ABOUT THE PROGRAM
Health: science, society and policy (HSSP) is an interdisciplinary major that focuses on health, health care and health policy. Courses include social science perspectives on health and illness, health policy issues, and scientific aspects of disease and treatment. The emphasis is on perspectives on health and health care through a multidisciplinary lens. Each student will engage in a hands-on experience in a health-related setting, typically through an internship or study abroad. Many HSSP graduates go on to graduate school and careers in the health fields, including medicine, public health, nursing, health administration and health law.

What makes the program distinctive?
HSSP draws from three of the university’s major strengths: the social sciences of health; the life sciences; and the Heller School, Brandeis’ graduate school in social policy and management. In addition, the required hands-on practice component enables students to gain firsthand experience in a health care setting or with a health organization.

FAST FACTS
- Current number of majors and minors: 253
- Number of faculty: 23
- Can you minor in this program? Yes
- Emphasis within the major: an interdisciplinary education in health and health care
- Popular second majors: anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology
- Website: brandeis.edu/programs/hssp
Academics and Research

Diverse faculty interests
Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the faculty has a diverse range of interests. HSSP science faculty members engage in research ranging from neuroscience to genetics to infectious disease. Sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists conduct research on aging, medicalization, managing illness, and impacts of stress on disease. Heller School policy faculty members are deeply involved in current health reform, development of new drug policies and evaluating quality of medical care.

A range of course offerings
Recent courses include “American Health Care,” “Innovations in Health Technology,” “Medicine, Body and Culture,” “Behavioral Health,” “Managing Medicine,” “Health Psychology,” “Inequalities in Health Care,” “Global Perspectives on Health,” “Health Economics” and “Sociology of Disability.” There is also a prehealth option for students preparing for medical school and other professional schools.

Beyond the Classroom

Real internships
During summer 2015, Rebecca Siegel ’16 combined her passions for HSSP and helping members of the underserved community around her by shadowing a nurse practitioner in a federally funded nonprofit clinic in Southern California. This experience and the HSSP program helped shape her desire to attend medical school and eventually practice medicine in a clinic similar to the one at which she shadowed. In recent years, other HSSP students have interned at sites such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in Vietnam, Health Leads (Boston), Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center (Baltimore), Riverside Community Care (Needham, Mass.) and Kaiser Permanente (Pasadena, Calif.).

Study abroad
Yuki Willand ’15 entered the CIEE/Community Public Health Program in Thailand during spring 2014. As an HSSP major, Willand was able to explore various facets of the public health system in Thailand. Relevant coursework allowed her to examine public health issues, community initiatives and research methods while also practicing the Thai language and traveling to nearby countries like Sri Lanka after her program’s conclusion. Every academic year, approximately 30 percent of each HSSP graduating class travels abroad to study. Countries have included Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, England, Kenya, South Africa and Spain.

Student research
In April 2014, HSSP alumnus Jonathan Steinberg ’13 published an article in The Rutgers Journal of Bioethics that originated from a paper he had written for the HSSP course “Madness and Medicine in the Modern Age.”

Social justice at work
Maichelly Baez ’16 was able to better understand and act upon the “upstream” social determinants of health she became so interested in as a result of her HSSP coursework. During her summer 2015 work with the Hockomock Area YMCA on the Healthy Futures Initiative, Baez worked to increase nutritional literacy and access to healthy food choices among Massachusetts residents.

AFTER BRANDEIS

Health policy and health services research
Natalie Chong ’15 joined RTI International as a public health analyst, where she was delighted to find a whole network of Brandeis alumni. Her work at RTI focuses on the development of quality measures for hospice and post-acute care. The HSSP program taught her that providing high-quality care is equally important as providing affordable and accessible care.

Public health and medicine
Since graduating, Lindsey Weiss ’14 has been working as a clinical research coordinator at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Weiss has been able to use her background in HSSP and Spanish to help design and coordinate a bilingual lifestyle intervention program for women who have experienced preeclampsia during their pregnancy. Her experience in the interdisciplinary HSSP program pushed her to understand health care in a holistic manner, which in turn has influenced her decision to start nurse practitioner school in fall 2016.

Graduate study
Following graduation, HSSP and biology double major Ahuva Hanau ’16 plans to pursue further education in health policy and medicine. Hanau hopes to complete a master’s in public policy through the Heller School’s HSSP MPP Advancement Program, where she intends to better understand how to lead change among health care providers. Knowledge and skills gained from a combination of experiences — her HSSP coursework, interning with an ENT surgeon and working as a president of Global Medical Brigades — have inspired Hanau’s interests in health policy and given her an insider understanding of today’s health care system.

“[My work is] a really wonderful experience. ... I speak with and help educate patients. ... Thanks to the internship I did for HSSP, I was able to land this transforming job.”

Dominique Dupont-Dubois ’07 on her position at Planned Parenthood as a clinic assistant in gynecological services