ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

Sociology is the study of society, including individuals, groups, social institutions, and the connections among them. This requires us to consider how the past and the present, the local and the global, and the personal and the social intersect to influence our interactions and experiences. The study of sociology focuses on social forces and emphasizes critical thinking about social class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and the social institutions in which we live, including education, family, religion, politics, and the economy. The Department of Sociology at Washington College accomplishes this through a variety of courses, such as Social Inequalities, Sociology of Family, Criminology, Self and Society, Variant Behavior, Global Health Disparities, and Environmental Sociology. These courses, along with core courses in Social Theory, Research Methods, and Statistics, will give students the tools to better understand the world around them.

THE MAJOR

Students who major in sociology will take Introduction to Sociology, Research Methods in Sociology, Social Theory, and a statistics course. In addition to the Senior Capstone, students take a two-semester Senior Seminar in their final year. The major is completed with five electives in the department. Faculty are happy to assist students who wish to double major by helping to map their course schedules and capstone requirements in order to meet the requirements of both plans of study.

CONCENTRATIONS

Students who major in sociology also have the option to complete a concentration in Social Welfare through their major electives.

• Social Welfare: The courses within the social welfare concentration explore both the history and evolution of social welfare programs and the development of social work and other helping professions that practice in the community. Building on psychological and sociological theory, the courses afford students the opportunity to see theory in practice. Those who take the field experience work for a year in a social agency with staff in clinical situations and develop beginning skills that can help them in entry-level positions if they seek work in human services.

INTERNSHIPS

As part of their undergraduate education, 65% of Washington College students complete internships. These applied experiences allow students the opportunity to learn how the skills and abilities they develop in their sociology courses can be put to use in the real world. Completing a summer or semester internship also allows students to explore career areas and refine plans for work, education, and their goals beyond their years at WC.

Students interested in internships may consult with their advisor and the college’s Center for Career Development to identify or develop both credit and non-credit internships as part of their academic experience. Some recent internship experiences have taken place with:

• Kent Family Center
• Kent County Behavioral Health
• Kent County Local Management Board
• Kent County Adult Medical Day Care
• Eastern Shore Food Lab
• Food Recovery Network
• Smithsonian Institutions

MINORS

Many of the courses offered in sociology at Washington College are also cross-listed with interdisciplinary programs, including Justice, Law and Society and Public Health.

• Justice, Law and Society: The minor draws from the academic fields of anthropology, business management, criminology, philosophy, and political science and provides students with national and global perspectives on justice and law issues.

• Public Health: Public health encompasses a diverse array of fields, as reflected in the interdisciplinary nature of all public health programs. This minor is designed to help students become familiar with the multidisciplinary nature of public health work, increase their awareness of the opportunities available in this diverse field, and inspire them to discover lives of purpose and passion through careers in health and medicine.

THESIS

The Sociology Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) is an independent research project, on a topic of the student’s choosing, undertaken with the close guidance of a faculty thesis advisor and with the support of the Sociology Senior Seminar. Each student defines a problem or question he or she is interested in investigating and then employs a wide range of knowledge, skills, and quantitative and qualitative reasoning gained from previous coursework to answer that question.
STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

Regional conferences such as the Eastern Sociological Society provide an excellent opportunity for students to share their outstanding Senior Capstone research. By attending and presenting their research at conferences, students are given the opportunity to discuss their research with experienced sociologists. This exchange helps students to think critically about their own work and about the real-world impact their research can have.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A SOCIOLOGY DEGREE?

Students who major in sociology develop a set of skills that can be used in a wide variety of careers. An education in sociology teaches students how to conduct research and analyze data, engage in critical thinking, problem-solve, work collaboratively, and appreciate diversity and global perspectives. Washington College students also develop strong oral and written communication skills that are valued in graduate programs and by employers. All of these skills are highly appreciated in careers in business, non-profit agencies, government and non-governmental organizations, education, the criminal justice and legal systems, journalism, health and medicine, and more.

ALPHA KAPPA DELTA

Alpha Kappa Delta is an international society of scholars dedicated to the idea of investigating humanity for the purpose of service. Only the most advanced undergraduate students in the discipline are eligible for membership. Members must be at least juniors majoring or minoring in sociology, have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 as well as a GPA of 3.0 in sociology coursework, and must have taken a minimum of 4 sociology courses at Washington College. Of students meeting these requirements, only those in the top 35% in their academic class are eligible to join AKD.

Members have the opportunity to take advantage of the society’s benefits and opportunities, including a subscription to the honor society’s official journal, Sociological Inquiry, participation in student paper competitions, and access to travel funds to attend regional sociology meetings. The benefits of membership extend beyond graduation as well. For students applying for admission to graduate programs, membership in AKD is regarded as an excellent accomplishment. For applicants of civil service positions with the U.S. government, membership in a qualifying honor society, including AKD, may make one eligible to receive a two-step boost in pay as a GS-7 grade.

Nicholas O’Meally ’15

Sociology and Theatre Major

Current job: Family Services Clinician, Uplift Center for Grieving Children in Philadelphia

Graduate School: Master’s Degree in Social Work, University of Pennsylvania

“My background in sociology aided me in my ability to discuss topics such as socioeconomics and cultural competency with my [graduate school] peers, and being able to analyze the ways in which we are influenced and labeled by society aided me in seeing the realities of my clients. Additionally, my undergraduate studies in feminist theory helped me look closer at the ways in which men talk about mental health differently from women.

Sociology taught me how to confront the racial and economic biases we all inherently have, and that we must look further into why society deems certain behaviors as more acceptable than others. In my everyday practice, I must confront expectations I may have [when interacting with clients]. Sociology not only challenged me to look at our world from a detached lens, but prepared me for a career in social work by forcing me to remove my own values while helping others improve their lives.”