

HEALTH STUDIES

The Health Studies Minor at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges brings together courses and faculty members in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities to guide students through the biomedical, cultural, ethical, and political questions that relate to health issues on local, regional and global scales. Our Colleges value the intersection of public health and social justice, and this new course of study will allow students to approach these vital issues with greater knowledge and understanding.

Given its multidisciplinary structure, the health studies minor will give scientific context to students in the social sciences and humanities who are interested in health policy, public health, law, medical ethics, social services, or health education. The minor also complements the curriculum for traditional science majors by providing important social and behavioral dimensions for those students planning to go into medicine, nursing, physical therapy, psychology and other clinical fields.

This is a Bi-College minor, and courses will be taught by Bryn Mawr College and Haverford College across many disciplines. When approved by the Co-Directors, selected courses for the minor may also be taken at Swarthmore College, University of Pennsylvania and while studying abroad.

Minor Requirements

The minor consists of a total of six courses, five of which must be outside of the student's major, and must include the following:

- Introduction to Health Studies (HLTH B115/HLTH H115). A multidisciplinary introductory course taught by two faculty members from different academic divisions that must be taken before enrolling in the Health Studies Capstone Seminar.
- Three core courses from a list approved by the Co-Directors. Two of these courses must be elected from a Department outside of the student's major and at least two of the courses should be at the non-introductory level. Students must take one course in each of three areas:
 - **M track:** Mechanisms of disease and the maintenance of the health body (M)
 - **R track:** Cultural and Literary Representations of Health and Illness (R)
 - **S track:** Responses of familial, social, civic and governmental Structures to issues of health and disease (S)
- One additional course, outside the student's major. Students may choose either a core course (C) or one selected from a list of approved affiliate courses (A), which deal with health issues, but not necessarily as their primary focus.
- HLTH B398 Senior Seminar Health Studies. A capstone course organized around a theme, such as vaccines, AIDS, drug abuse, disability, migration etc. Students will analyze current literature addressing the theme from their own disciplinary perspectives and will develop research proposals and collaborative projects.

Core Courses¹

- HLTH B115/H115: Introduction to Health Studies
- HLTH B398 Senior Seminar Health Studies

Track M

- HLTH H215: Sacrifice Zones: Empires, Epidemics, and Climate Changes
- HLTH H319B: Metabolic Disorders
- ANTH H338A: The Anthropology of Addiction
- BIOL B201 Genetics
- BIOL B215 Biostatistics with R
- BIOL B255 Microbiology
- BIOL B352 Immunology²
- CHEM B242 Biological Chemistry
- CHEM H222A: Organic Biological Chemistry
- PSYC B209 Clinical Psychology
- PSYC B231 Health Psychology

Track R

- HLTH B275 Global Eugenics
- HLTH B303 Topics in Health Studies: Sexual and Reproductive Health
- HLTH H214B: Memoirs of Illness and Disability
- HLTH H215A: Sacrifice Zones: Empires, Epidemics, and Climate Changes
- HLTH H304B: Critical Disability Studies: Theory and Practice
- HLTH H305A: The Logic and Politics of Global Health
- HLTH H319B: Metabolic Disorders
- ANTH H265A: Medical Anthropology
- ANTH B237: Environmental Health
- ANTH B210 Medical Anthropology
- ANTH B322 Anthropology of Bodies
- ANTH B357 Narratives of Illness, Healing, and Medicine
- ANTH H336B: Science, Technology, Medicine, Power
- ENGL H226B: Disability and Literature
- HIST B337 Topics in African History Topic: Social and Medical History of Medicine in Africa

Track S

- HLTH B275 Global Eugenics: Global Eugenics
- HLTH B303 Topics in Health Studies: Sexual and Reproductive Health²
- HLTH H215A: Sacrifice Zones: Empires, Epidemics, and Climate Changes
- HLTH H304B: Critical Disability Studies: Theory and Practice
- HLTH H305A: The Logic and Politics of Global Health
- HLTH H319B: Metabolic Disorders
- ANTH B210 Medical Anthropology
- ANTH B322 Anthropology of Bodies
- ANTH B357 Narratives of Illness, Healing, and Medicine
- ANTH H265A: Medical Anthropology
- ANTH H336B: Science, Technology, Medicine, Power
- ECON B217 Health Economics
- ENVS H222A: Heat and Health: Design Action Lab
- HIST B337 Topics in African History Topic: Social and Medical History of Medicine in Africa
- PSYC B231 Health Psychology
- PSYC B331 Health Behavior and Context

