Medicine and Society

The Medicine and Society Program is an exciting opportunity for undergraduate students in Arts & Sciences who are interested in exploring the interface of culture, behavior and health from a social science perspective. The program addresses the important social and cultural foundations of health and illness in human societies, with a specific emphasis upon service and research opportunities. The program is supported by a grant from the Danforth Foundation and administered through the Department of Anthropology.

Eligibility:
The Medicine and Society Program is a four-year program designed for students entering their freshman year. Upon acceptance to Washington University in the spring, students may apply online for admission to the program by indicating their interest in Medicine and Society. A description of the program and how to apply online is in Getting Started, a brochure sent to students in mid-May.

Admission to this program is highly competitive. Academic credentials, aptitude and interest in a health-related career, and personal statements all will be considered in selecting 20 participants to join the freshman cohort. The program will particularly appeal to students with a long-term commitment to careers in the health professions and related areas.

Curriculum:
Medicine and Society has its intellectual and programmatic roots in the field of medical anthropology, which is broadly defined as the study of human health and illness across culture, time and space. Medical anthropologists examine the role of culture and society in shaping illness experiences. Foci of inquiry may include such issues as traditional health beliefs and practices; cultural clashes between traditional medicine and biomedicine; political and economic foundations of health disparities; alternative and complementary medicine; social and behavioral factors affecting disease rates; and public health responses to emerging health problems. These topics all share a focus on community as a primary area of inquiry and population as a primary unit of analysis.

The Program

Requirements for the Medicine and Society Program:
Once admitted to the program, students must complete the following:

• Freshman Medicine and Society Seminar
• Community Health Internship
• Anthro 260 Topics in Health and Community

• A Major or Minor in Anthropology or the Global Health and Environment track of Anthropology
• Senior Capstone or Honors Thesis

Students who are accepted into the Medicine and Society Program are enrolled in a year-long Freshman Seminar on culture, health and society in the Department of Anthropology. This seminar provides the academic foundation for future community health work in St. Louis. Beginning in the sophomore year, students identify and select a community health site for internship placement. The internship opportunity provides students with a location for focusing their interest and involvement in community health and allows students to participate in the work of the host organization. During the junior and senior years, academic and service activities intensify at the internship site, culminating in a Senior Honors thesis or Capstone project based upon original research and investigation. All students in the Medicine and Society Program are encouraged to graduate with honors, based upon their independent research and academic achievement.

This course of study provides an excellent foundation for future graduate work in medicine, public health or any of the allied health professions such as nursing or physical and occupational therapy. Students who complete the program also will be highly competitive for admission to other professional schools such as law, business or social work.

Personnel:
Medicine and Society is directed by Bradley Stoner, a medical anthropologist and infectious disease physician at Washington University. Dr. Stoner has extensive experience as a physician and public health researcher and holds a joint appointment in the Department of Internal Medicine at Washington University School of Medicine. He oversees student training in medical anthropology and placement in the community internship sites. Dr. Stoner is assisted in these efforts by Rebecca Lester, who serves as assistant director of the program. Students also have full access to other faculty in anthropology and related disciplines who offer courses of relevance and interest.

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Lecturer
Barbara A. Baumgartner
PhD, Northwestern University
(Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies)

The Medicine and Society Program is not a major/minor program; it is a four-year program that is available by application only.

Current students who are interested in the Medicine and Society curriculum are advised to investigate a major or minor in anthropology with a focus on medical anthropology or the optional Global Health and Environment track of the anthropology major or minor.

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