

Spring 2025

HEALTH & SOCIETY

What a year it has been! The Health and Society minor continues to grow and offer new courses, including a new seminar called Research and Practice. Students in this research-intensive course had the opportunity to conduct independent research projects using qualitative and mix-methods approaches. Projects ranged in focus from the experiences of stress among college students to how women navigate the challenges of autoimmune diseases. Most all of the students in this course, many of whom are graduating seniors, presented their projects at the 2025 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

We are also pleased to announce next year's Barreto Fellows in Health and Society: Maya Barnes, Andrea Ramirez, and Adeline Ventrone-Ortega.

Beyond campus, events in Los Angeles and around the world continue to underscore the salience of studying the intersections of health and society. For example, the fires in Los Angeles in early 2025 have raised a number of important questions about the health impacts of major disasters fueled by climate change and how communities respond.

At a special panel held in March, we also explored the impacts of the recent federal spending cuts to health. We are witnessing massive changes to vital health programs across federal agencies and are already seeing the impacts of these cuts to public health programs, the provision of health services, and biomedical research. To help shine a light on these changes and their impacts, we are planning a few panels for the 2025-2026 academic year. Please stay tuned.

We hope you all have a wonderful summer!

-Rachel Washburn, HEAS Director

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS



Kelsey Armstrong

Major: Psychology

Minor: Health & Society

Q. What has been the most memorable or significant part of the Health and Society minor for you?

For me, the most significant part of the Health and Society minor was learning skills in qualitative research from Dr. Rachel Washburn. She really helped me to broaden my research portfolio.

Q. What are your plans for after graduation?

After graduation, I am attending a PsyD in Clinical Psychology program with an emphasis in Neuropsychology at The Chicago School in Los Angeles, in addition to continuing to work in psychology research.



Ananya Desai

Major: Psychology

Minor: Health & Society

Q. What has been the most memorable or significant part of the Health and Society minor for you?

One of the most memorable and meaningful aspects of being in the Health and Society minor has been the opportunity to carry out an independent research project under the guidance and expertise of Dr. Washburn. Her support and mentorship allowed me to explore a topic I'm passionate about while gaining hands-on experience in the research process, from submitting the IRB to writing memos and presenting my findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Q. What are your plans for after graduation?

I will be attending USC's Marriage and Family Therapy Program starting in Summer 2025

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS



Samantha Ikenna-Obioha

Major: Psychology

Minor: Health & Society

Q. What has been the most memorable or significant part of the Health and Society minor for you?

The most memorable/significant part of the Health and Society minor for me with presenting two of my research projects in the Undergraduate Research Symposium: "Black Maternal Health Experiences and Disparities and How Does Chronic Illness Impact Personal Identity, Relationships, and Social Roles?"

Q. What are your plans for after graduation?

My plans for after graduation are to discover opportunities that incorporate both my major, Psychology, and my minor, Health & Society.



Michelle Maxwell

Major: Communication Studies

Minor: Health & Society

Q. What has been the most memorable or significant part of the Health and Society minor for you?

The most memorable part of the Health and Society minor has been taking classes with Dr. Rachel Washburn. In particular, her research class made me genuinely excited about research and helped me appreciate the complexity and importance of the process. Her passion for research, healthcare access, and addressing societal injustices was contagious and deeply influential. Through her teaching, I developed not only new skills but also a new way of seeing the world and understanding the systems that shape people's lives.

Q. What are your plans for after graduation?

Taking a gap year to work and research grad programs and then applying for grad schools in the fall!

SENIOR SPOTLIGHTS

Adeline Ventrone-Ortega

Major: Political Science and International Relations

Minor: Health & Society

Q. What has been the most memorable or significant part of the Health and Society minor for you?

Working on my research with Dr. Washburn! It has shifted and changed a ton but I am so excited to keep working on it and come up with a publishable paper focusing on real problems women with autoimmune disease like me face.

Q. What are your plans for after graduation?

I will be entering LMU's healthcare systems engineering program and beginning an internship at Kaiser Permanente in their Population Care Management Department.



ANNOUNCING THE 2025-2026 BARRETO FELLOWS



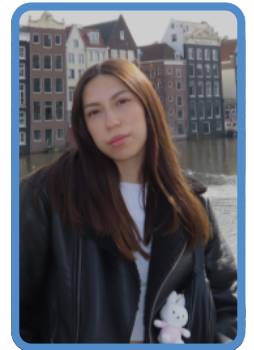
Maya Barnes

Project Title: **African American Women's Experience in Healthcare**

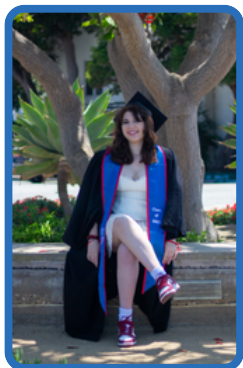
Maya will use qualitative methods to examine how Black women experience the U.S. healthcare system.

Project Title: **Social Media as a Mental Health Educator: Socioeconomic Differences in Adolescent Awareness and Help-Seeking**

Andrea will use mixed methods to examine the role of social media in adolescents' perceptions of mental health.



Andrea Ramirez



Adeline Ventrone-
Ortega

Project Title: **The Price of Pain: The Financial Implications of Autoimmune Disease in the United States**

Adeline will use qualitative methods to explore how those with autoimmune disease experience the financial burdens of seeking diagnosis and treatment.

SPECIAL NEWS



Paula Millan was accepted into the UCLA Public Health Scholars Training Program for the summer!

Yvette Castellanos will be an Undergraduate Intern for the Community Health Education and Health Promotion for the LA Department of Public Health for the summer!



Celine Athan is currently writing a short stage-play that explores the roots of modern gynecology.