Affiliate Courses

- BIOL H312D: Development & Evolution (0.5 units)
- MATH H203A: Statistical Methods and Their Applications
- PEAC H201A: Applied Ethics of Peace, Justice and Human Rights
- SOC B265: Quantitative Methods
- WRPR H120A: Evolutionary Arguments
- WRPR H135A: Health and Humanities

¹ Please Visit Haverford's Health Studies Web Page for Updates

² Course not offered in 2025-26

HLTH B115 Introduction to Health Studies (1 Unit)

The multidisciplinary foundation for the health studies minor. Students will be introduced to theories and methods from the life sciences, social sciences, and humanities and will learn to apply them to problems of health and illness. Topics include epidemiological, public health, and biomedical perspectives on health and disease; social, behavioral, and environmental determinants of health; globalization of health issues; cultural representations of illness; health inequalities, social justice, and health as a human right.

HLTH B275 Global Eugenics (1 Unit)

Eugenics is usually associated with genocidal and discriminatory theories and policies elaborated in the US (before WWII) and in Nazi Germany (1933-1945). This mainstream narrative implies eugenics belongs to the past, even though some controversial writers have recently been trying to rehabilitate eugenic theories. In this seminar, we will take a closer look at the emergence of eugenics in the Western world and reframe the usual narrative by going back – not to Francis Galton's invention of the word (1883) – but to the first treatise of modern eugenics, Vandermonde's Essay on the manner of perfecting the human species (1756). We will also expand the scope of our inquiry by including countries beyond the "usual suspects" (UK, US, and Germany). This reframing will have huge consequences on the way we perceive and interpret the historical significance of eugenics and the current controversy around gene editing.

HLTH B302 Survey Methods for Health Research (1 Unit)

Surveys are widely used to measure the population prevalence of various health conditions; to better understand the scope and impact of exposure to social and economic stressors on population health; to monitor health-related knowledge, attitudes and practices; and to inform health systems strengthening efforts. Through course material and hands-on experience, students will master the basic elements of survey design, including, operationalizing constructs and formulating research questions, choosing a mode of survey implementation, pretesting the survey instrument, designing a sampling plan, managing field operations, and analyzing and interpreting survey data. Prerequisites: Completion of a 200-level course in the social sciences or permission of the instructor.

HLTH B303 Topics in Health Studies (1 Unit)

This is a topics course. Course content varies.

HLTH B398 Senior Seminar Health Studies (1 Unit)

Required culminating seminar, which integrates the three tracks of the Health Studies minor. Students share and critically assess their own and fellow students' ongoing work to communicate across disciplines and understand the value and interconnectedness of different disciplinary approaches. Students present and defend their semester-long collaborative projects at the end of the course.

ANTH B208 Human Biology (1 Unit)

This course will be a survey of modern human biological variation. We will examine the patterns of morphological and genetic variation in modern human populations and discuss the evolutionary explanations for the observed patterns. A major component of the class will be the discussion of the social implications of these patterns of biological variation, particularly in the construction and application of the concept of race. Prerequisite: ANTH 101 or permission of instructor.

ANTH B210 Medical Anthropology (1 Unit)

Medical Anthropology is one of the most dynamic subfields in anthropology with relevance for health professionals and researchers interested in the complexity of disease, diagnostic categories, treatment modalities, especially in multicultural contexts. This course examines the relationships between culture, society, disease and illness in light of global, historical, and political and economic forces, in anthropological perspective. It considers a broad range of health-related experiences, discourses, knowledge and practices among different cultures globally and among diverse individuals and groups in different positions of power. We will explore illness experiences, disease etiologies, practices and rituals surrounding healing, patients and social groups, practitioners, biomedicine, traditional medicine and other forms of medical knowledge cross-culturally, epistemologies and practices, and the production of health and medical knowledge in a variety of settings, among other topics. While disease may appear to be a matter of biology, health and illness are culturally constructed and socially conditioned and essential in anthropological approaches to understanding human experiences of affliction and well-being. In this course we will ask: how are ideas of health, illness, and healing intertwined with belief, ideas about culture, concerns of social relations and social organization, and how they influence or are influenced by political and economic relations?

