Choosing a Career in Anthropology: A World of Opportunities

ADDRESSING THE AGE-OLD QUESTION, “WHAT CAN I DO WITH A DEGREE IN ANTHROPOLOGY?”

Dr. John Olsen, Regents’ Professor
Ann Samuelson, Academic Advisor, Sr.
School of Anthropology
Overview: What is Anthropology?

- What is Anthropology?

- Anthropological Subfields Description:
  - Sociocultural Anthropology
  - Biological Anthropology
  - Linguistic Anthropology
  - Archaeology

Each subfield offers different career opportunities for students.
Overview of Anthropology Careers

Jobs in Anthropology fall into one of three realms:

- Anthropological Academics (University, Community College, High School, Museums)
- Applied careers in each of the subfields
- *Non-Anthropology Positions*, for which Anthropology provides excellent training (80% of our students)
Anthropology as an Academic Career

- **Four-year College or University**
  - Need a PhD
  - Not a lot of positions available and most positions go to best students
  - Four-year colleges require lots of teaching; multiple classes per semester
  - Research universities require equal amounts of research as well as teaching for tenure-track positions
Anthropology as an Academic Career

As a Tenure Track Professor at a large research university (public or private):

- Faculty must undertake their own research projects. Generally get to work on what they are interested in and where they want do research throughout the world.

- Depending on the subfield, professors can apply for grants and government funding through agencies like NSF, NIH, and Wenner-Gren. Some Anthropologists (such as archaeologists) can apply for government contracts through the National Park Service, National Forest Service, and tribal groups. Sometimes universities have their own contract and sponsored projects offices, with which they work closely.
Anthropology as an Academic Career

Community College Professor

Permanent Positions
- Only require a Master’s degree, but today a PhD is preferred (and generally necessary) to secure a permanent position.
- Lots of teaching – four or five classes a semester
- Do not require, or especially encourage, research
Anthropology as an Academic Career

**Adjunct positions (at both Universities and Community Colleges):**

Generally these are temporary positions that pay poorly and provide no benefits. Often Adjuncts are limited in the number of credits they can teach a semester, so they do not become de-facto full-time employees.
Anthropology as an Academic Career

Primary and Secondary Schools

- If a student wants to work in Primary or Secondary Schools, s/he will need to get a Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology plus a teaching certificate.

- Only a very small and elite group of primary or secondary schools provide Anthropology in their curricula, so jobs in this sector are scarce.
Government or Private Careers: Museums

Museum Employee: All Subfields

- The most prominent museum jobs are in sociocultural anthropology or archaeology, but sometimes there are jobs available for linguistic and biological anthropologists as well.

- Some prominent types of museums that employ anthropologists are natural history museums, art museums, and dedicated anthropological museums. Examples include the American Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the de Young Museum, the Field Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and locally, the Arizona State Museum.
There are 35,000 museums in the U.S. according the Institute of Museum and Library Service. Many of these are small, local community museums (e.g., Havre, Montana).

Work in collections as a curator or curatorial specialist, archives, preservation and conservation (need strong chemistry background), education and research.
The remaining students who continue to work in the discipline are *Applied (or Engaged) Anthropologists*

- To secure a permanent job, nearly all of these anthropologists need a Master’s degree
- Some get PhDs, but for the most part, they only need a Master’s degree

Applied (or Engaged) anthropologists often assume roles outside of academia in realms as diverse as public health, ecology, and heritage management.
Many applied archaeologists work for federal, state, and local governments.

Compliance with federal, state, and local laws:
- Antiquities Act (1906)
- NAGPRA (1990) The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- Many state and local laws
Applied Anthropology: Archaeology
Work for the Government

State and Local: State and Local Parks, State Historic Preservation Office. Every state and many local communities hire archaeologists.
Cultural Resource Management (CRM)

For-Profit Corporations:

- Generally undertaken by private companies or corporations, although procedures are similar to what federal archaeologists do
- 100s of these around: at least a dozen in Tucson
- Pros and Cons to this kind of work
- Encourage students to run their own companies
Non-Profit Organizations

- Why non-profit archaeology?: protect archaeological sites, work to inform about the subject, develop larger protection plans, teach non-professionals
- Few jobs in this category available
- In Tucson, only two non-profit archaeological firms
Non-Profit Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Jobs in administration, fundraising, and program management and development.
- Very rewarding but not the best-paying positions.
Business

Hear more and more about businesses hiring Anthropologists

- To define and understand markets
- To figure out internal corporate culture and improve employee happiness and productivity.
Government Work: Outside the U.S. Foreign service
Government Work: Within the U.S.

