

Anthropology Department Learning Goals

Mission Statement:

Anthropology cultivates the intellectual and practical agility required in a world in which understanding and negotiating international and cross-cultural difference is increasingly a part of everyday life.

Goals:

INTELLECTUAL AGILITY

1. Anthropology students will acquire intellectual (conceptual, informational) tools to appreciate and analyze different worldviews, subsistence patterns, modes of exchange, kinship and family organization, political institutions, strategies of socialization and education, religious beliefs, and technological expertise of societies in different areas of the world.

*In the 101 and 102 and the intermediate 230 courses students will develop a four-field perspective on cultural diversity and a fundamental understanding of the comparative method that places biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity within a five million year evolutionary timeline. They will master concepts and findings from the sub-fields of biological anthropology, archeology, cultural anthropology, and linguistics. They learn a key skill in an increasingly globalized world: to suspend personal judgment about unfamiliar customs, behavior, and ideas until they have learned about and developed a full appreciation of the cultural context in which unfamiliar practices are embedded.

*In 200-level area courses students learn to describe, compare, and analyze cultures and societies from specific world areas: Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific. In other 200- and 300-level topical courses students develop their conceptual understanding and application of knowledge in foundational categories such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. They explore and evaluate key issues and critical studies in society and culture in areas such as art, medicine, food, politics, psychology, religion, and kinship.

2. Anthropology students learn to articulate orally and in writing significant trends in the history of Anthropological thought and important issues in contemporary anthropological research.

*In introductory level courses students learn to express key concepts and findings in the different four sub-fields of Anthropology. At the 200-level area and topical elective courses students build on this knowledge of cultural diversity by expanding their working knowledge base of societies in different world areas. At the 300-level students apply more sophisticated models of interpretation to cultural cases.

*The Seminar in Anthropological Theory (Anth 301) takes students through a review of the past one hundred fifty years of Anthropological theory in the US, Great Britain, and France. Students master critical concepts (for example, culture, paradigm, system, ethos, dialectic, structure, globalization) and apply these concepts to cases, they learn to pick out critical themes from ethnographies, and to apply a theoretical model to ethnographic field data derived from secondary sources.

*In Anth 401 (the Capstone) students deploy appropriate theoretical models to the analysis to field data that they themselves have collected. The final assessment is partially based on their demonstration of working knowledge about the critical issues and debates surrounding the models that they have chosen.

PRACTICAL AGILITY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH, PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

3. Anthropology students will be able to identify, describe, and evaluate appropriate methods of data collection and data analysis. They will learn how to design a qualitative research project proposal, appreciate the impact of cultural research on host individuals and communities and account for the protection of human subjects, conduct qualitative research, code and analyze research findings and present their results in portfolios, a written thesis, and public presentations in various venues.

*In the Research Methods Practicum (Anth 302 and/or Anth 215) students discuss and debate ethical issues in cultural research, learn about and practice informed consent, and master the code of conduct of the IRB and American Anthropological Association. They learn the fundamentals of project design, and practice different data collection methods such as behavioral observation, field note taking, informant selection/sampling, participant observation, interviewing (informal, structured, probing, focus group, transcription), artifact analysis/museum representation, network analysis, policy analysis, discourse/textual analysis, video data analysis, survey construction, coding, and data analysis.

*At the 300-level research practica are also a regular component of the seminar. For example, in Anth 340 students conduct an investigation of a particular religious institution. In Anth 350 students conduct interviews on courtship and kindred patterns as part of their final assessment.

*In the Capstone Senior Thesis Research Practicum (Anth 401) students design their own individual project, select and deploy an appropriate research methodology(ies) under the direction of the course instructor, and present their results in the Sociology and Anthropology Senior Majors Research Symposium. In that and other venues (such as the Wheaton Academic Festival, The Greater Boston Anthropology Research Consortium Conference, The Council on Undergraduate Research) students learn presentation formats appropriate to their project results such as oral presentation of their research summary, with or without PowerPoint, slides, charts, video, or a poster format.

