

Department of Sociology and Criminology  
Reflective Essay  
Assignment

You wrote a senior paper on a sociological or criminological topic as evidence of your basic scholarship, critical thinking, analysis and writing ability. In this reflective essay, you are asked to integrate your experiences as a major in this department. Your essay will be approximately 1,250 words. Complete the following questions:

1. **Written Communication Abilities** (425 to 500 words - parts a, b, and c are each about 150 words)
  - a. How is writing a cumulative research paper different from writing shorter assignments in other courses (e.g., book reviews, essays)? Provide specific examples and explain why they are important.
  - b. What new writing skills or research techniques, if any, did you learn from writing this paper?
  - c. Did your ability to write as a social scientist improve? Why or why not? If yes, in what ways did your writing ability improve? If not, please explain?
  
2. **Characteristics of Inquiry and Action Conducting Ethical Research in Social Science** (425 to 500 words - each part is about 150 words)
  - a. Discuss the new skills and techniques, if any, you learned about conducting research appropriate to sociology or criminology.
  - b. What new key information or fundamental concepts did you learn about the discipline of social science broadly? What specific concepts/theories did you apply?
  - c. How did this key information or these fundamental concepts help you better understand sociology or criminology as a field, either professionally or in terms of communicating with people of different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, race and/or sexual identities?
  - d. Discuss whether and how writing the research paper helped you to understand the role of sociology or criminology and related institutions in shaping the communication of research?
  
3. **Critical Thinking and/or Ethical Reasoning** (425 to 500 words - each part is about 150 words)

Read this explanation of critical thinking then answer the following questions based on this explanation.

From "Exploring Critical Sociological Thinking"  
Author(s): Liz Grauerholz and Sharon Bouma-Holtrop

Source: Teaching Sociology, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 485-496

*"We suggest that sociologists' interests in different types of critical thinking can be broadly encompassed under the term "critical sociological thinking"... In other words, critical sociological thinking is not a broad thinking process applicable to different disciplines. It requires sociological knowledge and skills and the ability to use this knowledge to reflect upon, question, and judge information while also demonstrating a sensitivity to and awareness of social and cultural contexts."*

In the above article, the authors explain how others discuss critical sociological thinking as the ability to see the relationship between individuals and society and to be able to question power relations. Some also describe it as the ability to use empirical evidence to provide a social critique.

- i. Discuss whether and how writing the research paper taught you to better recognize and use your sociological/criminological perspective, connecting your findings to a social and cultural context.
- ii. Discuss whether and how writing the research paper helped you to understand the professional ethical principles of sociological or criminological research.