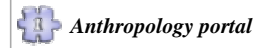


# Anthropology *Make a donation to Wikipedia and give the gift of knowledge!*

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*This article is about the social science. For other uses, see [Anthropology \(disambiguation\)](#).*

**Anthropology** (/ˌænθrɒˈpɒlədʒi/, from Greek ἄνθρωπος, *anthrōpos*, "human"; -λογία, *-logia*) is the study of humanity. Anthropology has origins in the natural sciences, and the humanities.<sup>[1]</sup> Ethnography is both one of its primary methods and the text that is written as a result of the practice of anthropology and its elements.



Since the work of Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anthropology has been distinguished from other social science disciplines by its emphasis on in-depth examination of context, cross-cultural comparisons (socio-cultural anthropology is by nature a comparative discipline), and the importance it places on long-term, experiential immersion in the area of research, often known as participant-observation. Cultural anthropology in particular has emphasized cultural relativity and the use of findings to frame cultural critiques. This has been particularly prominent in the United States, from Boas's arguments against 19th-century racial ideology, through Margaret Mead's advocacy for gender equality and sexual liberation, to current criticisms of post-colonial oppression and promotion of multiculturalism.

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## Historical and institutional context

The anthropologist Eric Wolf once described anthropology as "the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences."<sup>[2]</sup> Contemporary anthropologists claim a number of earlier thinkers as their forebears, and the discipline has several sources; Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, claimed Montaigne and Rousseau as important influences.

Ancient and medieval writers and scholars may be considered forerunners of anthropology, insofar as they conducted or wrote detailed studies of the customs of different peoples, including the Greek writer Herodotus, often called the "father of history" and the Roman historian Tacitus, who wrote many of our only surviving contemporary accounts of several ancient Celtic and Germanic peoples. A candidate for one of the first scholars to carry out comparative ethnographic-type studies in person was the medieval Persian scholar Abū Rayhān Bīrūnī in the 11th century, who wrote about the peoples, customs, and religions of the Indian subcontinent. Like modern anthropologists, he engaged in extensive participant observation with a given group of people, learnt their language and studied their primary texts, and presented his findings with objectivity and neutrality using cross-cultural comparisons.<sup>[3]</sup> He wrote detailed comparative studies on the religions and cultures in the Middle East, Mediterranean and especially South Asia.<sup>[4][5]</sup> Biruni's tradition of comparative cross-cultural study continued in the Muslim world through to Ibn Khaldun's work in the 14th century.<sup>[3]</sup>

Most scholars consider modern anthropology as an outgrowth of the Age of Enlightenment, a period when Europeans

attempted systematically to study human behavior, the known varieties of which had been increasing since the 15th century as a result of the first European colonization wave. The traditions of jurisprudence, history, philology, and sociology then evolved into something more closely resembling the modern views of these disciplines and informed the development of the social sciences, of which anthropology was a part. Developments in systematic study of ancient civilizations through the disciplines of Classics and Egyptology informed both archaeology and eventually social anthropology, as did the study of East and South Asian languages and cultures. At the same time, the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment produced thinkers, such as Johann Gottfried Herder and later Wilhelm Dilthey, whose work formed the basis for the "culture concept," which is central to the discipline.

Institutionally, anthropology emerged from the development of natural history (expounded by authors such as Buffon) that occurred during the European colonization of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Programs of ethnographic study originated in this era as the study of the "human primitives" overseen by colonial administrations. There was a tendency in late 18th century Enlightenment thought to understand human society as natural phenomena that behaved in accordance with certain principles and that could be observed empirically. In some ways, studying the language, culture, physiology, and artifacts of European colonies was not unlike studying the flora and fauna of those places.

