The Department has articulated student learning goals and specific learning objectives are stated that reflect each goal that will be assessed:

At the beginning of this Teagle grant process, the Sociology Department met collectively as a faculty to articulate what our overall learning goals were for our students throughout the major. This was a thoughtful series of truly collaborative conversations; conversations which seemed to indicate, perhaps to our surprise, that we had a strong consensus within our department regarding WHAT content and skills we wanted our students to master. We then tasked one member of our department with drafting a list of learning goals based on her notes from our conversations. That draft was then circulated to the whole department for comment over e-mail, finalized, and re-affirmed in a collective department meeting. Here is an excerpt from that document. Learning Goals are bolded and learning objectives for each goal are numbered beneath each bolded section:

(Beginning of excerpt)

Introduction:
Central to the discipline and our department’s educational mission is the sociological imagination—the linking of individual experience and biography to broader historical and social processes and institutions. Developing a sociological imagination involves a range of educational objectives that create very different assessment challenges. For example, assessing students’ understanding of certain types of statistical analysis is relatively straightforward and can often be accomplished in a single course. By contrast, assessing their ability to interpret sociological data or to formulate a sociological question is a considerably more complicated and subjective endeavor—a multi-stage process that unfolds as students make their way through the major. By the completion of the major, however, all graduating sociology majors should be competent in the skills listed below.

A graduating major should be well-versed in the sociological canon and be able to:

1. identify the historical circumstances and social changes that contributed to the development of sociology, many of which remain central to the discipline.
2. identify current and past social theorists that have shaped the discipline theoretically and methodologically, and be able to describe, compare, and apply their ideas.
3. identify and discuss the ideas of other social theorists who made significant contributions, but whose ideas have not conventionally been included as part of the sociological core.
4. analyze and discuss the experiences of diverse cultures, populations and perspectives from the US and abroad.
A graduating major should think sociologically. Specifically, s/he should be able to:

5. distinguish between and think across different levels of analysis: micro (individual), meso (institutional) and macro (national/global/cultural).
6. distinguish between responsible and irresponsible generalization, and engage in the former.
7. think reflexively and sociologically about their own cultural biases and social location, and how these factors may shape their own sociological analysis.
8. Pursue a research question through systematic sociological analysis, including theorizing, conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, and data-gathering.
9. Apply sociological theory and analysis to contemporary social issues, problems, and policy.

A graduating sociology major should be able to follow and contribute to the ongoing sociological conversation. Specifically s/he should be able to:

10. read and comprehend the various methods used by sociologists to conduct research (statistical, content analysis, ethnography, textual analysis, socio-historical analysis) and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each.
11. organize ideas and research into presentations (both written and oral) that are well-argued, clear, and insightful.

(End of excerpt)

After much deliberation, we decided to focus our efforts on assessing a single course, our required Junior Seminar. The purpose of the Junior Writing Seminar is threefold:

To expose students to the basic mechanics involved with a variety of non-statistical research methods used by contemporary sociologists

For each student to identify their own sociological research question and propose a research methodology designed to answer this question, situated in the relevant sociological body of literature

To learn the conventions of sociological writing and to effectively practice them in the aforementioned research proposal

These course goals align most closely with Departmental Objectives 6, 8, 10, and 11 listed above. This is not an exhaustive list of all Departmental Goals or Objectives that occur in this course, only the most prominent. Furthermore, this course is not the only place in the curriculum where any one of these objectives exists but it is the course where they all are addressed most explicitly. These goals and objectives constitute those focused on for the purposes of this grant.
Strategies used to achieve learning objectives are identified

6. Distinguish between responsible and irresponsible generalization, and engage in the former.

Students will be assigned a set of readings for each methodological approach used in the discipline of sociology. The readings for each methodology will be of two types. First, students will read how-to pieces written by and for professional sociologists that address how the methodology is to be carried out and how its careful execution can lead to limited and responsible forms of generalization. Second, students will read exceptional empirical examples of each particular methodology that have been recently published in the top journals in the field. Class lecture and discussion will highlight the generalizability claims made in each article.

Throughout the course, the generalization strategies of the various methodologies will compared and contrasted. The generalization principles common to all of them will be made explicit, as will the kinds of generalization that can and cannot be made with each individual approach.

During class discussion, students will brainstorm together how they could use each methodology to explore questions of interest to them, paying special attention to how each research decision has consequences for the types of generalized knowledge that will result.

Students will state clearly and explicitly in their final research proposal what they intend to be generalizable from the data they propose to collect and analyze. They will submit rough drafts of this paper to both the professor and their peers to ensure that this component is strongly present and responsible.

8. Pursue a research question through systematic sociological analysis, including theorizing, conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, and data-gathering.