It will be highlighting the experiences of enslaved women in the 1840s when they were being experimented on gynecologically, as well as explore parallels between them and the treatment of black women in the healthcare system now.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM




HEALTH AND SOCIETY GOES TO THE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

March 21, 2025

Panel: Qualitative Studies of Health, Illness, and the Body: 1pm-2:15pm
University Hall 3230

- Ananya Desai, "Masala Minds: The Spice of Neurodivergence in Indian Communities"
- Ava Nariman, "Navigating Gastrointestinal Distress Among Undergraduate Students"
- Hannah Tate, "PCOS: A Qualitative Study on the Experiences within the Diagnosis and Treatment"
- Adeline Ventrone-Ortega: "Self-Doubt and Self-Destructive Immune Systems: Experiences of Women with Autoimmune Disease"

Poster Session: 4:30pm-6:00pm, University Hall 1st Floor

- Yoyo Ikenna-Obioha, "Black Maternal Health Experiences and Disparities"
 - Michelle Maxwell, "Receptivity to Health Campaigns: The Role of Experiences"
 - Katelin Olson, "Stress in the College Journey: A Qualitative Exploration of Stress Among College Students"
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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Panel: Qualitative Studies of Health, Illness, and the Body



Presenters from left
Adeline Ventrone-Ortega, Ava Nariman,
Ananya Desai, and Hannah Tate

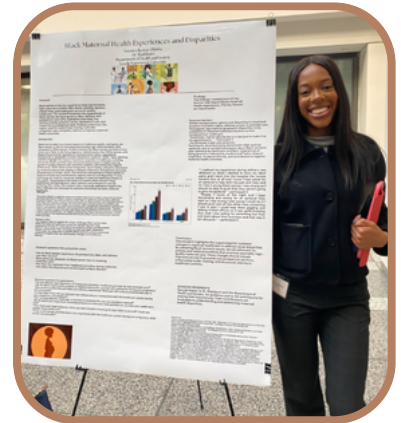


UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM



Yotanna Ikenna-Obioha

“Black Maternal Health Experiences and Disparities”

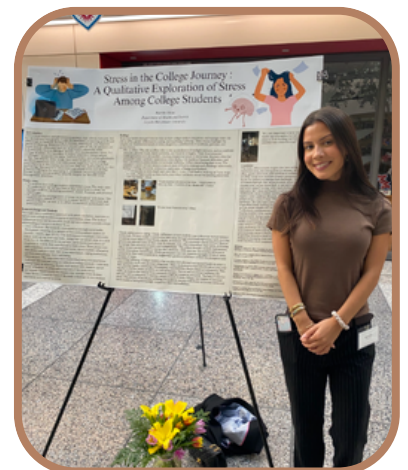


Michelle Maxwell

“Receptivity to Health Campaigns: The Role of Experience”

Katelin Olson

“Stress in the College Journey: A Qualitative Exploration of Stress Among College Students”

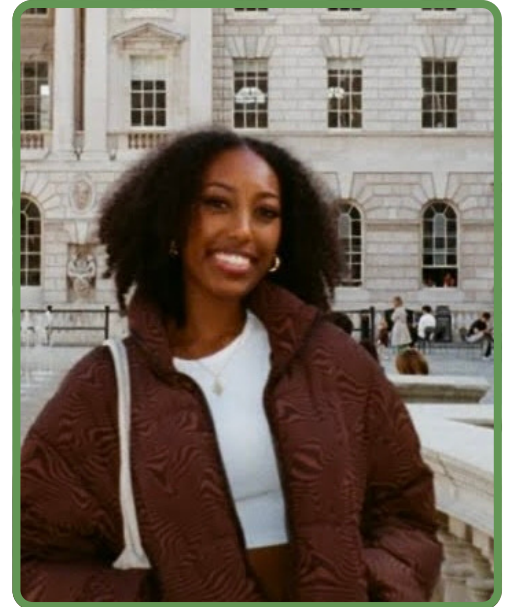


ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Miriam Admasu

What have you been up to since graduating from LMU?

After graduating from LMU, I pursued different opportunities to help my transition to the public health realm. I partook in fellowships with the California Initiative for Health Equity & Action (via the HCC Health Equity Scholars Program) and TRAPMedicine (a Los Angeles based organization that aims to address and eliminate health disparities amongst Black men and boys). I also began working full-time at L.A. Care Health Plan. After about 2 years of working, I decided to pursue my Masters degree and moved to the UK to get my Masters of Science in Health and International Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science. This was a great opportunity and I enjoyed my time in London.



What would you like to share with current Health and Society minors about post-grad life?

It's easy to compare yourselves to others around you, or even the people you graduated with, but it's so important to remember that post-grad life is a new experience on its own and looks different for everyone. Embrace your journey and really make it about you and your own goals!

What advice do you have for current Health and Society minors?

The world needs more people who understand the interconnectedness of social factors and health, and how to really look at health from different angles. This minor is so unique and important and what you learn can be applied in so many ways. The discipline is broad, but in that is the beauty of being able to discover and pursue your niche; try to get into different spaces and see what's for you! Also, do your best to connect with different people (other students, alumni, professionals, etc.) and build your network, because this will be so important as you move along in life

FALL CLASSES

AAAS 3201: Environmental Justice in Asia

BIOE 1000: Introduction to Bioethics

CMST 3325: Communication in Healthcare

EVST 3020: Sustainable Cities

EVST 3130: Environmental Justice

HEAS 3998: Rebellion and Mental Health

HEAS 4998: Research and Practice

HHSC 4100: Epidemiology

HIST 1900: Science, Nature, and Society

PSYC Capstone: The Cancer Experience

SOCL 4150: Sociology of Health and Illness

WGST 2200: Women's Bodies, Health, and Sexualities



Congratulations Seniors!