Medical Humanities

The minor in medical humanities draws on courses from a variety of departments and programs, including art history, classics, history, languages and literature, music, philosophy, and gender and sexuality studies. The minor is housed in the Washington University Center for the Humanities.

The minor approaches health, disease and medical care as culturally embedded human experiences that vary across time and place. In addition to exploring health, disease and medical care as core human experiences, the program of study is designed to provide a solid grounding in the textual-historical approach essential to all humanities scholarship. The minor combines disciplinary diversity with thematic unity to engage students with a set of tightly related "big" topics and issues. These include the contested meanings of health and disease; the ethical dimensions of medicine; illness narratives; debates over health and development; the role of medicine in war, empire and nation building; the relationship between religion and medicine; exchange and friction between biomedicine and other healing traditions; and the burden of disease as it relates to gender, race and class.

Medical Humanities aspires to instill the values shared by all humanities disciplines: to appreciate multiple worlds and viewpoints, to communicate clearly and gracefully, and to read and think critically. Students will emerge from the minor able to apply the insights and critical methods of literature, philosophy, history and the arts to subjects often left solely to the natural and social sciences. Its goal is to demonstrate the enduring relevance of humanistic inquiry to understanding a basic realm of human experience.

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Majors
Medical humanities is an interdepartmental minor; Washington University does not offer an independent major in medical humanities.

Minors
The Minor in Medical Humanities

Units required: 18

At least one gateway course (3 units) is required for the minor. These include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MedH 130</td>
<td>The Art of Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History 1640</td>
<td>Health and Disease in World History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedH 233F</td>
<td>Biomedical Ethics</td>
<td>3</td>
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An additional 15 units of Medical Humanities courses are required to complete the minor: At least 12 of these units must be core courses, designated by the "CFH MH" attribute, whereas the remaining 3 credits can come from either the core or affiliate lists shown below. At least 9 units of core courses must be at the 300 level or above. Core courses include the gateway courses, as well as the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MedH 126</td>
<td>Chinese for Medical Purposes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedH 3001</td>
<td>Philosophy of Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedH 301R</td>
<td>Historical Methods — European History (when offered as The Black Death and the Plague in Europe)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedH 3031</td>
<td>Music and Healing</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>MedH 3033</td>
<td>Religion and Healing</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGSS 3041</td>
<td>Making Sex and Gender: Understanding the History of the Body</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>MedH 3044</td>
<td>Humors, Pox, and Plague: Medieval and Early Modern Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History 3067</td>
<td>Current Topics in the History of Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MedH 307</td>
<td>Writing and Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
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MedH 310 | From Hysteria to Hysterectomy: Women's Health Care in America | 3 |
MedH 312W | The Body in Pain | 3 |
IS 326 | The Doctor Is In: Anton Chekhov and Narrative Medicine (U43) | 3 |
MedH 353 | Medical Spanish | 3 |
MedH 360 | Trans* Studies | 3 |
Phil 366 | Art and the Mind-Brain | 3 |
MedH 3672 | Medicine, Healing and Experimentation in the Contours of Black History | 3 |
ELit 370 | The Writing and Representation of Pain (U65) | 3 |
MedH 375 | Medical Narratives, Narrative Medicine | 3 |
MedH 3801 | Ancient Greek and Roman Medicine | 3 |
MedH 385 | What Is Medical Humanities? | 3 |
MedH 391W | Literature and Medicine | 3 |
MedH 4033 | Culture, Illness, and Healing in Asia (through SP18; please contact us for updates) | 3 |
MedH 408 | Disease, Madness, and Death Italian Style | 3 |
MedH 418 | Sexuality and Gender in East Asian Religions (when offered as "The Body in Daoism") | 3 |
MedH 423 | Philosophy of Biological Science | 3 |
Drama 456 | A Madman in the Theater: The History of Insanity on Stage from Sophocles to Shaffer | 3 |
MedH 4647 | Ancient Madness | 3 |
MedH 474 | Frankenstein: Origins and Afterlives | 3 |
MedH 4885 | Advanced Seminar: Medicine, Disease, and Empire | 3 |
MedH 491 | Staging Illness | 3 |
MedH 4990 | Advanced Seminar: History of the Body | 3 |
History 49CJ | Advanced Seminar: Medicine on the Frontiers | 3 |

