

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Criteria for  
Tenure & Promotion**

In order to achieve tenure and promotion in the Department of Sociology, faculty must attain high standards of demonstrated excellence in scholarship; effectiveness in teaching; and consistent service, both within the Department and the discipline. The Department places strongest emphasis on scholarship when reviewing files for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. In making decisions regarding promotion to the rank of Professor, the Department focuses on a sustained history of outstanding scholarship. However, all faculty must also demonstrate effectiveness as teachers in order to achieve promotion or tenure. Further, while faculty service is a crucial component of all reviews for tenure and promotion (and the expectations for tenure and for promotion to Professor are somewhat different), it is never the primary basis for tenure and/or promotion and cannot compensate for weak achievements in scholarship or teaching.

The Department recognizes that there are multiple routes to achieving tenure and promotion. Our goal with this document is to describe the most common routes; a candidate and the department chair may make a case for additional ones. The Department criteria are intended as one of several resources for candidates to consult regarding their progress toward tenure and/or promotion. Candidates also should consult the Faculty Manual and talk with faculty mentors—particularly the department chair and the chair of the Rank & Tenure Committee—to ensure they are on track and can build the strongest case possible for promotion/tenure.

**Excellence in Scholarship**

By establishing a goal of excellence in scholarship, the Department is not attempting to require faculty to meet a pre-established number of publications but to document a career defined by active scholarship that advances the discipline. We strongly encourage faculty to target high quality peer-reviewed journals and presses in their subfield as the predominant outlets for their scholarly work. For the purposes of tenure and promotion review, books and articles will be considered as published when the editor has accepted them in final form. Work under review, even if revised and resubmitted, does not constitute publication. Emphasis will be on work completed while at American University.

Fundamentally, the Department looks for clear evidence of a sustained record of significant scholarly publications and strong evidence of a productive trajectory of scholarship that will continue with tenure and promotion. (See Faculty Manual 2014:24 and 34.) These goals can be attained in a variety of ways. For example, a book published with a well-respected publisher and several refereed journal articles is one way to establish excellence. Publishing a substantial number of articles in refereed, scholarly journals is another. When the editorial and refereeing processes for online journals are commensurate with disciplinary standards, publications in them will be evaluated alongside print journals.

Other types of publications will be taken into account, though may be given less value. The weight allocated to invited articles and edited collections will vary. For example, invited articles may attest to the stature of a scholar and in such cases would be considered in the context of the invitation. Edited collections of original scholarship and chapters reflecting original scholarship

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in such collections may represent the cutting edge of a field and would be valued as such, whereas an edited collection of previously published scholarship or conference proceedings could carry a lesser value. Other types of publications, such as articles in non-refereed journals and research reports, are valued but carry less weight than refereed journal articles and books. Review essays, encyclopedia entries, and book reviews have the least weight in evaluations and will be assessed in the context of their respective contributions to the field.

Faculty publications in languages other than English and in countries outside of the United States will be considered in the overall context of the faculty member's scholarship. Similarly, we recognize the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship and contributions in the area of public sociology, which we also will consider in the overall context of the faculty member's scholarship.

Expectations for styles of authorship vary across the many specialized subfields within Sociology. In many subfields, single-authored publications carry the most weight in evaluations for tenure and promotion. However, the changing nature of the discipline and the growing significance of collaboration have made coauthorship the norm for other areas of specialization. The Department values both single-author and collaborative publications; in determining the weight to give collaborative publication, we will assess the candidate's contribution to the published work.

In some coauthored papers, author order is expressly noted as alphabetical, random, or reverse alphabetical, as a way of emphasizing the equal contributions of all authors. It is also common to list authors in order of their contribution to the paper. And, in some fields it is convention to list the PI on the research project that gave rise to the publication as the last author. This convention indicates that the faculty member is the senior scholar who provided the framework for the analysis, and had significant input into the article concept, analysis, and writing.

Given the range of conventions for co-authored papers, it is important that a candidate detail her or his contributions. In general, publications for which the faculty member is on the latter part of the list of co-authors or the last author (except as described above) will carry less value than publications for which the candidate is among the first named authors.

The Department will use a combination of criteria to evaluate a candidate's overall scholarly excellence including the prominence of presses, published reviews, journal rankings, rates of acceptance, citations, and, in tenure and promotion cases, outside evaluations. Professional honors or awards for scholarship also serve as evidence of faculty achievement. When looking for indicators of a strong future research trajectory, the Department will consider external reviews, articles under review at peer-reviewed journals, book manuscripts in process, and paper presentations at academic conferences. We will specifically look for evidence that one's scholarship is evolving in new directions.

For promotion to the rank of Professor, the faculty member's level of cumulative scholarly achievement is of crucial importance. We look for evidence that the faculty member has attained a national or international reputation for excellence in her or his field. Consequently, citations are a more significant indicator of scholarly excellence for faculty seeking promotion to Professor, than for those seeking promotion to Associate.

