Advice for pre-meds

Going to medical school to become a physician is a big decision to make, so make sure you know what you are in for. Besides 4 years at Yale, there are 4 years of medical school, 4-7 years of residency, 1-2 years of fellowship, and THEN you get to practice medicine. That's a long road. Make sure it's really what YOU want to do. Dean Chang recommends that you volunteer for at least 2 years in a hospital, and get hands on experience taking care of patients to make sure you like doing this before committing to a career in medicine.

Yale undergrads do really well when it comes to applying to med schools, with almost 90% getting into a US medical school. Compare this with the ~45% national average. This high acceptance rate is INDEPENDENT of what students major in. Our English majors do as well as our MBB majors. Not all of you will get into Yale Med or Harvard Med, but getting into any US medical school means that you will receive good training to become a good doctor. Remember, the secret is that for your future career, the quality of your residency program counts more than the medical school you studied in. So don't stress out, do the best you can in your classes, volunteer in a hospital, and you'll have a good chance of becoming a doctor.

To get into medical school, you have to take classes to satisfy the pre-med requirement. Yale does not have a "pre-med major." To help you think about when/what you should take, a typical pre-med curriculum is listed below. Disclaimer: Dean Chang sits on the MD/PhD committee at Yale Medical School so is familiar with what Yale medical school requires, but the specific class requirements sometimes vary from state to state. Below is a *guide* only, not the final word, but it applies to the majority of med schools in the US.

You need to decide by end of sophomore year whether you want to go directly into med school right after graduation from Yale, or will you take a year or more off (a gap year)? If you don't take a gap year, you have to finish all your pre-med requirements by the end of junior year. Many undergrads take a gap year to finish a research project or participate in clinical research, and med schools like students with gap year experience. Dean Chang suggests that you take one or two years after graduating from Yale to do something interesting before going to med school.

The Office of Career Strategy https://ocs.yale.edu/ is the place to get started if you are considering medical school. This link https://ocs.yale.edu/yale-college/career-options will help you with begin your medical school application process. Make an appointment to speak with the OCS health professional folks during the beginning of your sophomore year, when you are sure medical school is for you. While they are terrific at giving great advice, they are busy working with current juniors so don't be surprised if they do not get back to you with your questions immediately. Look out for Dean Chang's career talks on "Things to consider to getting into medical and graduate schools" on the SQR website.

Below are some recommendations of when to take specific pre-med classes. This applies to any major at Yale.

If you don't want to take a gap year:

First-year:
General Chemistry
Gen chem lab
[or Freshmen Organic + orgo lab]
Math 112 or 115 or 116 or 120 (depending on your preparation)
English 114 and 120 (or another WR credit)
Take a small STEM class (First year seminar or CURE class)

Summer: do research at Yale and start volunteering in Yale New Haven Hospital

Note: if you are choosing between taking either gen chem or intro bio during your first year, one recommendation is to take gen chem first. The chem sequence has to be taken in order (gen chem, orgo, biochem) and if you don't start taking it during your first-year, you will either have to take a chem class in the summer or during your senior year (which means you will have to take a gap year). Math is tricky - you need a year of calculus for med school, but most (not all - check your favorite schools) med schools will accept one semester of college calculus if you got a 5 in BC calculus in high school. If you didn't take BC calculus in high school, you will need to take 2 semesters of calculus at Yale.

Sophomore year:
Organic chemistry + lab
[or one semester of biochemistry]
Intro bio sequence
Psychology (1 semester)
Statistics (1 semester)
WR course

Summer: research at Yale or at another institution. Start volunteering if you haven't started already. Or finish that language requirement in a foreign country.

Junior year:
Biochemistry (1 semester)
Physics 170 or 180 or 200 + lab
Research for credit (if your major allows for this)

Note: if you didn't do any research in the biological sciences over the summers you will probably need to take 2 semesters of biology lab courses - this requirement varies among med schools.

Study for MCATS
Summer: apply to med schools

Senior year:
Medical school interviews

If you are going to take a gap year…

Freshman year:
General Chemistry
Gen chem lab
[or Freshmen Organic + orgo lab if you place in]
Math 112 or 115 or 116 or 120 (depending on your preparation)
English 114 and 120 (or another WR credit)
Take a small STEM class (First year seminar or CURE class)

Summer: do research at Yale and start volunteering in Yale New Haven Hospital

Same notes apply as above.

Sophomore year:
Organic chemistry + lab
[or one semester of biochemistry]
Intro bio sequence
WR course

Summer: research at Yale or at another institution. Start volunteering if you haven't started already.

Junior year:
Biochemistry (1 semester)
Psychology (1 semester)
Research for credit (if your major allows for this)

Summer: more research and volunteering

Senior year:
Physics 170 or 180 or 200 + lab
Statistics (1 semester)
Research for credit

Study for MCATS, apply to med schools. Note: if you didn't do any research in the biological sciences over the summers you will probably need to take 2 semesters of biology lab courses- this requirement varies among med schools.

1 year after graduating from Yale:
Med school interviews