Note: The 9 credits of advanced medical humanities core courses (at the 300 level or above) must also come from at least two of six different disciplinary categories: Classics & Art History; History; Languages/Literature/Culture; Performing Arts & Music; Philosophy & Religious Studies; and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Core courses may also require additional prerequisites within their home departments or programs.

Up to 3 units of affiliate courses from complementary disciplines in the sciences and social sciences (designated by
the “CFH MHA” attribute) may be applied to the minor. These include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOC 2510</td>
<td>Sociological Approaches to American Health Care</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthro 3283</td>
<td>Introduction to Global Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthro 3310</td>
<td>Health, Healing and Ethics: Introduction to Medical Anthropology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthro 3620</td>
<td>Anthropological Perspectives on the Fetus</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthro 3626</td>
<td>Adventures in Nosology: The Nature and Meaning of Disease</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych 399</td>
<td>Living, Dying and Death: A Biopsychosocial Approach to Understanding the End of Life</td>
<td>3</td>
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**Additional Information**

The most up-to-date list of medical humanities courses and medical humanities affiliate courses can be found by searching Washington University Course Listings for the “CFH MH” and “CFH MHA” attributes or by consulting the course requirements (https://humanities.wustl.edu/medical-humanities-minor-requirements) online.

**Courses**

Medical Humanities began listing courses under the L85 MedH designation in spring 2017; we are adding new courses to that designation as they are offered, but some of our core courses are not yet represented in the list below. For a more complete list of Medical Humanities courses, please consult the Minors section of this page or search Course Listings (https://acadinfo.wustl.edu/Courselists/Semester/Search.aspx) for the CFH MH (Medical Humanities) and CFH MHA (Medical Humanities: Affiliate) attributes.

**L85 MedH 126 Chinese for Medical Purposes**

This course is the continuation of Beginning Chinese taught in the fall at the Shanghai Fudan program. The spring course is targeted specifically to pre-medicine and/or health care students who have studied at the Shanghai Fudan program in the fall. Students without the Fudan experience can also enroll after language evaluation. Prerequisites: L04 101D, L04 117F or the equivalent.

Same as L04 Chinese 126
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS Arch; HUM Art; HUM BU: HUM EN: H

**L85 MedH 130 The Art of Medicine**

This interdisciplinary, cross-school course at the intersection of the humanities and medicine offers students a singular encounter with the changing art and craft of medicine from ancient times to the present day. The course highlights transformational moments in the chronological history of medicine. It engages a variety of texts, including primary works and scholarship in the history of medicine as well as artworks and literary and dramatic narratives that represent the body, disease and healing care. A principal aim is for students to learn to see medicine as a social practice deeply implicated in the beliefs and struggles of particular cultural and historical contexts. Collaborating faculty come from the McKelvey School of Engineering, the Washington University School of Medicine, the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts and the School of Arts & Sciences. This course is for freshmen only.

Same as I50 INTER D 130
Credit 3 units. A&S: FYBB A&S IQ: HUM Arch; HUM Art; HUM BU: HUM EN: H

**L85 MedH 233F Biomedical Ethics**

A critical examination, in the light of contemporary moral disagreements and traditional ethical theories, of some of the moral issues arising out of medical practice and experimentation in our society. Issues that might be discussed include euthanasia, genetic engineering, organ transplants, medical malpractice, the allocation of medical resources, and the rights of the patient.

