

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
WORKPLAN FOR AY 2020-21
AUGUST 2020

In the summer of 2020, we witnessed extraordinary calls for action regarding long-standing injustices experienced by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). In response to the murder of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and many others, graduate students in the Sociology Department have demanded that the Sociology Department take a hard look at itself and do better in supporting our BIPOC students, staff, and faculty and to consider changes to the structure and operation of the department to become more explicitly and consistently antiracist. *To this end, we dedicate this next academic year to focusing our collective attention and work on becoming a more antiracist department.*

This document outlines a general plan for discussions to work toward this overall goal. The plan is an outgrowth of many discussions held over the summer within the volunteer Accountability Committee formed in June. Our talented graduate students have assembled a number of documents that may be helpful and made them accessible to everyone in our community in a Google drive folder ([accessible here](#)).

This general work plan has three related components: 1) a collective learning “book club” on Black Scholarship and Antiracism; 2) recommendations for department committee deliberations on topics in order to develop concrete, written proposals for changes in our departmental structure, policies, and procedures; and 3) a coordinated year of department meetings in which the department will discuss and formally consider committee proposals and recommendations for change. Whenever possible, we should consider how we could redistribute power and resources to better support our BIPOC students, staff, and faculty. This work plan is not intended to be an exhaustive list of issues that should be addressed; rather it is designed to serve as a starting point for our work and move us closer to becoming a more antiracist academic department. This is an important and critical long-term goal that is fully consistent with our department mission but likely will take many years to fully realize, given the persistent nature of structural racism and white supremacy at Georgia State University specifically and in higher education more generally.

In addition to this goal, this is the year for our next formal Academic Program Review (APR). Our APR has been busy working on the preparatory tasks and will be asking the various committees and the full department to take up discussions and vote on a list of future priorities to guide our work over the next 5-7 years. We also must review and approve a formal written self-study in the fall and host a team of external reviewers in the spring to complete this university-required process.

I: “BOOK CLUB” ON BLACK SCHOLARSHIP AND ANTIRACISM

A subgroup of the Accountability Committee this summer developed a reading list and plan to meet monthly to discuss key works related to Black Scholarship and doing Antiracist work (see Appendix). The purpose of this work is to foster collective learning and inform our whole community and committee conversations. Everyone is welcome to participate, but these meetings and readings are particularly recommended for the white faculty and graduate students.

II: COMMITTEE WORK ON CRITICAL TOPICS

This summer, a group of graduate students developed a list of critical topics and issues that should be discussed by key departmental committees. The specific committee and recommended topics and issues are summarized in the table below. The current roster of committees, including the identified graduate student representatives is provided as an appendix.

Because these issues are interrelated and will require research and thoughtful deliberation, it is recommended that each committee listed begin meeting as soon as possible in the 2020-21 academic year and develop a plan to address each issue. Each committee should aim to present their findings and any associated proposals for policy changes to the department at the regularly scheduled meeting below outlined in the next section.

COMMITTEE	RECOMMENDED TOPICS/ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED
Executive Committee	Bylaws and departmental policies; departmental code of conduct Addressing unequal power structures and hierarchy within the Department Mediation and restorative justice practice opportunities Building transparency and accountability Budgeting and priorities for future budget years to better-support Black faculty, students, and scholarship Make commitments and identify actions to be taken by future Search Committee and Promotion and Tenure Committees iterations that will prioritize hiring and supporting Black scholars

<p>Graduate Committee</p>	<p>Needs-based funding and enhanced support for Black admits (here are examples from other institutions)</p> <p>Transparency in admission and funding decision-making practices (general practices, not individual decisions)</p> <p>Comprehensive exam formats and reading lists</p> <p>Assessing the ‘classical’ sociological cannon and areas of study at GSU, instituting changes that center Black scholarship</p> <p>Department’s messaging and support to prospective/incoming students</p> <p>Addressing unequal power structures within graduate program (director, chairs, etc.) and assistantships (supervisors)</p>
<p>Research and Technology Committee</p>	<p>Inventory the Department’s research portfolio and its support for Black communities and scholarship</p> <p>Determine the distribution of funding and support for research across the department’s discipline areas; propose ways to ensure that Black-centered scholarship is adequately supported</p> <p>Identify opportunities for funding and support that focus on race scholarship and can support Black students and faculty (e.g., are there programs similar to 2CI for race or urban scholars?)</p>
<p>Teaching Committee</p>	<p>Plagiarism reporting practices (both grad and undergrad); ensure no racial biases in practices, incorporate restorative justice approaches</p> <p>Accountability and assessment of <i>all</i> instructors, including tenured faculty</p> <p>Ensure support and backing of BIPOC instructors and students</p> <p>Include sections on the Teaching Sociology graduate course that productively address white violence in the classroom and denounce racism</p>

