The sociology program is designed to help students acquire the following competencies:

1. **Knowledge and awareness of sociological theory.** Sociology encompasses a variety of theoretical perspectives, both classical and contemporary. One unifying theme that runs through much of our curriculum is application of classical and contemporary theory to the wide range of substantive subfields and specialties. We strive to help our students develop an understanding of classical and contemporary theory as they apply to a variety of subfields, to develop an understanding of the history and development of social thought, to be able to compare the dominant theoretical perspectives, and to understand how theories are developed and constructed.

2. **An understanding of research methods and statistics.** Empirical verification of theory, and development of theory from empirical examination of social processes and social structure is central to sociological thinking. Accordingly, students must be competent consumers of research if they are to evaluate and critically analyze sociological works. We strive to help our students develop an understanding of quantitative and qualitative methods, research design, measurement, application of statistics to sociology, and research ethics.

3. **An understanding of major theories, hypotheses, concepts and findings dealing with particular subfields or specializations within sociology.** Sociology encompasses many subfields and substantive areas, and no undergraduate can take courses in all of these areas. However each student should have opportunities to study sociological theory and findings concerning some combination of the following areas:

   - **Deviance, social problems, and social control.** Including deviant behavior; criminology; juvenile delinquency; mental illness; sociology of law, and social control. These topics are particularly important for our program because they are essential elements of both sociology and criminal justice.

   - **Social differentiation and inequality,** including social stratification, social mobility, race and minority relations, ethnicity, and gender.
• **Social change**, including development, social movements, and collective behavior.

• **Social institutions and processes**, including the family, economic institutions and work, political institutions, politics and the law, the schools and education; religion; medicine; organizations.

• **Social psychology and the life course**, including social interaction; socialization and learning; small group dynamics; culture, social structure and personality; death and dying.

• **Human communities**, including urbanization and urban development; human ecology; community organization and disorganization; demography

4. **Critical thinking.** Sociology involves critically examining our society and social institutions, critically evaluating competing sociological theories and explanations, and examining strengths and weaknesses of research methodologies. Accordingly, sociological competence involves a variety of critical thinking skills such as the ability to draw inferences from theories and data, being able to recognize unstated assumptions, deduce conclusions from theoretical statements or data, interpret and weigh evidence, evaluate strengths and weaknesses of arguments and research methods, read and interpret quantitative data displayed in tables and graphs, and to apply sociological concepts, hypotheses and theories to new problems.