Same as L30 Phil 233F
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch; HUM Art; HUM BU: ETH EN: H

**L85 MedH 3001 Philosophy of Medicine**

Philosophy of medicine is an investigation into what doctors know, and how they know it. This course will investigate the following questions: What is disease? What is health? How do we classify disease? What counts as good evidence and good evidential reasoning in medicine? Is medicine a science? If so, what makes it distinctive as a science? What kinds of evidential roles do case studies play in medicine? How ought we to measure and compare outcomes in clinical trials and in systematic reviews? What is the appropriate relationship between medicine and the basic sciences, or, medicine and the public health sciences (e.g., epidemiology, biostatistics, economics, and behavioral science)? What role, if any, ought private industry - such as the pharmaceutical industry, or health insurance industry - play in shaping the practice of medicine? How ought we to define and measure "effectiveness" in medicine? Do values inform decision making about health policy, and if so, how? The overall goal of the course is to develop a reasoned, reflective approach to research and practice in medicine, through critical analysis of texts, and case studies in the history of medicine. You do not need a major in philosophy or background in medical humanities to take this course. This course is intended to be of special interest to pre-health professionals, or philosophy or science majors. For graduate students in philosophy, this course satisfies the seminar requirement. Extra assignments will be provided to satisfy graduate coursework; please see me for details.

Same as L30 Phil 3001
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Art; HUM BU: ETH EN: H

**L85 MedH 301R Historical Methods — European History**

This is a small-group reading course in which students are introduced to the skills essential to the historian’s craft. Emphasis will be on acquiring research skills, learning to read historical works critically, and learning to use primary and secondary sources to make a persuasive and original argument. View Course Listings for current topics. Required for history majors. Preference given to History majors; other interested students welcome.
L85 MedH 3031 Music and Healing
In this course, we broadly consider issues of music and healing, drawing from the fields of medical ethnomusicology, medical anthropology, music therapy, and psychology. Our case studies are multi-sited, as we interrogate musical healings and healing music from diverse global and historical perspectives. We approach our study of musical practices with the understanding that the social, cultural and political contexts where "music" and "healing" are themselves created inform the sounds of the music and its various — and often conflicting — interpretations and meanings. We read a variety of academic literature and use media texts and listening examples to develop interdisciplinary and cross-cultural analyses of music and healing. Issues of national consciousness, postcolonialism, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, religion, dis/ability and the role of history/memory remain central to our explorations of music and healing.
Same as L27 Music 3031
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: BA EN: H

L85 MedH 3033 Religion and Healing
This course explores the relationship between religion and healing through historical and comparative study of Christian, Jewish and other religious traditions. We will examine how specific religious worldviews influence conceptions of the body and associated healing practices, how states of health and disease are identified and invested with religious significance, and how religious thought contributed to and coexisted alongside the growth of modern Western medicine. While much of the course will draw on specific case studies, students will be encouraged to pursue their own interests in the area of religion and healing through final projects.
Same as L23 Re St 3033
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: BA EN: ETH EN: H

L85 MedH 3044 Humors, Pox, and Plague: Medieval and Early Modern Medicine
This course examines how people thought about, experienced and managed disease in the medieval and early modern periods. Students will consider developments in learned medicine alongside the activities of a diverse range of practitioners — e.g., surgeons, empriques, quacks, midwives, saints, and local healers — involved in the business of curing a wide range of ailments. Significant attention will be paid to the experiences of patients and the social and cultural significance of disease. Major topics include: the rise and fall of humoral medicine; religious explanations of illness; diseases such as leprosy, syphilis and plague; the rise of anatomy; herbs and pharmaceuticals; the experience of childbirth; and the emergence of identifiable "modern" institutions such as hospitals, the medical profession, and public health. The focus will be on Western Europe but we'll also consider developments in the Islamic world and the Americas.
Same as L22 History 3044
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L85 MedH 307 Writing and Medicine
Same as L13 Writing 307
What were the intellectual origins of Greek medicine? The social status of medical practitioners? How was medicine written and in what terms did its practitioners conceive it?