ANTH B322 Anthropology of Bodies (1 Unit)

This course examines meanings and interpretations of bodies in anthropology. It explores anthropological theories and methods of studying the human body and social difference via a series of topics including the construction of the body in medicine, identity, race, gender, sexuality and as explored through cross-cultural comparison. Bodies and their forms are intertwined in debates both in academia and in current affairs and politics. These concerns range from surveillance and movements of bodies, disappearance and erasure of some bodies and fortification of others, to biological and technological modification of individual bodies that arise in moral and political debates and action. Although "the body" is frequently assumed to be "natural," indeed it appears unstable and destabilizing, especially in particular times and in particular places. We will discuss, for instance the body as a focus of the biomedical gaze, as commodity, in creative expression, in relations to non-human primates, across the age spectrum, and in historical political, economic, and colonial and post-colonial regimes, among other topics. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing and higher.

ANTH B357 Narratives of Illness, Healing, and Medicine (1 Unit)

This course will explore the construction of narratives around illness, healing, and medicine cross-culturally and across a variety of media including through graphic novels, video drama series, primary source diaries, audio accounts, and anthropological texts. Illness narratives have figured prominently in the study and practice of medical anthropology, and increasingly in the teaching of medicine. We will ask: What is the role of illness narratives in the healing process for patients, healers, and caregivers in cross-cultural comparison? How can illness narratives destabilize dominant discourses, and provide an avenue of expression for those who are unable to easily speak or be heard, particularly in biomedical contexts? Who gets to speak, in what ways, and who remains unheard? What does it mean to tell a story of illness? What roles do illness stories play in illuminating and complicating understandings of illness, disability, trauma, and caregiving? How do illness narratives relate to suffering, hope, and healing, and how they differ for chronic or terminal illness? What do they tell us about making and remaking the self? Students will have the opportunity to explore frameworks and cross-cultural experiences through media beyond standard text. Prerequisite: ANTH B102 or permission of instructor.

ANTH B364 Anthropology of Global Public Health (1 Unit)

This course will use an anthropological lens to explore the field of contemporary global public health. Through readings and ethnographic case studies in cultural anthropology, medical anthropology, applied and critical anthropology, and related social sciences, the class will examine the participants and institutions that make up the production of global health, as well as the knowledge, and value production that have shaped agendas, policies and practices in global health, both historically and in the contemporary. The course will also explore anthropology's relationship to and perspectives on the history of global health. We will examine how local communities, local knowledge and political forces intersect with, shape, and are shaped by global initiatives to impact diseases, treatments, and health care delivery. As well, what the effects are on individuals, families and children, communities, urban and rural areas, and nations. Among other topics, the course will explore health disparities, epidemics/pandemics, global mental health, climate change and infectious diseases, chronic illness, violence, and diseases such as polio, HIV/AIDS, Covid-19, Tuberculosis, etc. Prerequisite(s): ANTH B102/H103 recommended; sophomore standing or higher

BIOL B201 Genetics (1 Unit)

This course focuses on the principles of genetics, including classical genetics, population genetics and molecular genetics. Topics to be covered include the genetic and molecular nature of mutations and phenotypes, genetic mapping and gene identification, chromosome abnormalities, developmental genetics, genome editing and epigenetics. Examples of genetic analyses are drawn from a variety of organisms including *Drosophila*, *C. elegans*, mice and humans. Lecture three hours a week. Prerequisite: BIOL B110 and CHEM B104.

BIOL B215 Biostatistics with R (1 Unit)

An introductory course in statistical analysis focusing on biological data. This course is structured to develop students' understanding of statistics and probability and when to apply different quantitative methods. The lab component focuses on how to implement those methods using the R statistics environment. Topics include summary statistics, distributions, randomization, replication, and probability. The course is geared around problem sets, lab reports, and interactive learning. No prior experience with programming is required. Suggested Preparation: BIOL B110 or B111 is highly recommended. Students who have taken PSYC B205/H200 or SOCL B265 are not eligible to take this course.

