

Majoring in

Sociology

Description of Sociology

What is sociology?

Sociology is the study of collective human behavior and the social forces that influence it.

What do sociology majors study?

Sociology majors learn about the effect of social forces on people's attitudes and behavior. They study how attitudes and behaviors differ across time and social groups, from small primitive societies to large, complex, modern organizations. A major in this area provides a framework in sociological theory and research in studying deviance and crime, ecology, gerontology, organizations, social demography, and social structures and welfare.

What skills are important for a sociology major?

Sociology majors should:

- Have good oral and written communication skills;
- Be curious of how people interact and form relationships with each other;
- Be interested in social problems and their solutions; and
- Have an interest in the scientific study of the structure of society and activities of its members.

What else do sociology majors study?

Sociology 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, literature, foreign language, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 30 credit hours of sociology courses are required. Sociology majors may take courses such as:

- African American family in social context
- Class, status and power
- Family research
- Group dynamics
- Juvenile delinquency
- Labor, occupations and careers
- Medical sociology
- Minority groups in the U.S.
- News media in a democratic society
- Population dynamics
- Research methods in social sciences
- Russian society in transition
- Social change
- Social movements and social conflict
- Social science computing
- Social thought
- Sociological theory
- Sociology of mental disorder
- Sociology of religion
- Sociology of women
- Urban sociology

Electives: About 35 credit hours are required.

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

Careers in Sociology

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

- Aging specialist
- Child welfare officer
- Community service agency worker
- Congressional aid
- Corrections case worker
- Cottage parent
- Day care worker
- Delinquency counselor
- Genealogist
- Government planner
- Hospital volunteer coordinator
- Market researcher
- Parole officer
- Program assistant
- Retail manager
- Sales representative
- Social service agency worker

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

- Career counselor
- City planner
- College student personnel worker
- Elementary teacher
- Lawyer
- Marriage and family therapist

- Public health educator
- Rehabilitation counselor
- Resident director
- School counselor
- Social worker
- Sociology professor

Next Steps

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

- Check out the VCU Department of Sociology's website at www.has.vcu.edu/soc/
- Take an introductory sociology course.
- Read about the sociology major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the sociology major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level sociology students about their major.
- Discuss the major with a sociology professor.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in sociology.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the sociology textbook section.

- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the Sociology Department.
- Check out the American Sociological Association's website at www.asanet.org for information on the study of sociology.
- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at www.bls.gov/oco.

Virginia Commonwealth University

**College of
Humanities & Sciences**

**L. Douglas Wilder
School of Government
& Public Affairs**

Scherer Hall
P.O. Box 842028
Richmond, VA 23284

Phone: (804) 828-2292

School of Government & Public Affairs website:

www.has.vcu.edu/gov/index.html



This brochure is published by the
University College in cooperation with
the L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government & Public Affairs