L85 MedH 385 What Is Medical Humanities?
What is medical humanities? What are its core questions and methods? When and how did the field emerge? To whom does it matter, and why? These questions will ground our exploration of recent work in medical humanities. We begin with readings chosen by the instructor to illuminate various humanistic methods (e.g., historical, literary, philosophical) and their approach to recurrent topics and problems in the field (e.g., the doctor-patient relationship, illness as experience, the social construction of disease, health inequality, medicalization). During the second part of the course, students will be guided in co-writing and co-teaching the rest of the syllabus. Students will finish the class able to provide their own definition of medical humanities and to explain the field's origins and concerns as well as why and to whom the field matters. Enrollment preference will be given to students who have already declared the minor in medical humanities.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM: HUM BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L85 MedH 391W Literature and Medicine
Same as L14 E Lit 391W
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, WI Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L85 MedH 399 Independent Work in Medical Humanities
This designation can be used for independent studies and reading courses in medical humanities. It requires prior approval from the director of the medical humanities minor.
Credit variable, maximum 3 units.

L85 MedH 4033 Culture, Illness, and Healing in Asia
This course examines the place of health, illness and healing in Asian societies. We explore how people experience, narrate and respond to illness and other forms of suffering — including political violence, extreme poverty and health inequalities. In lectures and discussions we discuss major changes that medicine and public health are undergoing and how those changes affect the training of practitioners, health care policy, clinical practice and ethics. The course familiarizes students with key concepts and approaches in medical anthropology by considering case studies from a number of social settings including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Tibet, Thailand, Vietnam and Asian immigrants in the United States. We also investigate the sociocultural dimensions of illness and the medicalization of social problems in Asia, examining how gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability and other forms of social difference affect medical knowledge and disease outcomes. This course is intended for anthropology majors, students considering careers in medicine and public health, and others interested in learning how anthropology can help us understand human suffering and formulate more effective interventions.

Same as L48 Anthro 4033
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC EN: S
L85 MedH 408 Disease, Madness, and Death Italian Style

Italian literary history teems with representations of illness, insanity, and death. From the ghastly 1348 plague that frames Boccaccio’s “Decameron” to the midday madness of errant Renaissance knights and from 16th-century tales of poisoning and 19th-century Pirandellian madmen to the contemporary scourge of mafia killings, disease, madness, and death are dominant facts of reality, points of view, symbols, and cultural characteristics of Italian poetry and prose. This course undertakes a pathology of these tropes in Italian literary history and seeks to understand their meaning for the changing Italian cultural identity across time and the Italian peninsula. We will read primary literary texts and view excerpts from films alongside articles focused on the cultural history of medicine, religion, and criminal justice. Taught in English. No final.

Same as L36 Ital 408
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, IS EN: H

L85 MedH 418 Sexuality and Gender in East Asian Religions

In this course we will explore the role of women in the religious traditions of China, Japan and Korea, with a focus on Buddhism, Daoism, Shamanism, Shinto and the so-called “New Religions.” We will begin by considering the images of women (whether mythical or historical) in traditional religious scriptures and historical or literary texts. We will then focus on what we know of the actual experience and practice of various types of religious women — nuns and abbesses, shamans and mediums, hermits and recluses, and ordinary laywomen — both historically and in more recent times. Class materials will include literary and religious texts, historical and ethnological studies, biographies and memoirs, and occasional videos and films. Prerequisites: This class will be conducted as a seminar, with minimal lectures, substantial reading and writing, and lots of class discussion. For this reason, students who are not either upper-level undergraduates or graduate students, or who have little or no background in East Asian religion or culture, will need to obtain the instructor’s permission before enrolling.