4. *Anthropology students learn how to apply their skills to the world of work after graduation. Anthropology students are expected to learn to communicate about the unique skill sets that they have acquired to employers across the job spectrum in fields as diverse as health care, marketing/business, IT, teaching, museums, cultural resource management, social services, and public policy. These skills sets combine practical/technical knowledge (e.g., proposal writing, interview, project design) with conceptual knowledge (e.g., how to predict when and why people of diverse cultural backgrounds will react differently to a particular context, how to approach problem-solving holistically and collaboratively, how to teach, manage, and resolve disputes in a multicultural environment).*

*Majors are encouraged to pursue internships and field schools. Information is provided on a regular basis via class-based bulletin board, e-mail, and social media. Students can expect feedback on proposal drafts for internship funding and are encouraged to post a blog on their internship experience that describes the skills and experiences that they acquire.

*Students are regularly engaged with professional anthropologists (external and alumnae/i) in courses, sponsored lectures, or workshops who provide details of how they became engaged in their line of work and who expand our students' network of contacts. Many of our alumnae/i interact with students and faculty through our social media sites (facebook, Linked In and contributions to the department's website).

*Post-graduation planning begins with the declaration of the major. Major advising in the sophomore year focuses on study abroad planning, course selection, and the development of internship and work opportunities. Junior year advising focuses on the timeline of preparation for national scholarship submission, graduate school applications, senior thesis planning, and post-graduation programs (such as AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, City Year, Teach for America, World Teach) or jobs. Seniors work one-on-one with faculty to design their post-graduation plans. Students are encouraged to work directly with faculty and staff in the Filene Center to define their interests, develop resumes, and prepare applications.

UNDERSTANDING AND NEGOTIATING INTERNATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

5. *Anthropology Majors learn to deploy a holistic and comparative approach to provide a fresh perspective on issues such as sustainability, human rights, migration/immigration/forced resettlement, educational inequity, gender/sexuality, urban environment/design, health/illness/medical care.*

*In courses such as Anth 210, 215, 245, 265, 311, 333, and 401 students learn to communicate and represent cultural knowledge through multiple digital platforms such as: blogs, voice threads, podcasts, and digital stories.

*In courses such as Anth 210, 265, and 311 students design and conduct joint class projects and/or symposia for the public forum of the Wheaton community.

*Experiential learning opportunities: ethnographic field school experiences such as Wheaton's Tanzania and Bhutan programs; summer and January internships; WRP research with faculty partners; classes with an experiential component, or honors thesis research provide opportunities for Anthropology students to apply concepts and theory learned in the library and classroom to real problems beyond the campus. Many majors use data collected during their study abroad for their capstone senior thesis projects. Because Anthropology students are taught the fundamentals of technical proposal writing early in their academic careers, they are able to successfully apply that skill to winning major scholarships to fund their travel and study when they graduate (for example: Fulbright, Watson, Beinecke, Rotary fellowships)

6. Anthropology students can learn to teach, mentor, and manage others. They can learn the fundamentals of curriculum development and lesson planning, testing/grading, teaching writing and study skills, and working in a team of different class cohorts.

*The department selects 3-4 rising seniors with top GPAs and other skills in the major each spring to be invited to serve as Teaching Assistants to the 102 course. Working under the supervision of the course instructor, they attend all lectures, hold their own 50 minute discussion lab, prepare the lesson plan for the lab, and grade exercises and the performance of the students in their sections. They also hold office hours. They receive one course credit over the course of the academic year for their participation in the Anthropology 399 Teaching Practicum, and a part-time salary.

*The department selects 1-2 rising seniors to act work as Anthropology Tutors to provide academic support to the students enrolled in Anthropology classes.

*The Anthropology Club works to provide activities and programming on campus and off for Anthropology students and the college community. Co-chairs, a secretary and a treasurer manage the programs, publicity, and budget for the year. Typically the club provides an opportunity for several students to attend the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association to hear panels, lectures, to attend the graduate school fair and to meet with professionals in the field.