

Faculty Mentor Observation of Teaching for SOC 6550
Evaluation Form

Guest Lecturer: Christabel Sarpomaa
Host Instructor: Sheyenne Grainger
Faculty Mentor: Sam Kizer
Course: SOC 1000 (sec. 102) Introduction to Sociology
Observation Date: Wednesday, 15 April 2026

Evaluation Scale:

Improvement Needed = 1
Meets Expectations = 2
Exceeds Expectations = 3

Criterion 1: Planning and Preparation

Score: 3

Comments: I appreciate how much time and effort you dedicated to preparing your presentation, and it showed during the lecture itself. Your lecture was organized, concretely aligned with Sheyenne's course learning outcomes, and all elements were clearly communicated to students. Planning began early in the semester and you had a fully developed draft presentation by mid-March, and I did not need to offer much substantive feedback because you were already so well prepared. Your receptiveness to my comments on the draft and in our meetings further demonstrated your commitment to student learning. It seemed clear to me that your investment in this lecture went beyond just fulfilling the requirements in SOC 6550.

Criterion 2: Student Engagement & Climate for Learning

Score: 3

Comments: Throughout the lecture, you used a student-generated word cloud about homelessness as an example of the points you raised, which allowed students to connect each concept to their preexisting knowledge. It also served as an invitation to learn. By involving students in the lecture structure from the start, they felt a stronger sense of agency over their own learning, which showed in their responses to questions and general willingness to participate. I was particularly impressed with how effectively you reinforced key ideas throughout the lecture. Your primary points – three sociological research methods (survey, interview, and observations) and their ethical considerations – were present in each section, and you took time in each section to explain the relationships between them. This approach provided students with constant examples of the content, which likely enhanced their understanding and retention.

Criterion 3: Instructional Style & Content

Score: 3

Comments: First and foremost, I would like to note that **I found your performance in this area to be distinguished and meritorious.** Your command of sociological concepts and ability to communicate them surpassed any reasonable expectations I had. You possessed a deep understanding of every point you raised during the lecture and never once needed to pause to think through definitions and applications. You *know* this field and you know it well, and students seemed captivated by the sheer scope of your knowledge. You designed the slideshow as a guide for students to enhance their learning, not as a support to jog your memory, and that distinction matters in teaching because it proves your credibility.

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Areas of Strength

1. **Explanations of and relationships between concepts.** Because you possess such a strong command of the field of sociology, you were able to effectively communicate the key ideas of each main point, as well as trace clear and accessible connections between them. Students should be able to easily articulate the differences and similarities between survey, interview, and observation as a result of your lecture. I appreciate how you took time to explain ethical considerations of each method individually, rather than approaching ethics as a generalizable concept. This helped reinforce your learning outcomes for the lesson. Finally, as Sheyenne also noted, your discussion of observer bias and the Hawthorne effect was particularly impactful and perfectly encapsulated your ability to explain connections between concepts.
2. **Presentation structure.** You designed your lecture to support your learning outcomes. You listed these outcomes at the start, along with an agenda for how your presentation will support them, and then moved through each item on the agenda in the order shown. When you transitioned between ideas, you always took a moment to recap what you just discussed *and* how it builds into the next idea, regularly reinforcing the throughline between each element of the lecture. Your use of visualizations (rather than just text) on the slides also reinforced the learning outcomes, as it offered students more ways to conceptualize and apply ideas.
3. **Timeliness and relatability.** You connected each aspect of the lecture to students' lived experiences, which clearly helped them see the relevance of sociology in real time. The most striking example of this was your incorporation of the Office of Sustainability's Transportation Survey, *which was distributed mere hours before your lecture*. You seamlessly wove that survey into various parts of your lecture to demonstrate the processes and ethics of survey research, as well as show students that the same type of data could not be collected using other methods. The fact that you were able to incorporate that survey with practically no lead time indicates three things: 1) you stay up to date with communications, which helps you develop course content that is timely and directly relevant to students' lives and experiences; 2) your knowledge of sociology is strong enough that you can effortlessly situate real-world examples within the discipline; and 3) as an instructor, you are invested in demonstrating why sociological research matters to individuals, organizations, and societal structures.

Suggestions for Improvement

1. **Pacing and volume.** You talked extremely fast during your lecture, which I imagine was partly due to nerves, but it also indicates your knowledge of and passion for the field. I do not think your pacing undermined your learning outcomes, but it is important to remember that many students are learning this material for the very first time, and they need more time to process new content. Slow down a bit and don't be afraid to let students sit in silence for a moment as they wrestle with the ideas. Learning happens in the silence. Relatedly, take more time for students to respond to questions. You often asked something to the effect of "do you get me?" and immediately moved on, which doesn't afford students sufficient time to even determine if they have questions to ask in the first place. You might also consider asking a targeted content question instead of general one; for instance, ask "someone please explain the distinction between observer

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bias and the Hawthorne effect,” as this allows you to concretely assess learning outcomes in real time. Your volume was generally appropriate for the size of the classroom, but it was lower towards the end of the lecture. Slowing down would help you keep volume consistent from start to finish.

2. **Use of technology.** You used Top Hat at various points during the lecture to align with Sheyenne’s pedagogical norms, but it seemed apparent that you did not practice this technology in advance of the presentation. Top Hat is an excellent resource when used properly, but it is not necessarily the most intuitive platform to set up. When you struggled with Top Hat, it conspicuously disrupted the flow of your lecture. Make sure you are sufficiently familiar with any technology you intend to use so that it supports your learning outcomes.
3. **Activity structure.** Your activity asking students to apply research methods to different scenarios was clearly aligned with your learning outcomes, but the instructions seemed vague to me. Instead of listing broad scenarios (e.g., homelessness, immigration, etc.), write out specific research questions and ask students to evaluate methods that would be useful in answering them. Alternatively, provide a topic and ask students to generate a research question themselves before evaluating methods. This would further reinforce the larger process of conducting sociological research. A worksheet (either printed or digital) would be helpful, too, so students can better organize their ideas and identify concepts that are still unclear.

Summary Evaluation

As a faculty mentor, I was deeply impressed with the quality of your guest lecture. Your knowledge, engagement, and enthusiasm were all palpable throughout the process, as was your commitment to student learning and success. Pedagogical alignment is one of the most important things to me as an instructor, and your efforts to align your presentation with the larger trajectory of Sheyenne’s class were obvious. This approach allowed students to leverage what they already know with the new content you offered, which will foster intellectual growth long after the course concludes. Perhaps most importantly, though, is that your presentation was *memorable*. Students remember course content better when they can recall exactly when and how they learned it, and your passion for sociology will allow them to do that. Your instructional presence is an asset to the field and to our Department.