Early anthropology was divided between proponents of unilinealism, who argued that all societies passed through a single evolutionary process, from the most primitive to the most advanced, and various forms of non-linear theorists, who tended to subscribe to ideas such as diffusionism.<sup>[6]</sup> Most 19th-century social theorists, including anthropologists, viewed non-European societies as windows onto the pre-industrial human past. As academic disciplines began to differentiate over the course of the 19th century, anthropology grew increasingly distinct from the biological approach of natural history, on the one hand, and from purely historical or literary fields such as Classics, on the other. A common criticism has been that many social science scholars (such as economists, sociologists, and psychologists) in Western countries focus disproportionately on Western subjects, while anthropology focuses disproportionately on the "Other"<sup>[7]</sup>; this has changed over the last part of the 20th century as anthropologists increasingly also study Western subjects, particularly variation across class, region, or ethnicity within Western societies, and other social scientists increasingly take a global view of their fields.



Table of natural history, 1728  
*Cyclopaedia*

In the twentieth century, academic disciplines have often been institutionally divided into three broad domains. The natural and biological *sciences* seek to derive general laws through reproducible and verifiable experiments. The *humanities* generally study local traditions, through their history, literature, music, and arts, with an emphasis on understanding particular individuals, events, or eras. The *social sciences* have generally attempted to develop scientific methods to understand social phenomena in a generalizable way, though usually with methods distinct from those of the natural sciences. In particular, social sciences often develop statistical descriptions rather than the general laws derived in physics or chemistry, or they may explain individual cases through more general principles, as in many fields of psychology. Anthropology (like some fields of history) does not easily fit into one of these categories, and different branches of anthropology draw on one or more of these domains.<sup>[8]</sup>

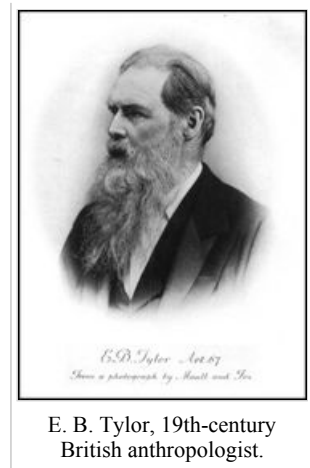
Anthropology as it emerged among the colonial powers (mentioned above) has generally taken a different path than that in the countries of southern and central Europe (Italy, Greece, and the successors to the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires). In the former, the encounter with multiple, distinct cultures, often very different in organization and language from those of Europe, has led to a continuing emphasis on cross-cultural comparison and a receptiveness to certain kinds of cultural relativism.<sup>[9]</sup> In the successor states of continental Europe, on the other hand, anthropologists often joined with folklorists and linguists in the nationalist/nation-building enterprise. Ethnologists in these countries tended to focus on differentiating among local ethnolinguistic groups, documenting local folk culture, and representing the prehistory of the nation through museums and other forms of public education.<sup>[10]</sup> In this scheme, Russia occupied a middle position. On the one hand, it had a large Asian region of highly distinct, pre-industrial, often non-literate peoples, similar to the situation in the Americas; on the other hand, Russia also participated to some degree in the nationalist discourses of Central and Eastern Europe. After the Revolution of 1917, anthropology in the USSR and later the Soviet Bloc countries were highly shaped by the need to conform to Marxist theories of social evolution.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Anthropology by country

### Anthropology in Britain

E. B. Tylor ( 2 October 1832 – 2 January 1917) and James George Frazer ( 1 January 1854 – 7 May 1941) are generally considered the antecedents to modern social anthropology in Britain. Though Tylor undertook a field trip to Mexico, both he and Frazer derived most of the material for their comparative studies through extensive reading not fieldwork: Classics (literature and history of Greece and Rome), the work of the early

