Ask the big questions. Discover new paths.
Social Sciences
Change the world.

It’s done every day by people like you—people who are devoted to better understanding human society and taking on the complex, interconnected problems affecting today’s world. At URI, our programs in the social sciences—anthropology, criminology and criminal justice, economics, gender and women’s studies, international studies and diplomacy, political science, and sociology—offer you the understanding and experiences you need to begin.

We offer a liberal arts education enhanced by the resources and faculty expertise of a research university without borders. In these fields devoted to the study of society, we explore human nature in our classrooms, in our research, and through experiential learning and fieldwork opportunities. We focus on research and leadership skills, paying special attention to institutional analysis, the effects of inequality, the interrelationship between the personal and political, and prospects for change. We’ll empower you for a variety of careers by giving you a strong foundation in crucial skills, from working with qualitative and quantitative data to communicating effectively.

A complex maze of challenges faces our world today, and most of the problems—economic, environmental, social, and health-related—are interconnected. Although many of the scientific, financial, and technical solutions to these problems already exist, the barriers to fixing them remain complicated. Studying the social sciences at URI opens up the whole world to you, giving you the tools you need to understand—and move—those barriers and effect real change. Join us in changing the world.

Julia Santini ’21 epitomizes the interdisciplinary approach we strive for at URI in today’s interconnected world. A sociology and Italian double major, minoring in biological sciences, Julia is on a pre-med track and plans to apply to the Early Identification program for the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University. She is in the Honors Program, and also participates in a pre-med club known as Doc Opp and the Outing Club.
Anthropology offers a unique combination of social science, natural science, and humanistic inquiry. Students can choose to focus on archaeology, anthropology, or sociocultural anthropology—or to sample widely from the range of offerings. Graduates are well-positioned for careers in curating, cultural preservation, teaching, and graduate and professional study, and more.

You'll be able to take courses in all major subfields of the study of humankind, including archaeology, cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, and anthropological linguistics. You'll learn about human prehistory, evolutionary biology, and cultures around the world.

Depending on your career goals, you'll leave our program ready to pursue an advanced degree or take a job in a nonacademic field. Either way, we believe your life will be enriched through the study of humankind.
Criminology and Criminal Justice
Seek justice for all.

The interdisciplinary program in Criminology and Criminal Justice (CCJ) combines courses from six participating departments—sociology, political science, psychology, gender and women’s studies, economics, and chemistry—to give students a broad knowledge base. Courses in law and the legal system, behavioral psychology, human trafficking, forensics/criminalistics, and more will help you tailor your coursework to your areas of interest and your professional goals. The program prepares students for entry-level positions in criminal justice and related fields, especially at the state and federal levels, or for advanced study in graduate and professional programs.

While completing courses in CCJ, students have the opportunity to complete internships with a variety of organizations. Placements have included local, state, and federal police/law enforcement agencies, county and state courthouses, offices of the attorney general, social service agencies, juvenile and adult correctional facilities, probation and parole, domestic violence and advocacy services, and rehabilitation and treatment programs.

“URI’s CCJ program is incredibly influential and timely. The CCJ faculty foster a very welcoming learning environment that is conducive to learning and challenging controversial subject matter.”
— Ashley Fontana ’19

Assan Touray ’19, a criminology and criminal justice major, is pictured here with URI Police K9 Officer Figaro. Assan, who chose an internship with the URI Police Department, has accompanied officers on traffic stops, conducted security checks around campus, and worked with Figaro, an explosives-detective dog. Assan started at URI as a kinesiology major but switched to criminology and criminal justice early on as he recognized a shift in his interest. A native of Gambia, Assan moved here in 2010 to be with family and further his education. He says he was drawn to URI by the diversity on campus and the Talent Development Program.
“The economics department at URI has been a wonderfully supportive and encouraging environment. The best part of the department is the approachability of professors and the connections I have developed with professionals in the field.”

— Paige Carmichael ’20

Economics

See the big picture.

The economy is related to just about everything. Whether your goal is a career in finance, public policy, law, education, business, government, or any one of a number of other fields, economics provides a solid foundation for understanding how society functions—as well as how to think logically and critically while mastering basic quantitative skills. Our alumni work in a variety of fields including market research, policy analysis, financial services, law, publishing, and education.

Here, you’ll have the chance to complete an independently designed research project under faculty supervision on a topic related to law and economics, international labor standards, behavioral economics, feminist economics, or international macroeconomics and finance. We offer study-abroad programs in Cuba in collaboration with the Department of Political Science. The department also offers guidance with internships, especially in public policy, that will provide you with invaluable experience and networking connections.

Degree Programs:
• Bachelor of Science in Economics
• Bachelor of Science in Applied Economics
• Bachelor of Science in Economic Theory and Methods
Gender and Women’s Studies
Be the change.

Here at URI, the Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) program offers an interdisciplinary learning experience that encourages collaboration, community, and activism. As a GWS major, you will study politics, theory, literature, psychology, history, sociology, and more in a welcoming, inclusive environment. You will examine how different categories of identity—such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability—intersect on multiple levels to create and perpetuate power dynamics in local, national, and global communities.

In today’s increasingly global work environment, there is a growing demand for individuals with multicultural mindsets who understand complex issues that human beings face on personal, social, political, and economic levels. This is especially true in the medical field, law, social work, education, counseling, government service, and beyond—areas in which our graduates thrive. If you are interested in equality, justice, human behavior, and social change, GWS will inform and challenge you to be an agent of change in the 21st century.

