

**Sara R. Curran**  
**Summary of Teaching**

**September 2004**

I have taught six “official” courses (1 of them 4 times and 1 of them twice) at Princeton, several reading courses, and a one-hour, not for credit, but mandatory, seminar for our sociology juniors. My main course has been SOC 225, “Sex, Sexuality and Gender,” which is a gateway course for the Sociology department. The other five courses have been at the graduate level, including two for the Woodrow Wilson School and three for the Sociology Department.

Of all the forms of teaching that we do as academics, the one I like the most is one-on-one mentoring with graduates and undergraduates. I like the challenge of working with a student to build and create a solid research program out of each individual’s interest and capabilities. I like the give and take between myself and a student and the intellectual challenge of considering how each individual’s project can make a contribution to sociology and broader knowledge. The diversity of the challenges keeps me refreshed intellectually. Allaying a puzzled look through the use of a metaphor, analogy, example, or interpretation and seeing the puzzlement replaced with the excited and stimulated look of insight are moments I treasure. In these moments I feel I learn just as much as the student, if not more. I was extremely honored, therefore, and privileged to receive several awards recognizing my mentoring, from the Sociologists for Women in Society 2001 Mentoring Award, to the inaugural Princeton University Graduate Mentoring Award (2002), to the department’s advising awards for Juniors and Seniors in 2002 and 2004.

I have worked closely with many different graduate students to publish articles and prepare research for presentation. I have collaborated on projects that have resulted in co-authored manuscripts and presentations with: Filiz Garip, Steven Shafer, Abigail Saguy, Catherine Kenney, Gwendolyn Cadge, Frederick Wherry, Marion Carter, Estela Rivero Fuentes, Susie Cassels, and Gabrielle Marx. These projects have been extremely rewarding.

My pedagogical approach in the classroom is to emphasize “hands-on” experience in observing social differences and the structural determinants of inequality. In my undergraduate course (SOC 225), I use accessible interactive lectures and original research projects with “real-world” applications. In my graduate courses, I encourage writing projects that synthesize readings and oral presentations that are creative and engaging. In all cases, I encourage students to take responsibility for what they learn and think, urge them to question my assumptions and arguments, as well as consider my own questions about theirs and others’ assumptions.

My courses have covered three main themes that mirror my own research interests – gender, development and methodology. SOC 225 is a survey course that examines the ways in which gender inequality is socially structured from childhood to old age and how it is created within social institutions of family, work, the marketplace, schools, and government or policy. Although I use cross-national and cross-cultural comparisons, the

emphasis is primarily upon gender relations in the U.S. On the other hand, WWS 572a focuses exclusively upon issues in less developed countries from agriculture to family planning, to migration, to work, to leadership and policy making and with an emphasis upon the integration of theory, practice and policy. The mini-seminar on migration and development is a brief overview of theory with a focus upon empirical research in less developed countries. Finally, recent courses in Sociology and the WWS emphasize methodological concerns - from study design, data management, and research analysis and write-up in SOC 550 (Empirical Seminar) to the ethical practice and philosophical considerations in social science research in WWS 598 (Ethics of Research Practice).

SOC 225 has been my most difficult course to teach, both because of the subject matter and because of my own high expectations for myself and for my students. Unlike some 300 level and above sociology courses that also specialize in a particular subfield of sociology, SOC 225 draws a wide range of students with a lot of preconceived notions, expectations, and motivations, presenting many challenges. Teaching about a “taken for granted” social difference such as gender challenges many students’ preconceived notions. Since gender is a constant in our lives, it is hard to see the underlying social structures, everyday discursive and active behaviors, and relational interactions that reinforce or diminish the social boundaries defining gender and the subsequent opportunities or constraints those social boundaries create for individuals. In the course I have always asked students to conduct original research using data they collect or secondary data. In some years, students have participated in community based research projects (CBLI).

