

Statement of Rationale
SOC 001 GE Certification for
Justice, Reconciliation and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds

Certification Criteria

Students will be able to:

1. develop biblically and theologically grounded understandings of justice, reconciliation, and diversity. These will enable students to understand justice and reconciliation in terms of the gospel and appropriate disciplinary frameworks, recognize sin, rebellion, and brokenness as such, and discern their responsibility in the work of justice and reconciliation within their own local context;

This certification criteria will be met primarily through readings and lectures that use explicit biblical and theological tools, though disciplinary tools will be blended in as well. (Note: Dr. Kent's syllabus is being used for template purposes, but all materials related to JRD will also be used in courses taught by Drs. Song, Whitnah, Jirek and other SOC-001 instructors. In the event that these other instructors wish to change JRD materials, these materials will be *substantially similar* and always *replaced*, not *dropped*.)

- “Faithful Antiracists...Have Wisdom,” Edmondson & Brennan
- “...Apply the Bible,” Edmondson & Brennan
- “...Follow the Example of Early Christians,” Edmondson & Brennan
- “Jesus Christ in Texas,” W.E.B. DuBois
- *The Powers that Be*, Walter Wink
- “Can Scripture Compete with Scrolling,” Kristian

Students will respond to these class readings in journal form, helping them identify and interact with key biblical and theological principles. Students will also be assessed through regular exams. We will engage in at least two class sessions specifically focused on biblical and theological tools: our discussion of Edmondson & Brennan chapters 1-4 and our discussion of Walter Wink.

2. examine personal actions, social norms, and systemic practices involving race and racism in the United States as they relate to historic and contemporary patterns of belonging and exclusion, attending to how historical particularities and differences in power shape the responsibilities different parties have in the work of justice and reconciliation in light of God's kingdom;

This certification criteria will be met with readings and lectures that focus more specifically on disciplinary tools, although some will incorporate biblical and theological reflection. A full week of class sessions is dedicated to the discussion of race and ethnicity, and race/ethnicity figures prominently into several other class sections/topics as well, including socialization & interaction; power, crime & deviance; religion; health & medicine; and social change. Related readings include:

- “Faithful Antiracists...Understand our Past,” Edmondson & Brennan
- “...Understand our Present,” Edmondson & Brennan

Students will respond to these readings in journal form and will be assessed via short answer/short essay exam questions.

3. model Christ-like dialogue reflecting God’s desire for justice and reconciled relationships among all image-bearers, especially when confronting challenging or sensitive issues.

The following text on classroom behavior expectations has been added to the syllabus:

Classroom behavior: Some topics of discussion we will engage in are highly contentious (e.g., race). In order to have productive and meaningful conversations, it is essential that all class members ask themselves (and one another) what it means to engage in conversation marked by love and mutual respect...even when different viewpoints are taken. I ask that all students attempt, when appropriate, to set aside their own interpretive lens and activate their “sociological imagination” in order to see things from a different perspective. Ultimately, just as God reconciles us to himself through Christ, we ought to be reconciled with one another. That doesn’t mean we always come to the same conclusion, but it does involve a legitimate attempt to listen and see from another angle. Jesus set this example when he “became like us” (Hebrews 4:15).

A theme throughout our course will be learning and practicing ways to honor one another with our words and attitudes as co-image bearers of God. As this course covers not only inequalities experienced racially—but also according to economics and gender—a key theme is God’s desire for justice and reconciled relationships among individuals and institutional realities. An intrinsic function of this course is to help students better understand their own place in the world—particularly in relation to their status and identity that can be challenging and/or sensitive—and encouraging them to learn and practice how to honor those who are different from themselves and honor one another with our words and attitudes as co-image bearers of God.

Student Learning Outcomes

- 1. Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.*
- 2. Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God’s loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.*

The SOC-001 course learning outcomes, listed below, are aligned with the JRD SLOs.

1. Converse in foundational sociological language—including theory and methodology—in order to explore, analyze, and understand social structures and relationships.
2. Articulate how diverse perspectives, including ethnicity, culture, religion, and gender shape the social experience.

3. Identify sources of power, oppression, and discrimination as they affect social structures and marginalized people groups.
4. Discuss biblical and theological perspectives, texts, and values as they relate to race and racism in the United States.
5. Connect personal beliefs and convictions to the sociological enterprise.

The course learning outcomes capitalize on several specific strengths of the sociological enterprise, including:

- theoretical tools;
- conceptions of personhood, socialization, and culture;
- emphasis on power, oppression, and marginalization;
- relationship between individual and social structures/institutions;
- and centrality of personal conviction and ethical responsibility.