

Grappling with the “Big Questions”

- How should pandemic planning and response redress structural injustice and promote social change?
- What does social justice demand of public health? How does discrimination undermine individual and public health?
- Is there a right to health care? What does that mean for health care rationing?
- What are populations in low- and middle-income countries owed, particularly when they serve as research participants for new drug development?
- Does corporate funding of health research imperil research integrity and public trust?
- Should medical science be used to produce “designer children” or to enhance mental and physical performance?
- Where does therapy end and enhancement begin?
- Does the right to choose the time and means of death exist? Should health professionals actively assist?
- What are the implications of AI for cognitive liberty and privacy?

These are just some of the essential questions that bioethics—a relatively young and fast-growing discipline—seeks to answer. Students in the [Bioethics and Medical Humanities \(BMH\) Minor](#) have the opportunity to probe these—and many other—pressing issues, drawing on scholarship from a wide range of disciplines, including: philosophy, medicine, law, psychology, sociology, anthropology, biobehavioral health, public policy, international affairs, art, literature, and environmental studies.

Skills Building and Professional Preparation

While the BMH Minor is beneficial to students in almost any major, it offers particular value to students planning to attend medical school, physician assistant school, law school, or veterinary school, as well as to students pursuing careers in health care, dentistry, life sciences, public policy, informatics, or forensics. The knowledge and skills developed through the BMH Minor provide students with the tools needed to tackle society’s major challenges in medicine, public health, nutrition, and the environment—among many others. Moreover, BMH Minor graduates leave Penn State better prepared to engage as global citizens.

BMH Undergraduate Minor Requirements

Students must take 18 approved course credits. The curriculum begins with a mandatory introductory course covering basic bioethics concepts (BIOET 100/PHIL 132). Subsequent classes are selected from the following list of offerings. Students may petition for substitutions, with permission dependent upon the student’s other course work, as well as the nature of the requested course. The BMH Minor culminates with a required capstone (BMH 490 or BIOET 496), which involves original student research. Students must receive a grade of C or better for all courses in the minor.

PREREQUISITES: NONE

PRESCRIBED COURSES: (6 credits)

- BIOET 100/PHIL 132: Bioethics
- BMH 490: Bioethics and Medical Humanities Capstone (Sem: 5-8) (Or, BIOET 496 Independent Study Capstone)

ADDITIONAL COURSES: (12 credits) must include 3 credits at the 400 level and at least 1 course from the list of Ethics courses below.

ETHICS:

- BBH 301: Values and Ethics in Behavioral Research and Practice

- BIOET 401Q: Science, Ethics, Policy, and Law
- BIOL 461: Contemporary Issues in Science and Medicine
- NURS 464: Dying and Death
- PHIL 432: Medical and Health Care Ethics
- PHIL 498: Special Topics (when relevant)
- WMNST 458: Critical Issues in Reproduction

HUMANITIES:

- CAS 253: Health Communication
- CAS 453: Health Communication Theory and Research
- HIST 103: History of Madness, Mental Illness, and Psychiatry

OTHER:

- BIOET 322/AED 322: New Media Arts Pedagogies, Transcultural Dialogues, and Bioethics
- ANTH 470H: Our Place in Nature
- ANTH 471H: Biology, Evolution, and Society
- CSD 269: Deaf Culture
- FD SC 280H: Food, Values, and Health
- H P A 301: Health Services Policy Issues
- KINES 345: Meaning, Ethics, and Movement
- NUTR 430: Global Food Strategies
- WMNST 250: Sexual Identity over the Lifespan
- BIOET 220N/ESC 220N: Ethics, Society, and Science Fiction (an interdomain course)

To request approval for alternative courses toward the minor, please contact **Bioethics Program Associate Director Michele Mekel**, mmekel@psu.edu. Courses that may be approved on a student-by-student basis include (but are not limited to):

- BBH 302 Diversity and Health
- BBH 305 Introduction to Global Health Issues
- BBH 315 Gender and Biobehavioral Health
- BBH 407 Global Health Equity
- FD SC 105 Food Facts and Fads
- HIST 124 History of Western Medicine
- H P A 401 Comparative Health Systems
- H P A 410 Principles of Public Health Administration
- H P A 445 Health Economics
- HIST 111 American Food System: History, Technology and Culture
- WMNST/BBH/NURS 452 Women's Health Issues

Please include in your email request:

- (a) the name and alpha-numeric identifier of the course you would like to substitute,
- (b) whether the course is intended to satisfy the ethics-course requirement,
- (c) a list of the other courses you have taken or plan to take for the minor,
- (d) your major(s) and minor(s),
- (e) your intended graduation date,
- (f) your transcript, and
- (g) the syllabus for the course you wish to take as a substitution.

If you are interested in the BMH Undergraduate Minor and would like to learn more, please contact Michele Mekel (mmekel@psu.edu).