Based on the first CBLI project, my preceptors and I co-authored a paper to guide future CBLI projects that was published in the journal *Teaching Sociology*. I was delighted that the graduate students’ interest in the project and what we learned from the experience yielded such a positive result. The other positive outcomes have been the unsolicited letters from former students who have now entered the labor force and are seeing gender at work in their lives. It is these letters that bring me the greatest pleasure and encourage me to keep working on figuring out how best to teach SOC 225. Here are three excerpts from unsolicited letters I have received:

“I just started my new job at McKinsey after having volunteered for a few months with a non-profit. As I start work, I’ve already witnessed certain gender issues at my workplace: predominantly male consultants (especially at the top), differences in communication style, and “people-centered” positions like HR and staff development filled exclusively by women. Albeit I cannot honestly say that I recall all of the details of your course from three years ago, I can safely say that it has had an impact and made me aware of my environment, especially at work. Thank you for that course and the real-life lessons it has given me to carry forward.” (Roger Ahn ’01)

“I wanted to let you know that the class I took with you during the fall semester ’02 was the most enjoyable aspect of my academic experience at Princeton, thus far, and that a great degree of the enjoyment and insight I gained from the class stems from your presentation of the material, and particularly the way in which you incited discussion and

contemplation. My decision to be an economics major may not have been the wisest (given that the only economics classes I have enjoyed were those with a sociological bent), and I had spent a lot of time at Princeton slugging through material that was supposed to someday bring me to the ultimate financial reward, and in doing so, managed to obscure the excitement I used to have for learning or for creating projects/completing assignments in a manner that made me proud, rather than simply for a grade. Ironically, in my running, I refuse to take any short-cuts or compromise my commitment. By and large, however, my first two years at Princeton had sapped my excitement for academics. It is largely for this reason that taking WOM/SOC225 was so refreshing. The material was personally exciting and relevant, but moreover, I felt that you encouraged us to question assumptions, question the material and question ourselves. A nice change from the regurgitation of numbers.” (Emily Kroshus '05)

“I know it’s been awhile since I’ve written, but I love to look up your website for good reading selections in your class syllabi. And, congratulations on your mentoring award. I enjoyed your website – it brought back so many memories. I have not had a better class. You made such an impact on my life – As the years go by, I become only more grateful.... So many of the women’s issues that we discussed in class take on new meaning for me as a new wife and mother!” (Joy Radice '97 – she took course SOC 599, the graduate level precursor to SOC 225).

I have also taught courses about gender at the graduate level through reading courses, a formal graduate course in the Sociology Department, and a course for the Woodrow Wilson School. Teaching to WWS MPAs proved most interesting, when I taught the Gender and Development course (WWS 572a) for two consecutive spring semesters. The second time I taught the course I increased the workload considerably with a contracted project for the Gender Division of the World Bank. Students performed an excellent and critical analysis of the gender evaluation procedures of the Bank, leading the Gender Division to revamp their program considerably. Based on their participation in the course, several students have leveraged their experience to their advantage in the job market through my letters of recommendation.

Designing courses that address how research is conducted has been a thematic focus for other courses I have taught, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. In my second WWS course, I recently developed and taught with Professor Harold Shapiro a course on the ethics of research practice in the social sciences. This six-week long course addresses philosophical and practical considerations with regards to the ethics of study design, data management and analysis, publication, teaching or mentoring and requires students to research and present case studies of practical relevance to their fields of study. This has long been a regularly required course for WWS PhD students who are resistant to taking the course and resent the requirement. I substantially reworked the course and was pleased to know that course evaluations were significantly better than they had been in the past.

Similarly, I modified and led the two-semester empirical seminar for sociology graduate students. This course provided the foundation for a new course at the undergraduate

level that develops students' capacities to read and write within the discipline and to make claims and provide evidence in Sociology (SOC 300). In all of these courses, I ask students to learn the practical elements of empirical investigation and ethical standards within the discipline, but also to step back, think critically, and provide constructive alternatives to study designs or ethical dilemmas.

