

Majoring in

African American Studies

Description of African American Studies

What is African American studies?

African American studies is a multidisciplinary study of the historic and contemporary experiences of people of African ancestry throughout the world.

What do African American studies majors study?

African American studies majors learn about the society, culture, politics, history, and economics of African Americans. They also study the contributions of people within the ethnic groups—in the arts, literature, science, professions, and commerce.

What skills are important for an African American studies major?

African American studies majors should:

- Be interested in the world and its people;
- Have good oral and written communication skills;
- Be good at synthesizing different topics of information; and
- Be sensitive to the differences between people of different cultures.

What else do African American studies majors study?

African American studies is a liberal arts major with a variety of courses to develop knowledge and skills that can be applied in both personal and professional settings.

Liberal arts courses provide a background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are also considered very important for success in the workplace.

Course Requirements

General education: About 55 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in science, math, writing, arts, ethics, civilization, human behavior, literature, foreign language, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 36 credit hours of African American studies courses are required. African American studies majors may take courses such as:

- African American family relationships
- African-American music
- African-American social thought
- African art and architecture
- Africa in transition
- African literature
- African societies
- Black theatre
- Black religion
- Economic development
- Politics of the Civil Rights movement
- Politics of Southern Africa
- Sociology of racism
- Survey of African history

Students are also required to establish a concentration in one of the following areas: anthropology, dance, English, geography, history, music, philosophy, religious studies, political science, psychology, sociology, theatre, or women's studies.

Electives: About 30 credit hours are required.

These courses may be taken in any area. Many African American studies majors focus these electives by choosing to minor (18-21 credit hours for an additional area of specialization).

Careers in African American Studies

Some entry-level areas of employment entered by African American studies majors with appropriate experience and education include the following:

- Banking associate
- Community service agency worker
- Congressional aid
- Cultural affairs officer
- Employment interviewer
- Family/life coordinator
- Human resources manager
- Investment counselor
- Lobbyist
- Management trainee
- Market researcher
- Minority program coordinator
- Public relations representative
- Real estate agent
- Retail manager
- Sales representative
- Social service agency worker
- Urban development advocacy program manager

Jobs that require additional education or experience for student majoring in sociology include:

- Career counselor
- College student personnel worker
- College professor
- Elementary teacher
- Lawyer
- Marriage and family therapist
- Rehabilitation counselor
- School counselor
- Social worker

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming an African American studies major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU African American Studies Departments website at www.has.vcu.edu/aas/
- Take an introductory African American studies course.
- Read about the African American studies major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the African American studies major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level African American studies students about their major.

- Discuss the major with an African American studies professor.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in African American studies.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the African American studies textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the African American Studies Department.
- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at www.bls.gov/oc

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