Degree Program:
• Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Women’s Studies

Studying gender and women’s studies pushed me outside of my comfort zone, challenged me to see my world differently, pushed me to be an independent thinker, and—most importantly—encouraged me to use my knowledge to help others.”
— Yulyana Torres ’18

Yulyana Torres ’18, seen here with a colleague, is the community engagement and youth coordinator at the South County Domestic Violence Resource Center in Wakefield, R.I.
International Studies and Diplomacy
Put knowledge into practice.

The International Studies and Diplomacy program is an interdependent, dual-major undergraduate program. It is housed in the Department of Political Science and administered by three Arts and Sciences departments—languages, political science, and economics. Students in the program must complete two majors—one in international studies (33 credits) and another in a modern language (30 credits)—as well as study abroad. By the end of the ISD program, students will have gained essential knowledge and skills in international politics, economics, cultures, and language. Upon graduation, students are ready for careers in foreign service, diplomacy, international non-governmental organizations, and other international careers.

Degree Program Requirements:
• International Studies
• Language (select one):
  Chinese
  French
  German
  Italian
  Spanish
• Study Abroad

“I really enjoy how key themes across my classes intersect with each other. I take classes from multiple disciplines for my major—political science, economics, history, and anthropology. It’s really cool to see that interconnectedness.”

— Johanna Leffler ’21
“The political science department offers a flexible curriculum that encourages students to flourish and express their passions.”

— Ana T. Nimaja ’19

Political Science
Lead the way.

Political campaigns. Civil rights. International conflicts. The allocation of power and resources in society. War. Political scientists tackle these critical, timely issues through research, policy development, and public service. Here, you’ll study governments, political philosophy, international political organizations, civil and international conflict, public policies, and political movements in order to make informed choices, lead communities, and develop laws that can change the world.

You will explore the diverse cultures and political institutions around the world, broadening your global horizons. You will learn to analyze politics and public policies using such analytical techniques as applied statistics. Studying political science gives you the tools you need to understand the world’s biggest interconnected problems and to create real change.

We also offer a Pre-Law Program providing preparation, support, and advising for students who are considering applying to law school, whatever your major may be. Our team of advisors guides you through your undergraduate studies and helps you choose the degree program(s), courses, experiential opportunities, and other activities that will pave your way to law school, and beyond.

Degree Programs:
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (in one of two tracks):
- International Relations
- American Politics

Ana T. Nimaja ’19, seen here in Providence, enjoyed her work as an intern at a Washington, D.C., nonprofit during her senior year. After working as an immigration paralegal at a Providence law firm post-graduation, she plans to apply to law school.
Sociology
Ask the big questions.

If you are interested in systems, structures, and issues that are uniquely human—such as social behavior and culture, family and intimate relationships, criminology and corrections, and advances in technology—pursuing a degree in sociology will allow you to study these complex issues while learning to create positive change in the world. As you explore human nature on a deeper level in the classroom and through research and a variety of experiential learning and fieldwork opportunities, you will cultivate skills that consistently appear among national policy priorities and employer surveys—including the ability to make empirically based arguments, to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, and to communicate effectively.

Our faculty have expertise in a broad range of topics, including inequality, immigration, crime and delinquency, labor markets, families and care work, reproduction and aging, poverty, and international development. We offer experiential learning programs—here in Rhode Island and abroad in Italy and Mexico—that will provide you with hands-on learning related to globalization, multiculturalism, and juvenile justice. We will prepare you for a range of careers in education, public service, law enforcement, and law—or for advanced study in the nation’s leading graduate and professional schools.

Degree Program:
• Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

“Studying sociology makes you stop and think critically about practices and behaviors in our daily lives that we take for granted.”
— Iqra Ishaq ’19
Interdisciplinary
Expand your worldview.

In the College of Arts and Sciences, we embrace the importance of putting knowledge into practice, and we see global, cross-disciplinary education as vital to that process. At this research university without borders, our faculty foster interdisciplinary connections, scholarship, and pedagogy both inside and outside our classrooms. Many of our students double—or triple—major and add minors to broaden their fields of study, or pursue internships and other experiential learning opportunities that combine several interests. You’ll find our emphasis on interdisciplinary education will help you understand and make connections across a diverse spectrum of knowledge, subjects, and proficiencies, and that expanding your skillset and worldview will prepare you for a rewarding life and career. Here are some examples of students who used interdisciplinary initiatives to think—and act—big.

Jessica Cawley '19, seen above in Havana, Cuba, double majored in political science and philosophy. While at URI, in addition to studying abroad, she completed internships with Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse at their Washington, D.C., offices, and conducted two in-depth research projects—one of which focused on gender equality and women's rights in Cuba and required her to conduct interviews in Spanish with Cuban scholars. She now works as a college advisor through the AmeriCorps program at a high school in Atlanta, Georgia.

Gabrielle DoVale ‘20, a double major in history and criminology and criminal justice, attended the 2019 Leadership Alliance Summer Research Program. She teamed up with scholars at Brown University, to conduct interdisciplinary research about the differences in alcohol-related arrests for white women and black women in the years around prohibition in Virginia. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in criminal justice.

Adelola “Lola” Ojutiku ’19 double majored in economics and mathematics. While at URI, she was president of the Student Alliance for the Welfare of Africa group, vice president of the Economics Student Association, and on the finance committee for the Diversifying Individuals Via Education conference. She completed an Arts and Sciences Research Fellowship focused on imperialism in Africa. She is now pursuing a Ph.D. in economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

After earning a B.S. in sociology and a B.A. in psychology, John Vaccaro ’12 attended John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he focused his graduate research on sexual violence prevention and conducted studies at a maximum security prison in Pennsylvania. He now works as a crisis clinician with the NYPD, specializing in cases that involve mental health concerns.