

Majoring in

Foreign Languages

Description of Foreign Language

What is foreign language?

Foreign language is the study of language, civilization, culture, and literature of non-English speaking peoples and regions.

What do foreign language majors study?

Foreign language majors learn to speak, listen to, read, and write the language they are studying. They learn the grammar, syntax, punctuation, and pronunciation of the language. Also, they study the culture and literature produced in the country and in other areas where the language is spoken. VCU students may choose to study Spanish, French, and German as their concentrations in the foreign language major.

What skills are important for a foreign language major?

Foreign language majors should have:

- A good ear for language and communication patterns;
- An above average ability in oral and written communication; and
- An interest in other cultures.

What else do foreign language majors study?

Foreign language 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 50 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in science, math, writing, arts, ethics, civilization, literature, human behavior, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 30 credit hours of upper level courses in Spanish, French, or German are required. Foreign language majors take courses such as:

- Advanced conversation
- Advanced grammar and writing
- Cinema
- Civilization and culture
- Internship
- Language for professions
- Literary genres
- Literature of various periods
- Translation

Electives: About 40 credit hours are required.

Foreign language majors are encouraged to complete a minor offered in the School of World Studies. These minors include anthropology, French, German, Italian, Spanish, geography, global studies, area studies, Native American studies, Catholic studies, Judaic studies, Latin and Roman studies, and religious studies.

Foreign language majors are encouraged to participate in a study-abroad program. Summer study-abroad programs provide short-term immersion in the language, culture, and civilization of the countries they visit. VCU is also a member of the International Student Exchange Program, which offers a junior year abroad at one of 40 universities world-wide.

Careers in Foreign Language

Some areas of employment entered by foreign language majors with appropriate experience and education include the following:

- College admissions counselor
- Customer service representative
- Customs official
- Elementary teacher
- FBI agent
- Food and wine sales representative
- Foreign news correspondent
- Foreign service officer
- Government consultant
- High school foreign language teacher
- Hotel manager
- Import/export agent
- Intelligence agent
- International airline employee
- International law
- International student advisor
- Interpreter
- Investment securities broker
- Librarian
- Museum curator
- Peace Corps volunteer
- Public relations information specialist
- Retail manager
- Translator
- Travel agent

Graduate study may be required for individuals wishing to advance their use of the language in areas such as interpreters, translators, and college professors. Using their language degree as preparation, many students go on to graduate programs in law or business.

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a foreign language major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU School of World Studies webpage.
- Take an intermediate or advanced foreign language course.
- Read about the foreign language major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the foreign language major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level foreign language students about their major.
- Discuss the major with one or more foreign language professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in foreign language.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the Spanish, French, and German textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the School of World Studies.

- Visit with the director of study-abroad program to discuss options available.

- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at www.bls.gov/oco.

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This brochure is published by
University College in cooperation
with the School of World Studies