- Within U.S. Government – congressional offices, government agencies like the Department of State, Department of Health and Human Services, National Archives, Tribal Agencies
- State Government
- Local Government
- Military: help military understand different cultures preventing antagonism and maintaining good working relationships
Applied Anthropology: Sociocultural Anthropology

- Writing, editing, publishing as well as documentary film-making
Applied Anthropology: Biological Anthropology

- **Forensic Anthropology** - Not a good career choice as there are very few positions.
- **Nature Centers** – exact number unclear, but many in the U.S.
- **Zoos** - Association of Zoos and Aquariums currently have 229 accredited members in the U.S.
**Language Preservation:** Work for various groups around the world in danger of relinquishing their cultural heritage because they are losing their language.

- Writing, editing, publishing as well as documentary filmmaking
Additional Jobs: All Anthropology Subfields*

* A frank overview of the job possibilities for those who graduate with an Anthropology major outside of academia and applied anthropology:

80% of students graduating with Bachelor’s degrees in Anthropology do not go on to pursue graduate degrees in Anthropology.
Furthermore, of those students who eventually acquire graduate degrees in Anthropology (Master’s and/or PhD), less than half are ultimately employed in fields that include “anthropology” as part of the job description.
Of course, if a student is already interested in both Anthropology and a specific career path, that student might consider a double-major or a minor in either subject, and take Anthropology courses related to their desired career field.

For example, if a student is attracted to working in public health, they might pursue a double-major in anthropology and biology and take classes in medical anthropology; ultimately seeking a Master’s of Public Health (MPH) degree.
Additional Jobs: All Anthropology Subfields

The website of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology is a useful source of information regarding the proliferation of career opportunities for those holding a Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology:

http://practicinganthropology.org/
The critical reading, writing, and thinking skills emphasized in Anthropology classes provide a solid background for graduate and professional programs in law, public policy, medicine, public health, business, education, foreign service, journalism, and beyond.
Anthropology is good preparation for jobs that involve “people skills” and require a nuanced understanding of cultural differences in behavior and expectations.

Even the armed services understand this...
Data tabulated by the University of California at Berkeley for 2007 graduates indicate:

Anthropology students are almost as likely to be employed in education or non-profit activities as in other forms of employment. While 58% of those employed were in the “for profit” sector, 26% were working for non-profits, and 16% reported being employed in education.
Respondents to a 2012 survey conducted by the American Anthropological Association provided the following labels to describe their post-graduate employment:
### Additional Jobs: All Anthropology Subfields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education/Outreach</th>
<th>Administration/Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archaeology</td>
<td>Ethnography/Cultural Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resource Management</td>
<td>Foreign Service/Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Preservation</td>
<td>Health (international/public health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Design/Curation</td>
<td>Healthcare Management/Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>Environment and Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Market Research</td>
<td>Tourism/Heritage Preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy (human rights/social justice)</td>
<td>Social Impact Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources/Social Services</td>
<td>Humanitarian Efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design (products and/or services)</td>
<td>Mass Communication/Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development/Policy</td>
<td>Software Development/Information Technology Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, what can a student do with a degree in Anthropology?

Pretty much anything s/he wishes, assuming s/he has been strategic about using flexibility, perseverance, and self-determination to their best advantage.

*Remember what anthropologists do best:* they understand variability in human behavior from both biological and cultural perspectives, especially over long periods.
A Suggestion...

Advise students to be proactive. For example:

- Attend a summer field school or “travel with a purpose” while studying other cultures.
- Volunteer to help with a professor’s research.
- Gain critical work experience through internships, practicums, part-time jobs, or volunteer positions.
Pursuing a Career in Anthropology

Thank You
Any Questions?