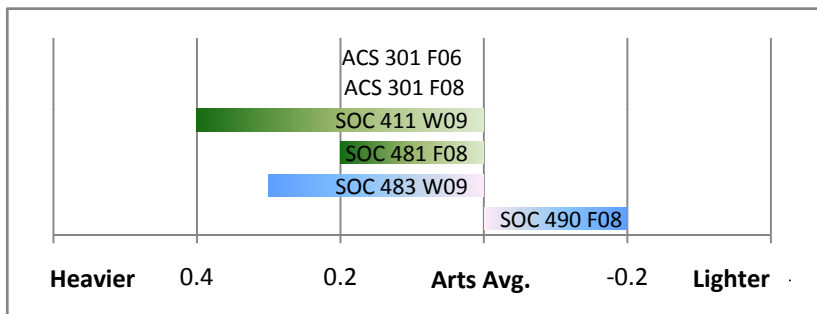
Rate the level of the course material.

PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F06	3.8	3.8
AN	ACS 301 F08	3.7	3.7
AN	SOC 411 W09	4.1	3.7
AN	SOC 481 F08	3.9	3.7
PM	SOC 483 W09	4.4	3.7
PM	SOC 490 F08	3.3	3.7



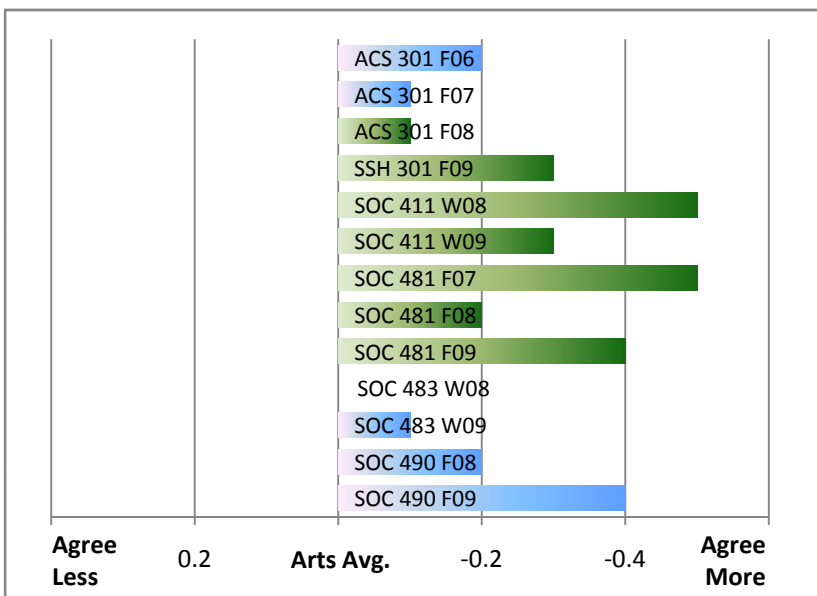
Rate the amount of the course material.

PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F06	3.6	3.6
AN	ACS 301 F08	3.7	3.7
AN	SOC 411 W09	4.1	3.7
AN	SOC 481 F08	3.9	3.7
PM	SOC 483 W09	4	3.7
PM	SOC 490 F08	3.5	3.7



Course material presented with enthusiasm/Faculty demonstrates enthusiasm for material

PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F06	1.1	1.3
PM	ACS 301 F07	1.5	1.6
AN	ACS 301 F08	1.2	1.3
AN	SSH 301 F09	1.1	1.4
AN	SOC 411 W08	1.1	1.6
AN	SOC 411 W09	1.0	1.3
AN	SOC 481 F07	1.1	1.6
AN	SOC 481 F08	1.1	1.3
AN	SOC 481 F09	1.0	1.4
PM	SOC 483 W08	1.6	1.6
PM	SOC 483 W09	1.2	1.3
PM	SOC 490 F08	1.1	1.3
PM	SOC 490 F09	1.0	1.4



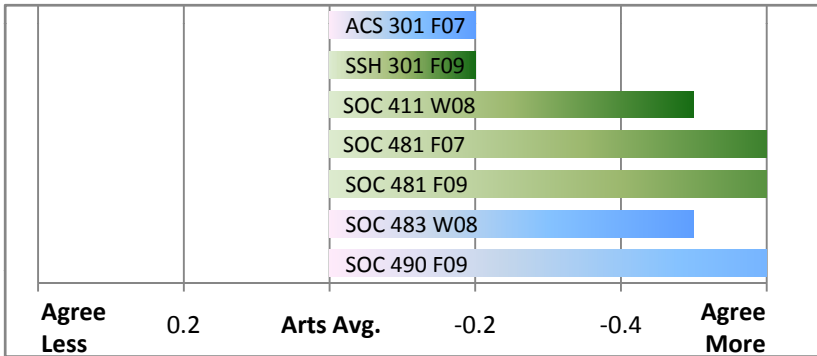
Courses: ACS/SSH 301 - Research Design and Qualitative Methods
 SOC 411 - Intro to Quantitative Data Analysis (Statistics)
 SOC 481 - Survey Design and Analysis

SOC 483 - Advanced Research and Statistics
 SOC 490 - Sociological Practice
 Response rates are on par with the Arts Faculty.