Same as L23 Re St 418
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM, IS EN: H

L85 MedH 423 Philosophy of Biological Science

This course examines a number of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological issues that arise in the attempts of biologists to explain living systems. One sort of problem concerns the relation between biology (and biological descriptions and explanations) and physics and chemistry. Biological phenomena have often seemed very different from ordinary physical phenomena in being teleological or goal oriented. Vitalists, accordingly, resisted the attempt to invoke physics and chemistry in the attempt to explain biological phenomena. But recently biology has come more and more to draw upon physics and chemistry; we will examine the conceptual frameworks that underlie these efforts. Another sort of problem concerns the adaptiveness of living organisms. Charles Darwin offered one naturalistic explanation of this feature, an explanation that was further developed in this century as the synthetic theory of evolution. A number of controversial issues have arisen within this context of adaptation, and the range of levels at which selection can occur. The ubiquity of evolution, moreover, has been challenged in recent years, as a number of non-selectionist explanations have recently been put forward. We will consider the arguments for the synthetic theory and these alternatives.

L85 MedH 4647 Ancient Madness

In this course we will ask what madness meant in Greek and Roman culture. We will find reading strategies that are sensitive both to ancient evidence and to the ethical demands of talking about, evaluating, and categorizing people treated as mad. While we will concentrate on literary (particularly tragic and epic), philosophical, and medical texts, we will also look at visual representations and evidence from ritual and cult. An important part of our project will involve tracing the afterlife of classical ideas: the history of melancholia will ground this aspect of the course. Finally, we will consider how antiquity informs psychoanalysis (Oedipus, Antigone, Narcissus), and how ancient madness might partake in a critique of contemporary understandings of mental illness.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD EN: H

L85 MedH 474 Frankenstein: Origins and Afterlives

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM

L85 MedH 4885 Advanced Seminar: Medicine, Disease, and Empire

This course examines the history of medicine in connection to the politics of colonialism and empire-building, spanning the 16th century through the 20th century. Topics covered include: epidemic disease outbreaks (e.g., smallpox, cholera, malaria); the role of science and medicine in endorsing the “civilizing missions” of empires; tropical climates and tropical diseases as western constructs; tensions between western medicine and indigenous healing practices and beliefs; ideas of race and racism in science and medicine; modern advancements in sanitation and public health in the context of empires; and the historical roots of the modern global health movement.

Same as L22 History 4885
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM, IS EN: H

L85 MedH 491 Staging Illness

“Suddenly some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light.” This quotation, from Tolstoi’s story “The Death of Ivan Ilych,” offers an example of how artists have employed serious or life-threatening diseases as a means of illuminating both physical suffering and spiritual rebirth. Even as it invades the body and isolates us from our fellow man, illness may offer opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal, serving as an apt metaphor for human survival in times of extremis. In her brilliant essay, “Illness as Metaphor” (1978), Susan Sontag takes issue with how illnesses like tuberculosis were misunderstood or even romanticized during the 19th century in works like Dumas’s “Camille” and Puccini’s “La Boheme.” During the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, American artists — particularly theatre artists, whose communities were decimated by the disease — were forced to consider how this global pandemic impacted their lives, especially at a time when the term AIDS was not even mentioned by the President of the United States. In conjunction with the Performance Arts Department’s 25th anniversary production of Tony Kushner’s extraordinary play, “Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches,” this new course examines how disease has been a focal point of artistic inquiry over the course of centuries. By examining works that are focused on illness throughout history, this seminar offers both a deeper understanding of and
context for Kushner's masterpiece and the AIDS crisis, and it considers how illness has always been an important subject for the investigation of what it means to be fully human. Same as L15 Drama 491 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: CPSC, HUM BU: HUM EN: H

**L85 MedH 4990 Advanced Seminar: History of the Body**

Do bodies have a history? Recent research suggests that they do. Historians have tapped a wide variety of sources — including vital statistics, paintings and photographs, hospital records, and sex manuals — to reconstruct changes in how humans have conceptualized and experienced their own bodies. We pay particular attention to the intersection of European cultural history and history of medicine since 1500. Same as L22 History 4990 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H