

Medicine & Society

The Medicine & 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 on service, research, and mentoring opportunities. In addition to the academic activities, Medicine & Society has a robust sense of community with several opportunities to work with, spend time with, and serve with other Medicine & Society Scholars.

The Medicine & Society program is supported by a grant from the Danforth Foundation and administered through the Department of Anthropology. It is not a major/minor program; it is a four-year program that is available by application only.

Eligibility

The Medicine & Society Program is a four-year program designed for matriculating first-year students. Admission to this program is highly competitive. Academic credentials, aptitude and interest in a health-related career, and personal statements all will be considered when selecting up to 20 participants to join the entering cohort. The program will particularly appeal to students with a long-term commitment to careers and research in healthcare and related fields. All evaluations for admission into this program are blind.

Curriculum

The Medicine & Society Program 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 the shaping of 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; ethical considerations pertaining to health care research, access, and the experience of care and illness; alternative and complementary medicine; social and behavioral factors that affect 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.

Requirements

Once admitted to the program, students must complete the following during the 4-year period of their undergraduate careers (Total of 18 credit hours) the table lists required courses, the information below it provides information about additional program requirements:

Code	Title	Units
Anthro 141	Ampersand: Medicine and Society	3
Anthro 142	Ampersand: Medicine and Society	3
Anthro 341	Health and Wellness in the Community: A Service Learning Seminar	4
Anthro 4421	Advanced Seminar in Medicine and Society: Patients, Politics, Policy	3

- First-year Medicine & Society year-long seminar (141, 142)
- Community health internship or service-learning course (341)
- A major or minor in anthropology or the global health and environment track of anthropology
- A junior/senior advanced seminar addressing contemporary issues in Medicine & Society (4421)
- 2 additional Medical Anthropology electives.
 - Sample elective courses offered in Medical Anthropology can be found here: [Global Health and the Environment](#)
- The W.H.R Rivers Project, which is a final project, paper, capstone, or honors thesis conducted during their senior year.

Students who are accepted into the Medicine & Society Program are enrolled in a year-long first-year 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 as early as the sophomore year, students identify and select a community health site for internship placement or service-learning activities. The internship/service-learning opportunity provides students with a location for focusing their interest and involvement in community health and allows them to participate in the work of the host organization. During the junior and senior years, students have the opportunity to intensify their academic and service activities at the internship or service-learning site, which may culminate in a senior honors thesis or a capstone project based on original research and investigation. Students in the Medicine & Society Program are encouraged to graduate with honors, based on their independent research and academic achievement.

Personnel

The Medicine & Society Program is directed by Dr. Anna Jacobsen, a sociocultural and medical anthropologist whose previous work discussed issues pertaining to religion and morality as they influence perspectives and understandings of personhood and health. This research focused on these processes as they unfolded in Somali refugee communities in Kenya and Northern Europe. Dr. Jacobsen's work then expanded to include the ways vaccine confidence was informed by moral and religious ideologies in Somali communities around North America and how understandings of death and dying have been broadly influenced by the same. Her current research explores end of life care, including palliative and hospice care, in the St. Louis area.

Students should also be aware that they also have full access to other faculty in anthropology and related disciplines who offer courses of relevance and interest.

Contact: Dr. Anna Jacobsen
Email: aljacobs@wustl.edu
Website: <https://anthropology.wustl.edu/medicine-society-program>

Faculty

Director

Anna Jacobsen

Senior Lecturer, Director of Undergraduate Studies in Anthropology
PhD, Washington University
(Anthropology; Medical Anthropology; End of Life Care, Death, and Dying; Morality and Religion)

Administrative Assistant

Erin Coleman

Courses

Please refer to the requirements in the Medicine & Society Overview (p. 1) section, where required courses are listed. Please visit the Medicine & Society page for additional information about the program and courses. Each semester the department offers a range of Medical Anthropology and Global Health electives. During Fall 2024, these courses will include the following:

Code	Title	Units
Anthro 3006	Global Health and Language	3
Anthro 307A	Human Variation	3
Anthro 3090	Cultures of Health in Latin America	3
Anthro 3151	Evolution of the Human Diet	3
Anthro 3316	Introduction to Forensic Anthropology	3
Anthro 3621	Anthropology of Human Birth	3
Anthro 3876	Darwin and Doctors: Evolutionary Medicine and Health	3
Anthro 3885	Global Mental Health	3
Anthro 4134	The AIDS Epidemic: Inequalities, Ethnography, and Ethics	3
Anthro 4581	Principles of Human Anatomy and Development	3