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
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 to 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.
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
Adjunct positions (both at Universities and Community Colleges):

Generally these are temporary positions which 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.
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.
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 which 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 to 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

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 RESOURCES & HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
PIMA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS CENTER
201 N. STONE AVENUE, 6TH FL.
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85701-1207
PHONE: (520) 740-6451
FAX: (520) 243-1610
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.
Applied Anthropology: Sociocultural Anthropology

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
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.
Applied Anthropology: Linguistic Anthropology

- **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 film-making**
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 Ph.D.), 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 taking 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

Education/Outreach
Archaeology
Cultural Resource Management
Historic Preservation
Museum Design/Curation
Community Development
Business and Market Research
Advocacy (human rights/social justice)
Human Resources/Social Services
Design (products and/or services)
International Development/Policy
Consulting/Organizational Development
Forensics/Law/Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement
Software Development/Information Technology Management

Administration/Management
Ethnography/Cultural Anthropology
Foreign Service/Diplomacy
Health (international/public health)
Healthcare Management/Delivery
Environment and Natural Resources
Tourism/Heritage Preservation
Social Impact Assessment
Humanitarian Efforts
Mass Communication/Journalism
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.
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?