Summary of Teaching Evaluations 2006-2009

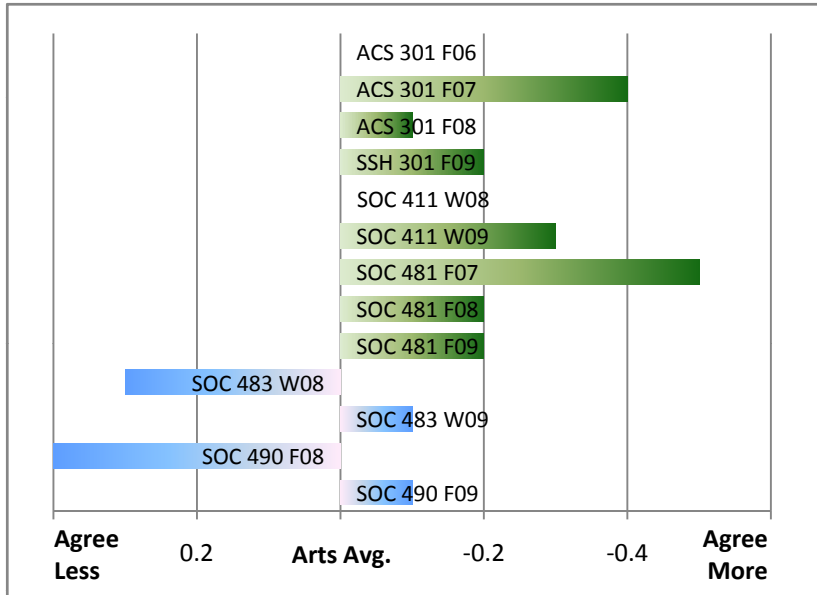
I get constructive feedback on my assignments

PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F07	1.7	1.9
AN	SSH 301 F09	1.6	1.8
AN	SOC 411 W08	1.4	1.9
AN	SOC 481 F07	1.2	1.9
AN	SOC 481 F09	1.0	1.8
PM	SOC 483 W08	1.4	1.9
PM	SOC 490 F09	1.0	1.8



Students are treated with fairness and respect / Faculty treats the students with respect*

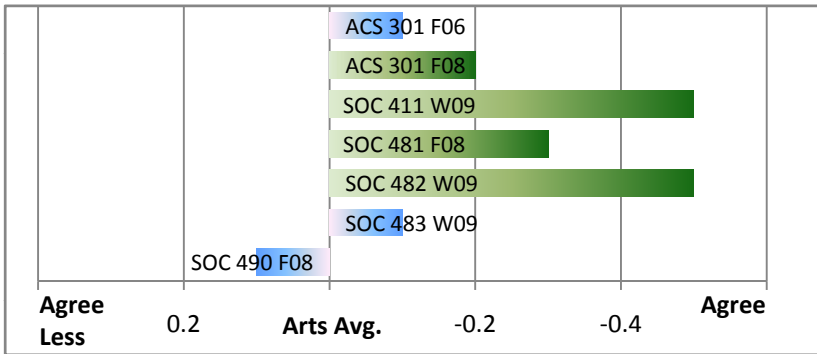
PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F06	1.2	1.2
PM	ACS 301 F07	1.1	1.5
AN	ACS 301 F08	1.2	1.3
AN	SSH 301 F09	1.0	1.2
AN	SOC 411 W08	1.3	1.3
AN	SOC 411 W09	1.0	1.3
AN	SOC 481 F07	1.0	1.5
AN	SOC 481 F08	1.1	1.3
AN	SOC 481 F09	1.0	1.2
PM	SOC 483 W08	1.6	1.3
PM	SOC 483 W09	1.2	1.3
PM	SOC 490 F08	1.7	1.3
PM	SOC 490 F09	1.1	1.2



* In this chart, you can see the exception of the first cohort in Moore's advanced methods courses, who did not have Noack for their Introductory courses. We hypothesize that without the foundation provided by our coordinated curriculum, some students found that the experience of having to defend their research choices was overwhelming.

Overall, the faculty member was effective

PROF	COURSE / TERM	PROF AVG.	ARTS AVG.
PM	ACS 301 F06	1.3	1.4
AN	ACS 301 F08	1.2	1.4
AN	SOC 411 W09	1.0	1.5
AN	SOC 481 F08	1.1	1.4
AN	SOC 482 W09	1.0	1.5
PM	SOC 483 W09	1.4	1.5
PM	SOC 490 F08	1.5	1.4



Courses: ACS/SSH 301 - Research Design and Qualitative Methods
 SOC 411 - Intro to Quantitative Data Analysis (Statistics)
 SOC 481 - Survey Design and Analysis

SOC 483 - Advanced Research and Statistics
 SOC 490 - Sociological Practice
 Response rates are on par with the Arts Faculty.

The Statistics Peer Mentor Program

In our experience teaching statistics, we noticed that many students lacked the computing skills needed to do their own statistical analysis, and that all students needed some technical assistance at least occasionally. These technical difficulties were a serious barrier to students' being able to engage with the statistical concepts and material. The problem was that these computing skills were not part of the substantive course material. Our solution was to draw upon the most technically-proficient students as mentors to others and to formalize this relationship.