European folklorists, and reports from missionaries, travelers, and contemporaneous ethnologists. Tylor advocated strongly for unilinealism and a form of "uniformity of mankind".<sup>[12]</sup> Tylor in particular laid the groundwork for theories of cultural diffusionism, stating that there are three ways that different groups can have similar cultural forms or technologies: "independent invention, inheritance from ancestors in a distant region, transmission from one race [sic] to another."<sup>[13]</sup> Tylor formulated one of the early and influential anthropological conceptions of culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>[14]</sup> However, as Stocking notes, Tylor mainly concerned himself with describing and mapping the distribution of particular elements of culture, rather than with the larger function, and generally seemed to assume a Victorian idea of progress rather than the idea of non-directional, multilineal cultural development proposed by later anthropologists. Tylor also theorized about the origins of religious feelings in human beings, proposing a theory of animism as the earliest stage, and noting that "religion" has many components, of which he believed the most important to be belief in supernatural beings (as opposed to moral systems, cosmology, etc.). Frazer, a Scottish scholar with a broad knowledge of Classics, also concerned himself with religion, myth, and magic. His comparative studies, most influentially in the numerous editions of *The Golden Bough*, analyzed similarities in religious belief and symbolism worldwide.



E. B. Tylor, 19th-century British anthropologist.

Neither Tylor nor Frazer, however, were particularly interested in fieldwork, nor were they interested in examining how the cultural elements and institutions fit together. Toward the turn of the twentieth century, a number of anthropologists became dissatisfied with this categorization of cultural elements; historical reconstructions also came to seem increasingly speculative. Under the influence of several younger scholars, a new approach came to predominate among British anthropologists, concerned with analyzing how societies held together in the present (synchronic analysis, rather than diachronic or historical analysis), and emphasizing long-term (one to several years) immersion fieldwork. Cambridge University financed a multidisciplinary expedition to the Torres Strait Islands in 1898, organized by Alfred Court Haddon and including a physician-anthropologist, W. H. R. Rivers, as well as a linguist, a botanist, other specialists. The findings of the expedition set new standards for ethnographic description.

A decade and a half later, Polish-born anthropology student Bronisław Malinowski (1884-1942) was beginning what he expected to be a brief period of fieldwork in the old model, collecting lists of cultural items, when the outbreak of the First World War stranded him in New Guinea. As a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire resident on a British colonial possession, he was effectively confined to New Guinea for several years.<sup>[15]</sup> He made use of the time by undertaking far more intensive fieldwork than had been done by *British* anthropologists, and his classic ethnography, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) advocated an approach to fieldwork that became standard in the field: getting "the native's point of view" through participant observation. Theoretically, he advocated a functionalist interpretation, which examined how social institutions functioned to meet individual needs.

British social anthropology had an expansive moment in the Interwar period, with key contributors as Bronisław Malinowski and Meyer Fortes<sup>[16]</sup>

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown also published a seminal work in 1922. He had carried out his initial fieldwork in the Andaman Islands in the old style of historical reconstruction. However, after reading the work of French sociologists Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, Radcliffe-Brown published an account of his research (entitled simply *The Andaman Islanders*) that paid close attention to the meaning and purpose of rituals and myths. Over time, he developed an approach known as structural-functionalism, which focused on how institutions in societies worked to balance out or create an equilibrium in the social system to keep it functioning harmoniously. (This contrasted with Malinowski's functionalism, and was quite different from the later French structuralism, which examined the conceptual structures in language and symbolism.)

Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's influence stemmed from the fact that they, like Boas, actively trained students and aggressively built up institutions that furthered their programmatic ambitions. This was particularly the case with Radcliffe-Brown, who spread his agenda for "Social Anthropology" by teaching at universities across the British Commonwealth. From the late 1930s until the postwar period appeared a string of monographs and edited volumes that cemented the paradigm of British Social Anthropology (BSA). Famous ethnographies include *The Nuer*, by Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, and *The Dynamics of Clanship Among the Tallensi*, by Meyer Fortes; well-known edited volumes include *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* and *African Political Systems*.

Max Gluckman, together with many of his colleagues at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and students at Manchester University, collectively known as the Manchester School, took BSA in new directions through their introduction of explicitly Marxist-informed theory, their emphasis on conflicts and conflict resolution, and their attention to the ways in which individuals negotiate and make use of the social structural possibilities.