<p>Undergraduate Committee</p>	<p>Review and update course content to center Black and POC experiences</p> <p>Find ways to support Black undergraduates to build additional work experience and supports (e.g., scholarships, connecting with research opportunities, etc.)</p> <p>Identify Social Justice Certificate supports and needs, such as how the Department will support students advocating for university/community change as part of the program</p> <p>ID areas where Black students can be empowered rather than disenfranchised in classroom settings</p>
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III: Department Meetings

To facilitate the translation of committee deliberations into action, the regular department meetings will be dedicated primarily to whole-department discussion of and voting on new policies and procedures for the future. Unlike in past department meetings, these meetings will be organized by topical area and the majority of each meeting (approximately 75 minutes) will be reserved for the identified committees to share their preliminary discussions/proposals for the full faculty consideration. Some topics and/or proposals may require more than one discussion, so we may use the balance of the time in subsequent meetings to address outstanding issues from prior meetings or other important topics.

To avoid using our meetings simply for information sharing, the department chair and all committee chairs will be asked to send out written updates on their committees’ work and critical information items for everyone to review by Wednesday of the week of a normal monthly meeting. We will try to allow the final few minutes of each meeting for questions and answers regarding the various written reports/announcements and other urgent updates.

Each regular department meeting will be held on the Fridays listed below between 10a and 12n. Please note that there are three meetings in August. These will take the place of the annual, all day department retreat (previously scheduled for all day on Friday, August 21st). Some changes in the schedule may be needed; requests for changes to the schedule should be submitted to the chair and will be considered in consultation with the Executive Committee. Because of the pandemic, the meetings for the fall semester will be conducted via Webex and will be recorded to facilitate taking minutes and recording all actions taken. All departmental documents, including new and revised policies and procedures, developed and adopted over the course of the year, will be posted on the department website.

MEETING SYLLABUS FOR AY2020-21 FOR THE SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

DATE	PRIMARY AGENDA	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN
Friday, August 14	Inclusive Instruction	Develop and adopt a set of principles and priorities for inclusive teaching
Friday, August 21	Mission/Vision, Diversity Statement, and Bylaws	Discuss effectiveness of current configuration of committees Review, discuss, and vote on needed changes to the department mission/vision, diversity statement, and bylaws
Friday, August 28	Academic Program Review Discussion of Priorities	Review, discuss, and approve APR committee recommended priorities
Friday, September 11	Graduate Committee	Vote on proposal for new comprehensive exam requirement Consider proposal(s) for new plan for graduate student funding Discuss recommended curricular changes Discuss recommendations for new practices to better support BIPOC graduate students
Friday, October 9	Undergraduate Committee	Discuss recommended curricular changes Discuss recommendations for new practices to better support BIPOC undergraduate students
Friday, November 13	Discuss Draft APR Self-Study and Recommendations	Approve APR Self-Study

<p>Friday, December 11</p>	<p>Teaching Committee</p>	<p>Review and finalize new policies on peer review of teaching and teaching portfolios</p> <p>Review and vote on plagiarism policy and procedures</p>
<p>Friday, January 15</p>	<p>Committee on Professional Conduct Policy; Executive Committee</p>	<p>Discuss and vote on proposed code of professional conduct policy, including procedures for holding individuals accountable</p> <p>Discuss and vote on departmental policy on administrative transparency and accountability</p> <p>Discuss and vote on faculty hiring priorities and practices</p> <p>Discuss and vote on policy on restorative justice practices</p>
<p>Friday, February 12</p>	<p>APR Site Visit</p>	<p>Meet with the APR Committee in small groups</p> <p>Review preliminary findings of recommendations of the site visit committee provided in exit interview</p>
<p>Friday, March 12</p>	<p>Research and Technology</p>	<p>Evaluate the overall department research portfolio</p> <p>Identify funding opportunities for BIPOC scholarship</p> <p>Identify and develop plan to support faculty and students to conduct BIPOC-focused research</p>
<p>Friday, April 9</p>	<p>Graduate Student Assessment Meeting (Graduate Faculty Only)</p> <p>***SPECIAL TIME (10a-2p)</p>	<p>Complete annual evaluation of all graduate students' progress</p>

Friday, May 7	Recap and Review	<p>Review and discuss final recommendations of the APR site visit committee</p> <p>Review progress and identify outstanding issues identified that require additional work</p> <p>Evaluate the overall approach for organizing committee and department meeting discussion used in AY2020-21</p> <p>Identify priority topics and issues for discussion in AY2021-22</p>
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