

HEALTH HUMANITIES, B.S.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Abington

Program Description

The Health Humanities program emphasizes the application of concepts and methods from history, literature, philosophy, communications, religious studies, cultural and language studies, and the arts, to educate us about the human condition. In combination with perspectives drawn from the social and behavioral sciences, it uses an interdisciplinary approach to explore the cultural and ethical aspects of human health and illness. Students in the Health Humanities cultivate empathy, embrace ambiguity, approach problems from a variety of perspectives, and practice self-care, all essential to effective health care practice and to a humanistic approach to studying and representing health and illness.

What is Health Humanities?

The B.S. in Health Humanities provides students with a strong foundation in the sciences in combination with perspectives from the humanities, social sciences, and the arts to examine the role of health, disease, and medicine in the human experience. It uses an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to explore the social, cultural, political, and ethical aspects of wellbeing, illness, and healthcare. Students in this degree program cultivate empathy, embrace ambiguity, approach solving problems from a variety of perspectives, and practice self-care, all essential skills for future health care practitioners as well as anyone interested in a humanistic approach to the study and representation of health and illness in the twenty-first century. The B.S. degree provides excellent preparation for medical school other graduate training in medical fields, as well as careers in areas such as public health, patient advocacy, law, health education, rehabilitation, social work, health care administration, and community activism.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You are interested in exploring questions related to health, illness and healthcare from a range of perspectives in addition to a biomedical approach
- You want to gain an understanding of the influence of cultural, social, political, and economic contexts on health, medicine and healthcare
- You would like to integrate the arts and humanities into the study of health care and medicine
- You are planning to pursue medical school or other graduate health professions study that requires a strong foundation in the sciences

Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Science degree in Health Humanities, a minimum of 123 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	32-36
Requirements for the Major	46

0-4 of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes: 0-4 credits of GQ courses.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
BIOET 110N	Health, Illness, and the Human Condition	3
BMH 490	Bioethics and Medical Humanities Capstone Course	3
PHIL 132/ BIOET 100	Bioethics	3
Additional Courses		
<i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
Select 7 credits from the following:		7
BIOL 110	Biology: Basic Concepts and Biodiversity	
BIOL 161	Human Anatomy and Physiology I - Lecture	
BIOL 162	Human Anatomy and Physiology I - Laboratory	
BIOL 220W	Biology: Populations and Communities	
STAT 200	Elementary Statistics	
STAT 250	Introduction to Biostatistics	
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
AFAM/BBH 302	Diversity and Health	
ASIA 106N	Asian Traditions of Health, Medicine, and the Body	
CAS/ENGL/ SOC 162N	Communicating Care	
HIST/STS 124	History of Western Medicine	

In consultation with adviser, select 3 credits from departmental list of approved courses in the Literary, Visual and Performing Arts 3

Supporting Courses and Related Areas

Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better

In consultation with adviser, select 12 credits from departmental list of approved courses in Culture, Society and Health Communication 12

In consultation with adviser, select 12 credits from departmental list of approved courses in Social Sciences and Health Care 12

Additional Information:

- **Diversity requirement:** At least 3 credits in Additional or Supporting Courses must be for a course related to race, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and/or postcolonial issues.

- **Global/Transnational requirement:** At least 3 credits in Additional or Supporting Courses must be for a course that has a focus that is transnational or outside the United States.
- A single course may not be used to meet both the Diversity and Global/Transnational requirements.
- **400-level requirement:** At least 12 credits in Additional or Supporting Courses must be at the 400-level.

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Program Learning Objectives

Develop the oral and written communication skills needed to be effective collaborators and leaders in health-related professions.

Be able to utilize tools, theories and perspectives from non-scientific disciplines to study practices related to health and medicine.

Understand the influence of diverse cultural and social contexts on health, healthcare, and medicine.

Develop critical thinking and practical skills in preparation for a career in the health care industry.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Abington

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Health Humanities, B.S. at Abington Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15 or 30H [‡]	3 BIOL 110, 161 and 162, STAT 200, or STAT 250 [†]	3-4
General Education Course	3 CAS 100A or 100B [‡]	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
PSU 1	1	
	16	15-16

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
BIOL 110, 161 and 162, 220W, STAT 200, or STAT 250 [†]	3-4 CAS/ENGL/SOC 162N, AFAM 302, BBH 302, ASIA 106N, HIST 124, or STS 124	3
BIOET 110N [*]	3 PHIL 132/BIOET 100 [*]	3
General Education Course	3 Major Additional Course from List (Arts) [*]	3
Elective	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course or Elective ¹	3
	15-16	15

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 202A or 202B [‡]	3 4xx Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3
General Education Course	3 Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3
Elective	3 General Education Course	3
Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3 Elective	3
4xx Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3 Elective	3
	15	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3 BMH 490 [*]	3
4xx Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3 4xx Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3
Major Supporting Course from List [*]	3 Elective	3
Elective	3 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
Elective	3 Elective	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 Elective ²	0-1
	16.5	13.5-14.5

Total Credits 121-124

- * Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

¹ Depending on whether STAT 200 or STAT 250 is counted as GQ

² Number of credits depends on credits earned in Additional Courses (7-8 credits selected from BIOL 110 or BIOL 161/BIOL 162 or STAT 200 or STAT 250)

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Advising Notes:

- Diversity requirement: At least 3 credits in Additional or Supporting Courses must be for a course related to race, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and/or postcolonial issues.
- Global/Transnational requirement: At least 3 credits in Additional or Supporting Courses must be for a course that has a focus that is transnational or outside the United States.
- The Health Humanities, B.S. department list can be found on the Penn State Abington website at: <https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/health-humanities/hhum-course-list> (<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/health-humanities/hhum-course-list/>).

Career Paths

The B.S. in Health Humanities offers excellent preparation for careers in health professions, such as patient care, patient advocacy, and

administration. In addition, the program's interdisciplinary and holistic approach to the study of health, medicine, healthcare and the body provides students with a strong foundation for medical school. Moreover, students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for a range of roles in fields that are concerned with the cultural, political and societal dimensions of health and healthcare for individuals as well as communities.

Careers

- Healthcare
- Business
- Education
- Law
- Journalism
- Public Health
- Social Work

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE HEALTH HUMANITIES PROGRAM (<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/majors-at-abington/health-humanities/>)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

The major prepares students to earn advanced degrees in medicine and other health-related fields as well as liberal arts disciplines.

Professional Resources

- Association of American Medical Colleges (<https://www.aamc.org/>)
- American Medical Student Association (<https://www.amsa.org/>)
- Literature Arts Medicine database (LITMED) (<https://medhum.med.nyu.edu/>)
- American Association for the History of Medicine (<https://histmed.org>)
- Graphic Medicine (<https://www.graphicmedicine.org/>)
- Poetry Therapy (<https://poetrytherapy.org/>)
- Society for Disability Studies (<https://disstudies.org/index.php/sds-principles/>)
- Society for Literature, Science & the Arts (<https://litsciarts.org/>)

Contact

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<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/majors-at-abington/health-humanities> (<https://www.abington.psu.edu/academics/majors-at-abington/health-humanities/>)