

January 1978

Major in Anthropology.

Wright State University

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What is Anthropology?

Alexander Pope's assertion, "The proper study of mankind is man," provides a simple definition of anthropology. The term is a combination of two Greek words meaning "man" and "study," and that is precisely what anthropologists do. They study human origins, physical characteristics, culture, traditions, social and political organizations, and languages.

Anthropology is considered a social science, sharing this designation with economics, sociology, psychology, history, and political science.

Anthropology combines elements of these disciplines in its attempt to understand man's whole way of life. This knowledge is useful for its own sake, but it also provides a means for understanding our own culture and those of other peoples throughout the world.

Physical anthropology is closely related to the biological sciences. It includes the study of human fossils in an attempt to reconstruct the patterns of human development from prehistoric man to the present. Another important facet of physical anthropology is the cataloging of different people's physical characteristics in studying the related effects of heredity and environment on human physical development.

Cultural anthropology is more closely related to the social sciences. It is commonly divided into three major areas: archaeology, ethnology, and linguistics.

Archaeologists excavate the ruins and remains of past civilizations in order to reconstruct their history and customs. The archaeologist examines artifacts and other evidences of human life and activity to learn as much as possible about a particular civilization. Excavations have been made in all parts of the world and have contributed greatly to our

understanding of the roots of contemporary culture.

The ethnologist, or social anthropologist, may spend long periods of time living with groups of people to learn about their way of life. Detailed observations are made of the people's social customs, beliefs, and material possessions. Often ethnologists study several groups in order to make comparative analyses of various cultures and societies. In recent years, social anthropology has also focused attention on the cultural patterns of complex urban societies.

Linguistics is the scientific study of the sounds and structures of languages and of the historical relationships among languages. A major area of linguistic study is the relationship of languages to the cultures of various groups.

Career Opportunities

Although the number of positions for anthropologists in this country is small in comparison to many other fields, the number of qualified anthropologists is usually even smaller.

The majority of the approximately 4,000 anthropologists in the United States are employed as college and university professors. Teaching is likely to be the area in which most of the new positions for anthropologists will become available in the next several years. A master's degree is usually the minimum requirement for such positions and permanent appointments ordinarily require a Ph.D. Many college graduates do part-time teaching as graduate assistants while working on advanced degrees.

Museums of science and natural history require professional anthropologists as curators and in administrative positions. Many of the

nation's major art museum also employ anthropologists as curators of archaeological collections. Some of the larger museums sponsor field expeditions in anthropological and archaeological research. Museum curators are usually involved in scholarly research and writing in addition to administrative duties.

The federal government employs anthropologists in a variety of positions. Among the agencies offering such positions are the Smithsonian Institution, the National Park Service, the Library of Congress, the National Science Foundation, the Veterans Administration, and the Departments of State, Justice, Defense, and Health, Education, and Welfare.

Business and industry, nonprofit organizations, and private foundations are another—although limited—source of employment. The United Nations also has a limited number of anthropologists on the staff of UNESCO and some of its other agencies.

Anthropology is one field in which opportunities are equal both sexes. In fact, many of the most famous anthropologists of our time are women.

High School Preparation

There are no specific course requirements for admission to the university or to the anthropology major program. However, a broad college-preparatory course is recommended, including English, the natural and social sciences, and one or more foreign languages.

The Degree Program

Since a well-rounded, liberal education is of primary concern at Wright State, all students are required to complete a program of basic studies referred to as the General Education requirement. This includes two courses in English, three courses in a laboratory science, and nine courses in the humanities and social sciences. Students have considerable flexibility in fulfilling this requirement.

The specific program for each anthropology major is worked out by the student and his or her adviser. Ordinarily the undergraduate program is structured to prepare the student for graduate school. Students have the option of concentrating on area studies, such as South Asian, African, or North American cultures, or they may specialize in archaeology or physical anthropology.

The departmental unit consists of a basic sequence in anthropology and courses in several related areas, including biology, economics, geography, geology, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. Students are also required to demonstrate proficiency in one foreign language equivalent to the Wright State University 203 level. This may be accomplished by taking courses in a foreign language or by passing a proficiency examination.

Students have a wide variety of choices of elective courses to complete the major. Offerings include archaeology, primitive religion, linguistics, study of the human skeleton and fossils, and courses that concentrate on a particular culture.

Further Information

For further information about the anthropology major program write to:

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