In Winter 2008 we launched a statistics peer mentor program: fourth-year sociology students are hired through the experiential work-study program to act as 'mentors' to second and third year students. The mentors provide computing help during formally-taught statistics labs, and also hold drop in hours in the Arts computer lab throughout the week. The student mentors improve their own skills and confidence by teaching others; the students in the statistics courses report a substantial reduction in anxiety as a result of having peer support.

After the first term, the program was evaluated; the results are summarized below. Overall, about three-quarters of students regularly used the mentors and felt that they helped them perform and understand statistics better. This success led to expanding the Sociology statistics mentors' availability to students in another Arts program.

What aspects of the peer mentor program were most useful for you? How did having peer mentors affect your experience in this course?

- The mentors were really helpful in fixing SPSS glitches and more technical issues. Having peer mentors provided a really good security blanket (making me feel confident that if I had a problem, I could get help) but one that was actually useful and used! (SOC 411)
- I probably owe a lot of my understanding and success to the mentors. They were approachable and knowledgeable, and consequently helped me in my assignments. (SOC 411)
- The fact that they were there almost all the time. Having a peer mentor calmed me down and made me more comfortable cause they were more people my age who went through it. (SOC 411)
- They were able to help with problems with SPSS. Helped because they had recently taken the class and understood what we were going through because they went through the same thing and had the same problems and questions. (SOC 411)
- I chose to do assignments in the lab rather than at home so I could talk to the mentors when I had questions. I found them extremely useful and helpful. This course would have been much more difficult without them. (SOC 411)
- I thought it was good to have them around - that they had gone through intro stats before and knew what they were talking about. I thought it was a lot better for me to want to try to understand the stuff (SOC 411)
- The peer mentors being there every day made it easy to work with my schedule and they could explain things in simple ways because they had recently learnt everything. I enjoyed the peer mentors, they relaxed me when I was stressing. (SOC 411)
- When I was nervous about small technical things (that were normal) they helped. It was comforting having them there for the extra support even though they didn't have all the answers. (SOC 483)
- I liked the fact that the peer mentors were part of the sociology department and they were close in age which I could relate better to them. (SOC 483)
- They made me feel a little less alone. (SOC 483)
- For me it was most useful when the peer mentors were available in labs and able to sit down and help you with anything relating to the course material and assignments. The peer mentors help you to ask for help when you need it and make you feel less intimidated to ask questions. (SOC 483)
- I like the fact that the peer mentors were willing to take the time to explain concepts to better my understanding which is useful for analysis on assignments. I didn't feel as embarrassed speaking to a peer mentor as with the professor. They were really nice. (SOC 483)

The Statistics Peer Mentor Program

Table 1: During the past term, how often have you interacted with the statistics peer mentors:

		Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5+ times
During the course lab times?	ALL	6%	8%	27%	50%
	SOC 411	3%	8%	19%	67%
	SOC 483	10%	7%	37%	30%
During the drop-in hours in the Arts Lab?	ALL	12%	17%	21%	42%
	SOC 411	8%	14%	22%	56%
	SOC 483	17%	20%	20%	27%

Table 2: Students Level of Agreement or Disagreement with Program Success Indicators*

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Having the peer mentors available helped to reduce my anxiety around assignments	ALL	37%	47%	13%	3%
	SOC 411	47%	41%	9%	3%
	SOC 483	23%	54%	19%	4%
I planned to work in the Arts lab during the times that the peer mentors were available	ALL	31%	46%	21%	2%
	SOC 411	40%	46%	14%	0%
	SOC 483	19%	46%	31%	4%
The peer mentors helped me to overcome technical problems using the SPSS software	ALL	39%	56%	3%	2%
	SOC 411	50%	44%	6%	0%
	SOC 483	25%	71%	0%	4%
The peer mentors helped me to understand statistical ideas and concepts	ALL	23%	52%	21%	3%
	SOC 411	31%	46%	20%	3%
	SOC 483	12%	62%	23%	4%
I encouraged my friends to use the peer mentors	ALL	29%	60%	7%	3%
	SOC 411	37%	54%	6%	3%
	SOC 483	17%	70%	9%	4%
The peer mentors helped me to complete my assignments more quickly.	ALL	27%	41%	27%	5%
	SOC 411	29%	44%	21%	6%
	SOC 483	24%	36%	36%	4%
The peer mentors seemed more approachable than the professor when I had questions	ALL	11%	26%	50%	13%
	SOC 411	7%	33%	44%	15%
	SOC 483	15%	19%	56%	11%
The peer mentors had more time available to help me than the professor	ALL	15%	69%	14%	2%
	SOC 411	18%	64%	15%	3%
	SOC 483	12%	77%	12%	0%

* missing data is excluded on a question-by-question basis

Table 3: How important do you think it is to have peer mentors for this course next year?

		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important
How important do you think it is to have peer mentors for this course next year?	ALL	86%	12%	2%
	SOC 411	92%	8%	0%
	SOC 483	80%	17%	3%