

Majoring in

Psychology

Description of Psychology

What is psychology?

Psychology is the study of human behavior and mental processes.

What do psychology majors study?

Psychology students study how thoughts, feelings, and motivations influence behaviors in individual and group relationships. This major relies heavily on exploring various theories and new research as it applies to why people behave the way they do.

Who succeeds in psychology?

Characteristics associated with success in this major include interest and skills in working with people, research, communication, and critical observation.

What else do psychology majors study?

Psychology is considered a liberal arts major. This means that students take a variety of courses in addition to those required in the major. These courses help develop knowledge and skills that are applied throughout one's lifetime.

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 considered very important for future success in the workplace. A strong liberal arts background also provides the foundation of an educated person.

Course Requirements

General education: About 60 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in the science, math, statistics, writing, arts, ethics, civilization, literature, and urban environment.

Major courses: From 30 to 40 credit hours of psychology courses are required. Psychology majors are required to take four core courses:

- Introduction to Psychology
- Applications of Statistics
- Experimental Methods
- History of Psychology

Additional content courses include:

- Child Psychology
- Personal Adjustment
- Educational Psychology
- Stress and Its Management
- Personality
- Social Psychology
- Interpersonal Relations
- Perception
- Abnormal Psychology
- Physiological Psychology

Psychology majors may choose a standard curriculum or select a concentration in one of four areas: Pre-graduate school, life science, applied psychology, and urban psychology.

Electives: About 30 credit hours are required.

Many psychology majors choose to use their electives toward a minor (18-21 credit hours) to give them an additional area of specialization.

Careers in Psychology

The psychology major provides a good background for *entry* to any number of occupations. Some of these careers include:

- Employment interviewer
- Human resources manager or recruiter
- Human services case worker
- Consumer researcher
- Childcare advocate
- Mental health worker
- Public relations specialist
- Sales representative
- Retail manager
- Real estate agent
- Parole officer
- Non-profit organization director
- Youth counselor

Many students who find this major appealing are interested in careers in counseling and clinical settings. Further training, including graduate school, is required in order to work in these areas.

- College student personnel worker
- Career counselor
- Director of social service agency
- Substance abuse counselor
- School counselor
- Corporate trainer
- Psychologist
- College professor

Next Steps

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

- Check out the VCU psychology webpage.
- Take an introductory psychology course.
- Read about the major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the Psychology major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level psychology students about their major experience.
- Discuss the major with one or more psychology professors
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in psychology.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse through the psychology textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the Psychology Advising Office.

- Check out the American Psychological Association's (APA) website at www.apa.org for information on topics related to the psychology field.

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