

Sociology is a social science dealing with the study of social life, social rules and processes, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. The field of interest ranges from the analysis of short contacts between anonymous individuals on the street to the study of global social processes. Sociology offers a rich source of conceptual frameworks into which the most pressing issues of our times can be placed, and a powerful set of methodological tools with which to study them. A focus on sociology as an “applied” discipline emphasizes the “real-world” applicability across society.

THE PROGRAM

The primary purpose of the sociology program at Virginia Wesleyan University is to provide concrete occasions and intellectual resources that can help students understand the social and cultural dimensions of human behavior. The community-oriented program provides students with the “toolkit” they need and the ability to apply their acquired skills at the next level. The applied, action-oriented nature of the program gives students hands-on experience and exposure to community involvement as well as valuable skills that employers seek. In addition, the program seeks to equip students with the necessary skills that are the foundation for graduate studies not only in sociology, but in a variety of fields such as social work, public health, law, and business.

THE MAJOR

The sociology major is a strong supporter of the liberal arts and complements the liberal arts curriculum. The department can also model the major around the individual needs and interests of the student. A student majoring in sociology at Virginia Wesleyan is required to complete 40 hours in specified coursework, and 50 hours if choosing to pursue an internship as part of their program.

THE COURSES

Classes at VWU are small and interactive. Some of the courses within the sociology program include: Applied Sociology; Cultural Anthropology; Family; Foundations of Sociology; Medical Sociology; Social Research; Sociology of Religion; Social Problems and Social Solutions; Visual Sociology; and special topics courses such as Animals and Society.

INTERNSHIPS

Students may elect to complement the classroom experience with an internship opportunity supervised by the department. An internship is a practiced, supervised experience in direct student learning in applied social settings in which students learn how sociological knowledge and skill sets can be applied to the workplace. Practical and applied learning through student performance in the applied setting gives the student a “competitive edge” for future

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The variety of skills that students gain through the sociology program enables students to plug into many roles, such as clinicians (with further study) and researchers who implement the theory in day-to-day life. Students enter a variety of career fields including public administration, education, social work, business, politics, protocol and personnel work. A degree in sociology also enables students to also work in health and human services-related fields or in the criminal justice system. In addition, some graduates seek postgraduate degrees such as law, M.S.W. and M.B.A. degrees.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Jeff Toussaint

Chair of the Department of Sociology/Criminal Justice
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
jtoussaint@vwu.edu

Dr. Thomas Brown

Chair of the Social Science Divisional Program
Associate Professor of Sociology/Criminal Justice
tbrown@vwu.edu

