

**M**y fascination with cultural anthropology began with the idea that the definition of one's own cultural lens allows **a clearer assessment of human patterns of behavior**. I found great value in learning to apply this critical view to the medical profession as it helped me in evaluating accepted attitudes toward my patients and my future profession.

**“Medical anthropology directed my understanding** of Western and alternative medicine. **I learned to observe the history and structure** of the modern medical system from an outsider's and a patient's perspective.

“My education in medical anthropology also serves me well as I meet patients from various backgrounds. I have learned to try to elicit information from and examine patients in a way that will make their medical care more culturally appropriate and useful.”

**Sigrid Melander**

AB '00 with a major in anthropology and a minor in music  
Now a second-year medical student at the Washington University School of Medicine

**T**hrough a freshman class, *Illness and Healing*, I became excited about the possibility of **complementing my pre-med curriculum with an anthropology major**. My idea of how to approach problems—whether it be diagnosing a patient or discovering the source of illness—**began to move toward a holistic position**.

“I believe that having a background in medical anthropology **will allow me to be on the cusp of the revolution in medicine**.

People are looking at our medically pluralistic society and trying to decide what type of care to use: typical Western medicine, herbs, acupuncture, chiropractic, or other practices. Furthermore, our country encompasses many different cultures and an anthropological background will help me be more thoughtful and investigative. As a doctor and medical anthropologist, I will be able **to view situations cross-culturally** to decide what type of treatment will work best for patients.”

**Eric Ferkel**

AB '02 with a major in anthropology and minors in business and biology  
Planning to apply to medical school in 2002

 Washington University in St. Louis

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# Medicine & Society



Exploring the  
**relationships**  
among culture, behavior, and health.

**F**or students interested in exploring relationships among culture, behavior, and health, the Medicine & Society Program in Arts & Sciences offers a new pathway from the perspective of the social sciences. Addressing the important social and cultural foundations of health and illness in human societies, this program also emphasizes service and research at health-related sites throughout St. Louis.

**Front cover: Bradley Stoner** (*second from the right*) and senior anthropology student **David Saxon** (*far left*) work together at a St. Louis health clinic. Dr. Stoner is an infectious disease physician, medical anthropologist, and director of the Medicine & Society Program.

 Washington University in St. Louis

# Preventing disease & promoting health

**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 location. Medical anthropologists examine the role of culture and society in shaping experiences with illness. The discipline also provides a focus for understanding societal responses to health threats. Individual health is seen within a broader framework of social networks and the larger public and private efforts to prevent disease and promote health, both domestically and internationally.

As a student in the Medicine & Society Program, you will focus primarily on medical anthropology and community health. But you also have the opportunity to draw widely from the many other resources in Arts & Sciences at Washington University.

Courses in other social science disciplines—such as history, economics, political science, and psychology—may be relevant and appropriate, depending upon your particular interests and needs. You also will be able to participate in programs at the local St. Louis health departments, community health organizations, and Washington University School of Medicine. This program is designed to appeal particu-

**Assistant Professor Shanti Parikh** teaches an upper-level course titled *Topics in Anthropology: HIV/AIDS in Africa*.

**Allison Schilsky**, a senior majoring in anthropology, interned at St. Louis County's health department. For her internship, she assisted in developing a bioterrorism preparedness plan and a plan to prevent the spread of infectious disease.



larly to those of you with a long-term commitment to a career in the health professions or related areas. **For those interested in a medical career, the curriculum will be fully coordinated with pre-medical course requirements.**

The Medicine & Society Program is supported by a grant from the Danforth Foundation.

## The Program

Upon acceptance to Washington University in the spring, you may apply for admission to the Medicine & Society Program by indicating your interest in this program on the sign-up card included in *Designing Your First-Year Program*, a brochure sent to you in late April.

Admission to this program is highly competitive. Academic credentials, aptitude and interest in a health-related career, and personal statements all will be considered in selecting participants for this program.

Those accepted into the program are enrolled in a year-long freshman 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. You will choose all the other courses in your freshman year from the regular undergraduate curriculum.

Beginning in your sophomore year, you identify and select a community health site for a long-term internship placement. Your internship provides an opportunity to focus your interest and involvement in community health, and allows you to participate in the work of the host organization.

