

UCSD Department of Sociology
Sociology Graduate Program
Approved Field Exam Topics
Revised & Adopted April 22, 2008

This approved list of field exams was recently revised and recommended by the Graduate Program Committee (GPC), and later adopted by the faculty on April 22, 2008.

The GPC considered two criteria for topics:

1. The topic covers an established sub-field within sociology;
2. and there are at least two faculty members in our Department willing and able to guide and grade a paper on that topic.

Although some of us work on the boundaries of the discipline and beyond, the graduate program in Sociology is committed to providing a solid foundation in the discipline of sociology through the training and development of its students within these approved field topics. Student wishing to be examined in a field other than one of those listed below must petition the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Program Committee for permission. Among the things the Committee will consider are (1) the department's mission, which is, in part, to prepare students to teach well-recognized, established areas of sociology, and (2) the relationship between the proposed field and the student's anticipated doctoral research. The petition must make the case that the proposed topic is a well-defined subfield of the discipline of sociology and that is not already covered by one or two of the topics listed below. In general, the Committee does not approve narrowly conceived fields and discourages customization.

Field Exam Topics

Comparative/Historical
Culture
Development/Political Economy
Economic Sociology
Education
Family
Gender
Globalization
Inequalities & Stratification
International Migration
Knowledge & Intellectuals
Language and Discourse Analysis
Law
Mental Health
Medical
Methods (Qualitative/Quantitative)

Organizations
(may combine w/ Occupations & Work)
Occupations & Work
Political Sociology
Race and Ethnicity
Religion
Social Movements
Science and Technology
Sexualities
Social Control
Theory
Urban and Community Sociology

NOTE: The university catalogue and graduate program handbook include the relevant details on these examinations; if you have questions, please consult them or with the graduate coordinator.

Field Exam Summary Points

- Eligible to take the field examination in the quarter student expects to finish required coursework.
- Field examination must be completed by the end of the student's third year in the program.
- Demonstrate mastery of two established, broad, and distinct fields of sociological inquiry.
- Faculty committee is no fewer than four departmental faculty, one serves as chair.
- Written part consists of two papers, one in each field, and a course syllabus.
- Students must constitute their field exam committee two months before the proposed date of the exam.
- Students submit one copy per member of a substantial draft, one month in advance to grad coord.
- Faculty read and comment on papers within two weeks.
- Completed papers submitted to committee two weeks before the orals.

The Field Examination Policy

In the quarter in which students expect to finish the theory and methods requirements, the three core seminars, and the four elective seminars, students become eligible to take the field examination. This examination must be completed by the end of the student's third year in the program. The object of the field examination is to demonstrate mastery of two established, broad, and distinct fields of sociological inquiry, selected from a list of fields provided by the department. The examination is carried out by a faculty committee composed of no fewer than four departmental faculty, one of whom serves as chair. The choice of fields and the composition of the committee must be approved by the Graduate Program Committee before the student starts preparing for the exam. Faculty from departments other than sociology may be added (or, if necessary, substituted) by petition to the Graduate Program Committee.

The demonstration of mastery has both written and oral components. The written part consists of two papers, one in each field, and a course syllabus for a course the student would teach in one of the two fields in which the orals are taken. The papers are critical reviews of the literature in those fields. In these papers, students are expected to demonstrate a grasp of key issues and debates, and of the broad, conceptual history of the field. These reviews are based on a bibliography drawn up by the student in consultation with relevant committee members and other faculty in each field. Students are expected to know the central arguments of all the books and papers in the bibliographies, regardless of the extent to which these books and articles have been used in the papers. Field papers must be a minimum of thirty and a maximum of fifty pages each, exclusive of notes and should include at least twenty to thirty books or article equivalents. The two bibliographies may not significantly overlap, either in literature surveyed or in specific titles. Students must constitute their field exam committee two months before the proposed date of the exam. Once the committee is constituted it can be changed for the exam only if a faculty member becomes unavailable. Students will have to submit one copy per member of a substantial draft of their field papers one month in advance to the graduate coordinator, who then distributes them to the committee members. Faculty, in turn, will commit to read and comment on the papers in two weeks time.

Completed field papers (as opposed to drafts) and the syllabus must be submitted to the committee two weeks before the orals or the orals cannot go forward.

The oral part lasts two hours and covers both fields. It is given by the examining committee, sitting as a whole, and is based on the bibliographies, papers, and course syllabus submitted by the student. The exam does not focus on the papers, but on the students' knowledge of the fields. Following the oral examination, the committee evaluates the student on the basis of both the written and the oral components of the examination. Possible grades are high pass, pass, conditional pass, and no pass. High pass recognizes exceptional performance. Conditional pass indicates that the committee has passed the student pending the completion of additional work. Students receiving a grade of no pass will have an opportunity to retake the examination one time, should they so desire, no later than the end of the subsequent quarter. Students electing not to retake the examination or receiving a grade of no pass a second time will be asked to withdraw from the graduate program.