BIOL B216 Genomics (1 Unit)

An introduction to the study of genomes and genomic data. This course will examine the history of this exciting field, the types of biological questions that can be answered using large biological data sets and complete genome sequences as well as the techniques and technologies that make such studies possible. Topics include genome organization and evolution, comparative genomics, and analysis of transcriptomes, with a focus on animal genomics and humans in particular. Prerequisite: One semester of BIOL 110. BIOL 201 highly recommended.

BIOL B238 Ethics in Biology (1 Unit)

Students will read and discuss various text to understand the intersection of ethics with biology in the modern world in light of the history of questionable morality and ethics in science. We will specifically focus on the medical sciences, environmentalism, and how settler colonialism is an intrinsic part of most scientific research practices. Prerequisites: A college-level intro science class like BIOL 110 or 111, ENVS 101 or GEOL 101

BIOL B255 Microbiology (1 Unit)

Invisible to the naked eye, microbes occupy every niche on the planet. This course will examine how microbes have become successful colonizers; review aspects of interactions between microbes, humans and the environment; and explore practical uses of microbes in industry, medicine and environmental management. The course will combine lecture, discussion of primary literature and student presentations. Three hours of lecture and three hours of laboratory per week. Prerequisites: BIOL 110 and CHEM B104.

BIOL B271 Developmental Biology (1 Unit)

An introduction to embryology and the concepts of developmental biology. Concepts are illustrated by analyzing the experimental observations that support them. Topics include gametogenesis and fertilization, morphogenesis, cell fate specification and differentiation, pattern formation, regulation of gene expression, neural development, and developmental plasticity. The laboratory focuses on observations and experiments on living embryos. Lecture three hours, laboratory three scheduled hours a week; some weeks require additional hours outside of the regularly scheduled lab. Prerequisite: one semester of BIOL 110-111 or permission of instructor.

BIOL B303 Human Physiology (1 Unit)

A comprehensive study of the physical and chemical processes in tissues, organs and organ systems that form the basis of animal and human function. Homeostasis, control systems and the structural basis of function are emphasized. Laboratories are designed to introduce basic physiological techniques and the practice of scientific inquiry. Lecture three hours, laboratory three hours a week. Prerequisites: One semester of BIOL 110-111, CHEM 103, 104 and one 200-level biology course, or permission of instructor.

BIOL B318 Sex in Modern Healthcare (1 Unit)

A primary goal of this course is to explore the spectrum of biological sex, a concept that is usually described as entirely binary, but is highly variable with as many as 1% of individuals born with differences in sex development. We will also study topics specific to people with uteruses including menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these physiological processes. In addition, this course will engage with societal issues affecting patients who identify as women including access to reproductive and gender affirming healthcare, and the of historical understudying of female physiology. Prerequisite: BIOL 110 and any 200-level biology course

CHEM B242 Biological Chemistry (1 Unit)

The structure, chemistry and function of amino acids, proteins, lipids, polysaccharides and nucleic acids; enzyme kinetics; metabolic relationships of carbohydrates, lipids and amino acids, and the control of various pathways. Lecture three hours a week. Prerequisite: CHEM B212 or CHEM H222.

ECON B214 Public Finance (1 Unit)

Analysis of government's role in resource allocation, emphasizing effects of tax and expenditure programs on income distribution and economic efficiency. Topics include sources of inefficiency in markets and possible government responses; federal budget composition; social insurance and antipoverty programs; U.S. tax structure and incidence. Prerequisites: ECON B105.

ECON B217 Health Economics (1 Unit)

Economic analysis of the health sector. The demand for health care (demand curve for health care and health as human capital); the supply of health care (models of hospital and physician behavior); socioeconomic disparity in health; the demand for health insurance (the role of uncertainty, adverse selection, and moral hazard); health care systems in the U.S. and around the world. Prerequisite: ECON B105.