The Department encourages all faculty to pursue external funding, in the form of grants or fellowships, while also recognizing that fields in the discipline vary with regard to significance and sources of funding. The Department values faculty serving as PI as well as faculty inclusion as Investigator on grants for which someone else is PI because the latter indicates the value of the individual's expertise for colleagues in her or his field. Applying for external funding

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demonstrates commitment to pursuing scholarship goals. Thus, as part of the holistic evaluation of the candidate's file for tenure and/or promotion to full we will take into consideration demonstrations of effort to secure and, particularly for promotion to full, success in securing external funding, especially in better-funded subfields.

Vibrant scholarly engagement in the intellectual life of the discipline is a cornerstone of academic excellence. We recognize and will consider the importance of presenting original scholarship at academic conferences and colloquia. In addition, invited presentations may attest to the stature of a scholar and, if so, will be considered in the context of the invitation.

We urge colleagues to follow closely the guidelines for preparing Files for Action (especially with regard to placement of scholarship material in the file) which are published each academic year by the Committee on Faculty Actions.

### **Effective Teaching**

The scholar-teacher ideal at AU combines “excellence in research with exceptional teaching.” In the Department of Sociology, it is a goal toward which we strive. Excellent scholars must be able to teach effectively in order to receive tenure and promotion, including promotion to the rank of Professor.

The Department seeks clear evidence of effective teaching in a variety of ways. Inside the classroom, we look for evidence of the ability to teach both undergraduate courses and graduate seminars. Standardized student evaluations of teaching (SETs) are important, if imperfect, indicators. For example, faculty who teach controversial topics (or some required courses) might find that their average scores for the course are lowered by a few poor evaluations. Similarly, especially rigorous courses may not achieve high SET scores. Thus, the Department will take into consideration the distribution of responses to questions on this standardized measure of teaching effectiveness. Additionally, narrative comments by students on teaching evaluations, syllabi, handouts, assignments, and exams may all serve as indications of effectiveness in the classroom.

At any time during her or his career, faculty may request that a member of the Rank and Tenure Committee or a faculty member from the Center for Research, Teaching and Learning visit his or her classroom to offer constructive feedback for improvement. The faculty may include any such assessment, based on direct observation, in her or his dossier as evidence of teaching effectiveness.

In addition to SETs and in-class observation, the Department will consider a well-organized, rigorous, and professional approach to teaching as evidence of effective teaching. Indicators of such include curriculum development grants; statements of teaching philosophy; new course development; documented service to the profession in advancing teaching; publications and conference presentations on teaching; and innovative use of technology. We note in this context that faculty shall provide timely, fair, and objective assessment of student performance. The Department will also take into account teaching honors, awards, and invited guest lectures.

The demands of teaching extend to contexts beyond the classroom where effectiveness can be demonstrated by a wide range of engagements including but not limited to: co-authoring with students; involving students in faculty scholarship; chairing theses; guiding independent research by graduate and undergraduate students; and mentoring students in the process of applying for prestigious awards. To the extent that a faculty member's teaching involves students in sociological practices that support local communities, public sociology may be recognized as a contribution to teaching.

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Given less weight but also recognized as important are activities that promote interaction between student life and the academic environment such as serving as faculty advisor to student organizations, frequent and active presence at student events on campus, and participation in Alternative Break. Student advising may be evaluated as teaching or service, depending on the specific context.

### **Service**

If faculty find distinction in scholarship and teaching, we find community through service. All faculty members are encouraged to be active participants in AU community life by attending major campus-wide events, particularly opening convocation, graduation, and orientation activities. For pre-tenure faculty, service to the Department is crucial; this includes participation in committees and events. Service to the profession and to broader local, national, or international communities is also expected. The relative weight of such forms of service depends on the significance of the service itself.

The Department appreciates that the balance among service, scholarship, and teaching must vary over the course of an academic career. We look to tenured faculty to demonstrate a record of active and constructive contributions to faculty governance at all levels. A candidate for the rank of Professor should clearly demonstrate a willingness and ability to provide leadership through service at the levels of the department, college, university, and profession. Senior faculty should participate in the mentoring of junior faculty.

The department evaluates a faculty member's consistent service to the profession through a range of indicators. These may include: being elected to office in professional organizations; holding positions of responsibility (invited or elected) on professional committees; sitting on grant review panels; organizing or participating in professional conferences; editing scholarly journals; serving on editorial boards of scholarly journals; refereeing works by other scholars submitted for publication; and maintaining active membership in professional organizations. In addition, some forms of public sociology and media engagements may also be recognized as professional service.

While faculty service is a crucial component of all reviews for reappointment, tenure, and promotion, it is never the primary basis for tenure and promotion decisions. As a consequence, it cannot compensate for weak performance in scholarship or teaching at any stage of a faculty member's academic career.