As part of my role as Departmental Representative, I have tried to consider how we can better teach about sociology and how to be a sociologist. In the advising I do for undergraduates I most enjoy helping students think about how to recast their research questions in terms of a sociological research lineage and thereby providing them with a reason for approaching a particular advisor, considering a particular study design, or reading a particular journal or book. As a first step towards formalizing the content of the mentoring that I do, I have developed a Blackboard Course Website for Independent Study that includes materials I have developed to help our majors successfully complete their independent research. I also realized that my one-on-one mentoring with our majors was addressing a pedagogical gap in our curriculum and their training. Missing was a course that linked theory with practice. This gap is not unique to our department nor is it unique to undergraduates. I had also recognized this gap among our graduate students when I taught the empirical seminar. I proposed and received approval for the introduction of a new course, which fills this gap, SOC 300: Claims and Evidence in Sociology.

As I have worked to formalize and improve teaching at the undergraduate level, both through the introduction of a new course and the provision of one-on-one mentoring, I have also worked to increase the profile of the department among undergraduates. This I have done with more sophisticated handouts during university-wide events, working with our current majors to provide publicity about our major and excellent exemplars from our major, and inviting key members of the administration and staff to departmental events. With the able assistance of Cynthia Gibson, Donna DeFrancisco, and Melanie Adams, I have also worked to formalize our Class Day program so that it is more inclusive and professional. This year, to achieve those two goals, we introduced a poster presentation for all of our senior theses in the entryway of Wallace Hall. The increased visibility of the program, complemented by excellent advising, the growing prestige of the faculty, and the excellent teaching by our faculty has meant that the program has grown from about 35-40 majors (both classes) to next year's total of 75-80 students (35 juniors – 40 seniors). This is a two-fold increase since I took over the position in the fall of 2000.

Most importantly my teaching does not stop at the boundary of the classroom door. I incorporate formal and informal teaching and mentoring into most of my activities at Princeton.

Most recently, I have joined with current MPA students and some sociology students to rehabilitate a website I began in the spring of 1999 (with former MPA students). The new website, <http://www.wws.princeton.edu/~gender>, is designed to provide curricular enhancement in the WWS program in response to considerable student interest in gender and development policy through students' essays about their summer internships, student

interviews of leaders in the field of policy, gender, and development, and book reviews written by students, alumni and faculty. The site and associated student organization provides opportunities for interactions between alumni, current MPAs, and undergraduates, as well as sponsorship and initiation of public affairs speakers and brownbag lunch forums.

### **Courses Taught**

#### Undergraduate Courses

	Year	Enrollment
Soc 225 Sex, Sexuality and Gender	Sp 1997	39
“	Sp 1998	46
“	Sp 2000	20
“	F 2002	45
“	Sp 2004	25
Junior Seminar Soc 300	F 2001-02	30
“	F 2002-03	64
“	F 2003-04	

#### Graduate Courses

WWS 572a Gender and Development	Sp 1998	14
“	Sp 1999	16
	Sp 2005	TBD
Soc 599 Special Topics in Sociology: Gender and Social Change (w/ S. McLanahan)	F 1997	10
Soc 530f Migration and Development in the Periphery (half semester)	Sp 2000	6
Soc 550 Empirical Seminar	F 2000	7
“	Sp 2001	6
WWS 599 Ethics of Research Practice (half semester w/ H. Shapiro)	Sp 2003	12
	F 2003	10
“	F 2004	TBD
Soc 702 & 705	F 1999	3

### **Undergraduates Supervised**

#### Independent Work

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Independent Work</i>
Jane Cogshall	1996-97	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Denise Ryan	1996-97	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Kristen Johnson	1997-98	WWS	Senior Thesis
Justin Murfin	1997-98	WWS	Senior Thesis
Emma Penick	1997-98	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Michelle Murphy	1998-99	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Sameen Gauhar	1998-99	WWS	Senior Thesis
JoAnn Sofis	1999-00	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Laura Kaplan	2000-01	Sociology	Junior Paper
Emily Brown	2000-01	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Morgan Voeltz	2001-02	Sociology	Junior Paper
Christina Alvarez	2001-02	Sociology	Junior Paper