Students who are not admitted into the Medicine & Society Program may still enroll in many of the upper-level medical anthropology courses.

## A SAMPLING OF INTERNSHIP POSSIBILITIES:

- St. Louis city and county health departments
- Various nongovernmental health aid agencies
- Sites for delivery of clinical care and research
- Health philanthropic foundations

During your junior and senior years, you intensify the academic and service activities at your internship site. The program can also be combined with a semester or year abroad during your junior year. Your work in the program ends with a senior honors thesis based upon original research. All students in the Medicine & Society Program are expected to graduate with honors, based upon the research conducted at their community health internship site.

Participation in the Medicine & Society Program provides an excellent foundation for future study in medicine and public health, as well as any of the allied health professions such as nursing or physical and occupational therapy. Students who complete the program will also be highly competitive for admission to other professional schools, such as law, business, or social work.

## Faculty

BRADLEY STONER, an infectious disease physician and full-time medical anthropologist at Washington University, directs the Medicine & Society Program. Dr. Stoner, who has extensive experience as a physician and public health researcher, holds a joint appointment in the Department of Internal Medicine at Washington University School of Medicine. As director of the Medicine & Society Program, he oversees student training in medical anthropology and placement in the community internship sites. Dr. Stoner will be assisted in these efforts by REBECCA LESTER, an expert in culture and mental health, who joins the faculty in fall 2002.

Students in this program will also have full access to other faculty in the Department of Anthropology, as well as related disciplines that offer courses of relevance and interest:

- PASCAL BOYER, Anthropology & Psychology
- EDWIN FISHER, JR., Psychology, Medicine, & Pediatrics
- KENNETH LUDMERER, Medicine & History
- SHANTI PARIKH, Anthropology & African/Afro-American Studies
- WALTON SCHALICK, Pediatrics & History
- RICHARD SMITH, Anthropology
- GLENN STONE, Anthropology
- CONEVERY VALENCIUS, History

## A sampling of research areas of interest to medical anthropologists:

- Immigrant health and social influences in seeking health care
- Use of alternative and complementary medicine in modern society
- Organ transplantation and the ethics of directed donation
- The human genome project, privacy, and the ethics of genetic testing
- Social and behavioral factors affecting infectious disease transmission, including AIDS
- Public health responses to bioterrorism
- Witchcraft, sorcery, shamanism, and other traditional health beliefs
- Cultural clashes between traditional medicine and biomedicine
- Political-economic foundations of health disparities in the developing world

These topics all share a focus on the community as the primary area of inquiry and examination.

**A**s a student interested in public health and medicine, I did not consider an anthropology course until a friend pointed out a course titled *Anthropology and Public Health*. To this day, I strongly believe it was **the best course I took** as an undergraduate. I learned that illness is oftentimes embedded within a strong cultural context and that this culture cannot, and should not, be stripped away when one's goal is to view health and disease holistically.

"I worked with Dr. Stoner in my senior year to conduct an independent study at the St. Louis city health department. As I interviewed individuals for a study on factors related to a syphilis epidemic that occurred in the early 1990s, I began to see **how important culture is to health behavior change**.

"I later earned my master's in public health. **I continue to sing the praises of my classroom and practicum experiences** in Washington University's Department of Anthropology as it provided me with a strong foundation to understand health, medicine, and public health from a culturally grounded perspective."

## Poorni G. Otilingam

AB '97 with majors in psychology and international studies  
MPH '00 from Emory University

Now a data analyst at the Center for Health Care Evaluation,  
Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System and Stanford University School of Medicine

**I** could have taken a more direct path to attending law school, but that would have come at the expense of my intellectual growth. My studies in medical anthropology **allowed me to address issues with circumspection** so I do not throw myself precipitously to an unwarranted interpretation of an idea or issue. The sensitivity required of students studying pluralistic medical systems carries over to other nonmedical fields of study. In my opinion, such a quality is invaluable because it provides greater **opportunity for growth and understanding** of one's self and others."

## Shantanu Singh

AB '98 with majors in anthropology and biology  
Now a law student at the University of Wisconsin