Why Health: Science, Society, and Policy at Brandeis?

Brandeis offers students the unique opportunity to examine both health and illness as complex biological, behavioral, social, political, and economic phenomena. By using the resources of the biological sciences, the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and the social sciences, students examine health-related issues from a variety of perspectives while having the opportunity to gain hands-on learning experience.

Curriculum Overview

Bachelor of arts, a bachelor of science, or a minor in HSSP. Each of these options requires four core courses:

- Human Biology or Physiology
- Health, Community, and Society
- American Health Care
- Introduction to Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Population Health

The BA option additionally requires four electives, an internship or independent research project, and a senior seminar. In order to complete the BS, students must complete five electives, an internship or independent research project, a senior seminar, and six additional math or science courses. The minor requires the four core courses plus two electives.

Electives for the HSSP program are divided into three focal areas: science, society, and policy.

Science: Courses in this area examine the biological dimensions of health and illness. Some of the regularly offered courses are Heredity, Viruses, and Human Disease; Environmental Health; Diet and Health; Immunology; Human Reproductive Biology; Growth Control and Cancer; and Principles of Neuroscience.

Society: Courses in this area look at the social and behavioral dimensions of health and illness. Courses include Medicine, Body, and Culture; AIDS in Anthropological Perspective; Health and Healing in American History; Biomedical Ethics; Disorders of Childhood; Aging in Society; and Caring in the Health Care System.

Policy: Courses in this area address issues in health care policy and practice; they include World Perspectives on Health; Sociology of Disability; Law and Social Welfare; Law, Technology, and Innovation; Medical Error and Quality of Care; and Women in the Health Care System.
Hands-On Learning Experience
With the guidance of a Brandeis faculty member, students engage in a health-related internship or in an intensive independent research project. The following is a short list of some of the organizations with which our students have completed internships:

- Cambridge Rindge and Latin Health Clinic
- Disability Law Foundation
- Fenway Health Clinic (HIV prevention project)
- Jane Doe Inc. (prevention of domestic violence)
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Integrative Senior Seminar
Students conclude their HSSP studies by participating in a team-taught seminar focusing on a particular aspect of health such as Health and Culture, or Mental Health.

Academic and Professional Advising
Faculty from sociology, biology, anthropology, psychology, history, philosophy, legal studies, and the graduate school for social policy all provide students with academic and professional advising. Students are connected to the Hiatt Career Center, the Prehealth Society, and other resources on campus. In addition, the program regularly cosponsors timely events such as “AIDS in the Increasingly Global Community” and “A Comparison of Presidential Health Care Plans.”

Career and Education Opportunities
By undertaking this broad study of health, students prepare themselves for a variety of educational and professional opportunities. Many graduates of HSSP go on to careers in the fields of medicine, dentistry, public health, clinical therapy, social work, genetic counseling, biomedical research, law, social policy, and public service, among others. Students also have the option of completing premed requirements through the HSSP program, but nearly half of our students choose other professional avenues.

Faculty
Following is a list of faculty members and their areas of specialization:

- **Peter Conrad, chair**
  Sociology of health and illness, deviance, field methods

- **Elizabeth Goodman, associate chair**
  Social epidemiology, socioeconomic gradients in health, obesity, and cardiovascular risks among adolescents; child and adolescent health

- **Sarita Bhalotra**
  Health care in developing nations, health policy and management

- **Sarah Lamb**
  Social-cultural theory, gender studies, anthropology of aging, medical anthropology, immigrant and transnational communities, South Asia, United States

- **Sacha Nelson**
  Synaptic integration in the visual cortex

- **Aurora Sherman**
  Social relations and health; aging

- **Judith Tsipis**
  Genetic counseling