Saroj Siegler	2001-02	Sociology	Junior Paper
Nao Terai	2001-02	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Joseph Robinson	2002-03	Sociology	Junior Paper
Natasha Morales	2002-03	Sociology	Junior Paper
Amy Schnall	2002-03	Sociology	Junior Paper
Allison Smith	2002-03	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Katherine Redman	2002-03	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Joy Igbokwe	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Amy Jones	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Chanel Lattimer	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Lauren Lowe	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Jessie Nagin	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Hyeyoung Oh	2003-04	Sociology	Junior Paper
Eric Martinez	2003-04	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Christina Alvarez	2003-04	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Kjerstin Elmen-Gruys	2003-04	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Sarah Fox	2003-04	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Luara Ginsberg	2004-05	Sociology	Junior Paper
Margo Lipman	2004-05	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Katherine Reilly	2004-05	Sociology	Senior Thesis
Vanessa Gomez	2004-05	Sociology	Senior Thesis

### Freshmen Advising

I have served as a freshmen advisor for Wilson College for the following years: AY 96-97, AY97-98, AY99-00, AY01-02, AY02-03, AY 03-04, AY 04-05.

### **Graduates Supervised**

#### Dissertation Committees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Status</i>
Shelley Clark	WWS	Co-Chair	Completed ('98)
Judith Diers	WWS	Member	Completed ('99)
Wannarat Rattanawarang	IPSR, Mahidol U.	Member	Completed ('02)
Gwendolyn Cadge	Sociology	Member	Completed ('02)
Catherine Kenney	Sociology	Member	Completed ('02)
Dana Gleis	Sociology	Member	Completed ('02)
Tania Rands Lyon	Sociology	Chair	Completed ('04)
Frederick Wherry	WWS	Member	Completed ('04)
Kelly Hoffman	WWS	Member	Continuing
Kanchana Tangchonlatip	IPSR, Mahidol U.	Member	Continuing
Traci Schlesinger	Sociology		Continuing
Susie Cassels	PIPS	Member	Continuing

#### Second Year Papers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Reader</i>	<i>Year</i>
Estela Rivero-Fuentes	WWS	First	1998-01
Susie Cassels	PIPS	First	2001-02

Jean Knab	Sociology	First	2000
Meredith Kleykamp	WWS	Second	2000
Sada Aksavatova	Sociology	Second	2000
Cesar Rosado	Sociology	Second	2000
Catherine Kenney	WWS	Second	1999
Catherine Kenney	WWS	Second	1998
Gwendolyn Cadge	Sociology	Second	1999
Laura Clawson	Sociology	Second	2001
Joan Walling	Sociology	Second	2001
Rina Agarwal	WWS	Second	2002
Deborah Becher	Sociology	Second	2004
Conrad Hackett	Sociology	Second	2004
Filiz Garip	Sociology	First	2004
Filiz Garip	Sociology	Second	2005

General Exams Supervised

<i>Name</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Year</i>
Marion Carter	Sociology	Gender	2000
Maiyatree Bhattacharya	Sociology	Gender	1999
Gabi Seto	Sociology	Gender	1998
Gwendolyn Cadge	Sociology	Gender	2000
Rina Agarwal	WWS	Gender	2002
Gabriel Rossman	WWS	Stratification	2002
Susie Cassels	WWS	Pop & Env.	2002
Jeris S Yruma	History	Sci Ethics & Policy	2004
Filiz Garip	Sociology	Migration	2004

**Leaves that Affected Teaching Loads**

Fall 1998	maternity (full reduction in teaching)
Fall 1999	sabbatical
Fall 2000-Spring 2001	maternity (half-time reduction in teaching)