In addition to the readings mentioned above, students will also read big picture pieces on how to identify and narrow a research question, and how to write an effective research proposal. These will be spaced throughout the semester and correspond to a series of assignments that will facilitate students writing a final research proposal that explicitly outlines a strategy for gathering and analyzing data that answers a sufficiently narrow question that is situated in a relevant sociological literature. These assignments will include:

**Six mini-proposals brainstorm:** Come up with a general topic and then 3 different potential subtopics within that general topic. For each subtopic, discuss 2 different research projects that would explore that subtopic in detail.

**Freewriting 1:** Quickly write down what research question(s) most animate you and why they interest you.

**Preliminary annotated bibliography:** Identify at least 5 scholarly journal articles or books that are directly related to your topic. Describe their goals, research strategy, data, findings, and how they inform your ideas about your proposal.
Freewriting 2: Quickly writing down your thoughts on what your project is about and how it will contribute to the literature you’ve been reading all semester.

Exhaustive literature review and bibliography: A complete literature review of your research topic, synthesized specifically for your project.

IRB Proposal: A completed proposal for IRB approval of your project.

Peer-reviewed rough draft of final proposal: Write a rough draft of your proposal, complete with detailed literature review. Pair off with a fellow student and review each other’s proposals in detail according to guidelines we provide. Submit both your draft and your review of their draft.

10. Read and comprehend the various methods used by sociologists to conduct research (statistical, content analysis, ethnography, textual analysis, socio-historical analysis) and appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of each.

When reading the readings discussed for Objective 6 above, students will engage with the different methodologies and be guided by the professor in mastering the techniques involved and becoming aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Students will practice at least three of the methodologies via mini research projects over the course of the semester and write up their reflections on their experience.

Students will select the best methodology to use to answer their research question and justify their selection in the written proposal.

11. Organize ideas and research into presentations (both written and oral) that are well-argued, clear, and insightful.

Students will orally present their ideas to their peers and to the instructor on a weekly basis, culminating in a final oral presentation of their research proposal. Instruction will be provided regarding HOW to present ideas both orally and in writing.

Students will peer-review multiple drafts of their initial literature review and final research proposal.

Students will submit a final research proposal.

Direct assessment is used

All the assignments mentioned in the previous section will be directly assessed by the professor via written feedback to the students, with explicit attention paid to the goals and objectives mentioned above. In addition, many of the assignments will also be directly assessed by fellow students, with guidance provided to the students regarding what and how they are to be assessing their peers.

The final research proposal will be assessed according to the following rubric.
<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Emergent</th>
<th>Strong</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question</strong></td>
<td>- Research question is never clearly stated</td>
<td>- Research question is eventually made clear, but only after significant reading or after significant effort on the part of the reader to extract it from the text</td>
<td>- Research question is stated clearly at the very beginning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Question is stated but is utterly simplistic</td>
<td>- Question is fleshed out somewhat, but lacks nuance and depth</td>
<td>- Subsidiary, embedded, or implicit questions and assumptions are made explicit and relations among them are specified</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- No case is made for why the question is sociologically interesting or worth asking</td>
<td>- A case is made for why it matters, but it needs to be more convincing</td>
<td>- Importance of question and what is at stake in answering it is convincingly demonstrated</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Literature review</strong></td>
<td>- Demonstrates poor grasp of existing literature relevant to the topic; coverage is very slight</td>
<td>- Amount of literature reviewed is extensive, but merely a collection of loosely related summaries rather than a well organized synthesis directly tied to research question</td>
<td>- Reviewed literature is well organized, exhaustive, and clearly presented</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presentation is poorly organized</td>
<td>- The contribution of the proposed project is implied but not explicitly stated, or is stated but not convincing</td>
<td>- Presents precisely what is known about this topic and what remains yet to be learned</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- No compelling case for a contribution of this project is made</td>
<td>- The contribution this project would make to the literature is obvious and compelling</td>
<td>- The contribution this project would make to the literature is obvious and compelling</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection strategy</strong></td>
<td>- No clear plan for identifying and collecting any specific data is provided, or it is too vague or incoherent to be understood</td>
<td>- Plan for identifying and collecting data is not specific enough</td>
<td>- A specific plan for realistically identifying and collecting data is clearly stated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Issues of sampling are ignored or glossed</td>
<td>- Issues of sampling are raised implicitly or explicitly but insufficiently addressed</td>
<td>- Relevant issues of sampling are thoughtfully considered and</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Data analysis strategy</strong></td>
<td>over</td>
<td>thoroughly addressed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- No specific analytic strategy is provided, or it is too vague or incoherent to be understood</td>
<td>- The analytic strategy is not as clear as it needs to be in order for the reader to fully understand what will be done with the data to answer the question</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The proposal yields no means of answering the question</td>
<td>- The analytic strategy proposed is clear and shows potential promise but as stated is not likely to adequately answer the question convincingly</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What will be done to the data to yield an answer to the question is explicit, clear, precise, and thorough</td>
<td>- The analytic strategy proposed is likely to yield a promising answer to the question</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Generalizability claims</strong></th>
<th>- No effort is made to state to what persons and settings the findings of the proposed study will be generalizable</th>
<th>- The study proposes to generalize to persons and settings beyond the data, but fails to specify them precisely enough</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Statements of generalizability are made but are wildly irresponsible from the data proposed</td>
<td>- The persons and settings intended are not convincingly generalizable from the data proposed</td>
<td>- The intended generalizations to be made from the findings to other persons and settings beyond the data are explicitly stated and responsibly formulated</td>
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<td>- The proposed data will allow the proposed generalizations to be made responsibly</td>
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| **Writing organization** | - The writing is incoherent, disorganized, unclear, and a chore to get through | - The ideas are clear and more or less in an order that makes sense, but it does not flow smoothly and requires some revision to enhance readability |