ENGL B243 Disease and Discourse (1 Unit)

When did "consumption" become "tuberculosis"? What does it mean when someone calls COVID-19 the "China Virus"? As human beings are confronted with novel contagions, we are also forced to grapple with the psychological and cultural impact that these illnesses have on our societies; the words we use to describe these diseases matter. In this course, we will examine literature produced during significant historical epidemics, including: divine punishment and early Christian views of leprosy; apocalypticism and the Black Death; the moralization of the AIDS crisis, and the "unprecedented times" of COVID. Readings will include such texts as Boccaccio's Decameron, Defoe's The Journal of a Plague Year, Mary Shelley's The Last Man, and Tony Kushner's Angels in America. Guided by work by critics like Susan Sontag (Illness as Metaphor) and contemporary scholarship in disability studies, trauma theory, and narrative medicine, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to textual production and genre, putting medical, religious, literary, and historical texts in conversation in order to better understand their reciprocal influences. Along the way, we will consider: How does language affect our perception of diseases and those who contract them?

HIST B250 Media and Medicine in Modern America: (1 Unit)

Have you ever turned to TikTok for health advice? Are you a fan of medical dramas like Grey's Anatomy? This course explores of the co-development and evolution of modern medicine and the media in the United States, from the late nineteenth century through the present day. Students will delve into a wide range of media formats, including advertising, newspapers, radio, film, television, and the Internet, to analyze the media's long-standing influence on perceptions and practices of medicine. Special attention will be paid to the shifting cultural authority of medicine, as well as the stakes of communicating health information and implications for public health.

HIST B274 topics in Modern US History (1 Unit)

This is a topics course in 20th century America social history. Topics vary by half semester

HIST B325 Topics in Social History (1 Unit)

This a topics course that explores various themes in American social history. Course content varies. Course may be repeated.

HIST B337 Topics in African History (1 Unit)

This is a topics course. Topics vary.

ITAL B216 Body and Mind (1 Unit)

In this course, we will explore representations of the relationship between body and mind, starting from 19th-century Russian novels that conceptualize love as a physical ailment and ending with the history of Alzheimer's disease. Talking about the relationship between body and mind will allow us to investigate how gender roles and models of womanhood and masculinity shaped the evolution of modern sciences, from psychiatry to obstetrics. Investigating how bodies have been (and continue to be) read, we will discuss systems created to police societies by cataloguing bodies, from Lombroso's phrenology to modern fingerprinting and face recognition softwares. Finally, we will consider how our understanding of the relationship between body and mind has changed over time. Many of the theories we will discuss during the semester are now considered outdated pseudo-science - but how can we conceptualize the difference between science and pseudo-science? As new categories and disease designations appear to substitute the old ones, which are the implications of creating a label for a constellation of existing symptoms? The course will be taught entirely in English. There will be an optional hour in Italian for students of Italian.

ITAL B303 Boccaccio, the Plague, and Epidemic illness: Literature and Medicine (1 Unit)

What are the responses to human suffering during outbreaks of epidemic illness? How can literature be a valuable tool for plague prevention in time of pestilence? This class explores crucial questions on how narrative works in medical contexts, with a focus on the Decameron and the black plague of 1348. Giovanni Boccaccio is the first writer to unite the literary topos of narration during a life-threatening situation with an historical epidemic context in Medieval Italy. How does he tell his stories in time of illness and death? How do writers and other storytellers respond to dominant versions of health and medicine? Taught in Italian.

ITAL B326 Love, Magic, and Medicine: Poetical-Philosophical Bonds (1 Unit)

The course investigates how the concepts of love, magic, and medicine emerged and developed throughout early modernity and beyond. In exploring the fields of Philosophy, Medicine, and Magic, global thinkers, poets, and artists drew not only from classical sources, but were also deeply influenced by a wide range of models, such as fictional ancient sources, Islamic philosophy, and the Jewish Kabbalah. In this interesting syncretism, love was considered as an inspiration experienced by the entire universe, and magical practice was understood as a philosophy in action, which had the power to establish a bond of a loving nature between the different realms of reality. Magicians were therefore conceived as wise philosophers capable of joining this network of correspondences and controlling them (art)ificially. As a result, the figures of poets and artists interestingly merged into those of magicians of physicians, and poetry was conceived both as a magic able to arouse mental images stronger than real visions, and as a medicine able to exert a mental and physiological agency on the body. The course will approach these themes through a multi-disciplinary and trans-historical approach, which will include in the discussion a wide variety of figures, such as global early modern and modern philosophers, physicians, poets, artists, and composers. All readings and class discussion will be in English. Students will have an additional hour of class for Italian credit.

