Research Specializations

Departmental Research Strengths

The Sociology Department at the University of Washington is a research-focused department whose faculty specialize in theoretically driven, scientifically sound empirical research that addresses a wide range of social topics. We prioritize disseminating the results of our research in scholarly articles and books, in our teaching, and in other public fora. Research activities are supported both by the department and by a number of interdisciplinary centers. Current strengths of the department include demography and health, criminology, law and deviance, analysis of states, markets and societies (which includes comparative historical sociology, economic sociology, social movements, ethnic conflict and the sociology of religion), social inequality, migration studies, and research design, statistical analysis and data-intensive social science.

Demography & Health

There is a long tradition of excellence in the study of population at UW, in part due to the presence of the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, an NIH funded population center. Demography at UW has embraced the data revolution, and is increasingly dynamic, with faculty members extending our department’s long-standing strengths in fertility, mortality and mobility in new and promising directions through research on population projections, global health, health disparities and data science. In addition to resources provided by CSDE, faculty working on these issues are deeply involved in the University’s new Population Health Initiative and the eScience Institute.

Affiliated Faculty: Crowder, Curran, Flores, Herting, Lavely, McCormick, Raftery, Stovel, Williams, Zagheni

Inequality

The study of stratification and inequality is the core of our discipline, and research on these topics is central in the UW Sociology Department as well. Our focus on inequality builds upon our traditional strength in studies of sex and gender and race and ethnicity, which we combine with new focus on labor markets, housing, environmental inequality, and racial and ethnic disparities. Faculty working on these topics have links to the Evans School, the West Coast Poverty Center, eScience, and the Bridges Center for Labor Studies.

Affiliated Faculty: Brines, Burt, Crowder, Flores, Harris, Matsueda, Quinn, Schwartz, Stovel.

Research Methods, Social Statistics, and Data-Intensive Social Science

Faculty at the UW are at the forefront of a revolution in statistical analysis of new types of data, and are internationally recognized for the development of methods for theoretically and statistically rigorous analysis of digital data in service of social science questions. While our faculty is particularly strong in social statistics, network methods, and computational demography, attention to methods and study design is central to our research mission in graduate training. Faculty also utilize “big data,” field experiments, and qualitative methods including ethnography and field methods, comparative and historical methods, and case-based approaches in their research. Our concern with methodological issues is reinforced by the department’s central involvement in CSSS, CSDE, the eScience Institute, and the University's QUAL Initiative.

Affiliated faculty: Brines, Crowder, Curran, Flores, Harris, Herting, Kiser, Matsueda, McCormick, Pfaff, Raftery, Stovel, Quinn, Williams, Zagheni

Crime, Law & Deviance

UW Sociology is well known for its commitment to rigorous sociological research on crime, law, and deviance. Current faculty interests continue this topical focus through research utilizing perspectives from social control, socio-biology, socio-legal studies, and the sociology of punishment to study both individual and structural determinants of criminal behavior, and nature of legal and justice institutions. The specialization profits from ties strong ties to the Department of Law, Societies and Justice and the School of Law.

Affiliated Faculty: Beckett, Burt, Harris, Herting, Matsueda
Migration Studies

Migration research is an emerging area of excellence in our department. The study of migration includes the study of demographic processes as well as the social, economic, and political consequences of immigration and spatial mobility. Our emerging specialization has broad, sociological relevance, is open to varied methods, and is substantively important for understanding contemporary politics and society. It builds on links to CSDE, the Jackson School of International Studies, and the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance.

Affiliated faculty: Crowder, Curran, Flores, Pfaff, Williams, Zagheni

States, Markets & Society

Comparative and historical analysis of states and markets has long been a hallmark of UW Sociology. Scholars in this area are interested in macrosociological perspectives and the origins, functions, and transformation of social institutions. Research in this area explores the engagement of states and market institutions with their societies and with transnational actors and processes, and is enhanced by strong links to the Jackson School and the Political Science Department.

Affiliated faculty: Flores, Kiser, Pfaff, Stovel, Quinn

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