| **Writing mechanics** | - The paper is littered with errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar | - The paper has some minor errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar |

| | - The prose is consistently engaging, clear, well-organized, and enjoyable to read | - The paper is free of all errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar |
This rubric will be provided to the students at the beginning of the semester, and referred to throughout. Both the professor and peer reviewers will assess the rough drafts according to the rubric and students will receive both of those assessments back with their rough draft before revising their final proposal. They will be asked to assess themselves according to the rubric at both the rough draft and final proposal stage. Finally, the professor will assess their final proposal according to the rubric, comparing progress made from the rough draft to the final.

Mid-semester assessment will be conducted according to the following questions: What is working well for you in this class? What is not working or what are you struggling with? What could the professor do differently to improve your learning experience in this class? What could you do differently to improve your learning experience in this class? Anything else you’d like to say? Students will write down their answers anonymously, and the feedback will be typed up and aggregated and shared with all the students, followed by a conversation with the professor during class.

In addition to these direct forms of assessment that occur during this course itself, there will be follow-up assessments that will happen during the senior year.

We will analyze data from sociology majors who participated in the senior survey and the senior exit interviews with respect to their learning of these goals (to the extent possible).

We will create and distribute a survey to seniors to ascertain if they achieved these specific learning goals during this course.

At the end of the spring semester of their senior year, we will have a departmental conversation with our graduating seniors about their experiences in the major, the successes and challenges they faced and their suggestions for future improvements in the department. In this conversation, we will specifically ask about their perceived mastery of the goals outlined for Junior Seminar.

After we have completed these assessments of student learning, we will have departmental discussions about these findings to ascertain if any major changes are necessary in our curriculum with respect to Junior Seminar to enhance students’ achievement in this area. We will attempt to implement any changes as warranted to the extent that staffing and funding permit.

*Project leaders have discussed project and its findings with others*

At least once each semester, I carve out time at our department meetings to remind my departmental colleagues what we are doing related to this grant and how it fits into our departmental major plan more broadly. This course is taught by multiple professors, and we have decided that everyone will use the same final rubric and the same basic plan of attack, while the individual readings and assignments may vary somewhat.

I have discussed our department’s experiences with this assessment process at a Bryn Mawr College-wide Chairs meeting. That conversation led to an e-mail chain of conversations that lasted several weeks with some colleagues, and continues in hallways and at informal gatherings...
to this day. I have also discussed these experiences at multiple iterations of the Haverford and Bryn Mawr Bi-College Teaching and Learning Initiative workshops and seminars, where conversations of assessment have dominated. Finally, I have engaged with the Writing Center on Bryn Mawr’s campus to talk about how to best assess writing instruction at the college, using the work of this grant as a starting point.

_**Report makes explicit recommendations for change in curricular practices to be implemented in Year 3**_

The development of the final proposal rubric during Year One led to some significant changes in the way Junior Seminar was taught in Year Two. Most especially, I noticed that the goal of responsible generalizability was not achieved effectively, leading to greatly increased emphasis on that during each week’s discussion of readings and preparation for assignments.

The major changes to be implemented in Year Three within Junior Seminar are the introduction of the two freewriting assignments and an earlier and more frequent interaction with the rubric itself. During Year Two, it was only handed out after rough drafts were submitted, not utilized by peers in the peer review process, and not utilized by the student herself as a form of self-assessment. That was clearly an opportunity missed that will be corrected in Year Three.

Finally, these assessments have led to very productive and substantive changes in our curriculum outside of Junior Seminar. Most significantly, Year Three will introduce a reconfiguration of our Senior Seminar classes that will better map onto the experiences of our students in Junior Seminar, and better complement the objectives achieved in each year. In short, it has helped our department to better define and articulate which objectives we are seeking to achieve at which points in our major, and to allow us to meet the challenges of providing multiple pathways through our major for different kinds of students (e.g. thesis writers and non-thesis writers) and a better senior capstone experience for all.