PSYC B209 Clinical Psychology (1 Unit)

This course examines the experience, origins and consequences of psychological difficulties and problems. Among the questions we will explore are: What do we mean by abnormal behavior or psychopathology? What are the strengths and limitations of the ways in which psychopathology is assessed and classified? What are the major forms of psychopathology? How do psychologists study and treat psychopathology? How is psychopathology experienced by individuals? What causes psychological difficulties and what are their consequences? How do we integrate social, biological and psychological perspectives on the causes of psychopathology? Do psychological treatments (therapies) work? How do we study the effectiveness of psychology treatments? Prerequisite: Introductory Psychology (PSYC B105 or H100). Please note that this course was previously known as "Abnormal Psychology" and has now been renamed "Clinical Psychology" and can not be repeated for credit.

PSYC B231 Health Psychology (1 Unit)

This course will provide an overview of the field of health psychology using lecture, exams, videos, assignments, and an article critique. We will examine the current definition of health psychology, as well as the theories and research behind many areas in health psychology (both historical and contemporary). The course will focus on specific health and social psychological theories, empirical research, and applying the theory and research to real world situations. Prerequisite: Introductory Psychology (PSYC B105) or Foundations of Psychology (PSYC H100). Students may take either this course or HLTH/PSYC H245 not both.

PSYC B331 Health Behavior and Context (1 Unit)

This seminar will be devoted to a discussion of theory and research in health psychology. We will investigate both historical and contemporary perspectives on the psychology of wellness and illness. We will begin with a consideration of how psychosocial forces influence health cognitions, behaviors, and physiological processes. The second half of the course will focus on contextual factors, interventions, and emerging topics in research. We will debate the question of whether/how psychological forces influence health outcomes. Prerequisite: PSYC B105 and PSYC B231 or PSYC B208, or by permission of the instructor.

PSYC B344 Early Childhood Experiences & Mental Health (1 Unit)

Development represents a unique period during which the brain shows enhanced plasticity, the important ability to adapt and change in response to experiences. During development, the brain may be especially vulnerable to the impacts of harmful experiences (e.g., neglect or exposure to toxins) and also especially responsive to the effects of positive factors (e.g., community resilience or clinical interventions). This seminar will explore how childhood experiences "get under the skin," shaping neurobiological systems and exerting lasting effects on mental health and well-being. We will examine theoretical models of how early experiences shape development, considering the proposed mechanisms by which different features of childhood environments could shape psychological risk and resilience. We will evaluate the scientific evidence for these models and then apply this knowledge to consider what strategies for intervention— at the level of the child, family, and society— could help reduce psychopathology and promote well-being. There is no textbook required for this course. We will read, critically evaluate, and discuss empirical journal articles and explore the implications of this scientific literature for public policy. Prerequisites: PSYC B209 or PSYC B206 or PSYC B218 or permission from instructor; PSYC B205 highly recommended

PSYC B395 Psychopharmacology (1 Unit)

A study of the role of drugs in understanding basic brain-behavior relations. Topics include the pharmacological basis of motivation and emotion; pharmacological models of psychopathology; the use of drugs in the treatment of psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis; and the psychology and pharmacology of drug addiction. Prerequisite: PSYC B218 or BIOL B202 or PSYC H217 or permission of instructor.

RUSS B220 Chernobyl (1 Unit)

This course introduces students to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, its consequences, and its representations across a range of cultures and media through a comparative lens and as a global phenomenon. Culture meets ecology, science, history, and politics. Students will contribute to a digital exhibition and physical installation. Taught in translation. No knowledge of Russian required.

SOCL B220 Medicine, the Body and Society (1 Unit)

An introduction to the sociology of health and illness with a particular focus on the sociology of the body. Topics include: cross-cultural perceptions of the body and disease; the definition of "legitimate" medical knowledge and practice; social determinants of health and access to healthcare; management of healthcare costs.

SOCL B265 Quantitative Methods (1 Unit)

An introduction to the conduct of empirical, especially quantitative, social science inquiry. In consultation with the instructor, students may select research problems to which they apply the research procedures and statistical techniques introduced during the course. Using SPSS, a statistical computer package, students learn techniques such as cross-tabular analysis, ANOVA, and multiple regression. Required of Bryn Mawr Sociology majors and minors. Non-sociology majors and minors with permission of instructor.