In Britain, anthropology had a great intellectual impact, it "contributed to the erosion of Christianity, the growth of cultural relativism, an awareness of the survival of the primitive in modern life, and the replacement of diachronic modes of analysis

with synchronic, all of which are central to modern culture."<sup>[17]</sup>

Later in the 1960s and 1970s, Edmund Leach and his students Mary Douglas and Nur Yalman, among others, introduced French structuralism in the style of Lévi-Strauss; while British anthropology has continued to emphasize social organization and economics over purely symbolic or literary topics, differences among British, French, and American sociocultural anthropologies have diminished with increasing dialogue and borrowing of both theory and methods. Today, social anthropology in Britain engages internationally with many other social theories and has branched in many directions.

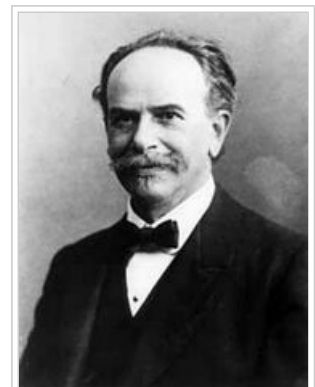
In countries of the British Commonwealth, social anthropology has often been institutionally separate from physical anthropology and primatology, which may be connected with departments of biology or zoology; and from archaeology, which may be connected with departments of Classics, Egyptology, and the like. In other countries (and in some, particularly smaller, British and North American universities), anthropologists have also found themselves institutionally linked with scholars of folklore, museum studies, human geography, sociology, social relations, ethnic studies, cultural studies, and social work.

## Anthropology in the United States

### 1800s to 1940s

From its beginnings in the early 19th century through the early 20th century, anthropology in the United States was influenced by the presence of Native American societies.

Cultural anthropology in the United States was influenced greatly by the ready availability of Native American societies as ethnographic subjects. The field was pioneered by staff of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, men such as John Wesley Powell and Frank Hamilton Cushing. Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881), a lawyer from Rochester, New York, became an advocate for and ethnological scholar of the Iroquois. His comparative analyses of religion, government, material culture, and especially kinship patterns proved to be influential contributions to the field of anthropology. Like other scholars of his day (such as Edward Tylor), Morgan argued that human societies could be classified into categories of cultural evolution on a scale of progression that ranged from *savagery*, to *barbarism*, to *civilization*. Generally, Morgan used technology (such as bowmaking or pottery) as an indicator of position on this scale.<sup>[18]</sup>



Franz Boas, one of the pioneers of modern anthropology, often called the "Father of American Anthropology"

### Boasian anthropology

Franz Boas established academic anthropology in the United States in opposition to this sort of evolutionary perspective. Boasian anthropology was politically active and suspicious of research dictated by the U.S. government and wealthy patrons. It was rigorously empirical and skeptical of overgeneralizations and attempts to establish universal laws. Boas studied immigrant children to demonstrate that biological race was not immutable, and that human conduct and behavior resulted from nurture, rather than nature.

Influenced by the German tradition, Boas argued that the world was full of distinct *cultures*, rather than societies whose evolution could be measured by how much or how little "civilization" they had. He believed that each culture has to be studied in its particularity, and argued that cross-cultural generalizations, like those made in the natural sciences, were not possible. In doing so, he fought discrimination against immigrants, African Americans, and Native North Americans.<sup>[19]</sup> Many American anthropologists adopted his agenda for social reform, and theories of race continue to be popular targets for anthropologists today. The so-called "Four Field Approach" has its origins in Boasian Anthropology, dividing the discipline in the four crucial and interrelated fields of sociocultural, biological, linguistic, and prehistoric anthropology (i.e., archaeology). Anthropology in the U.S. continues to be deeply influenced by the Boasian tradition, especially its emphasis on culture.

Boas used his positions at Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History to train and develop multiple generations of students. His first generation of students included Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Edward Sapir and Ruth Benedict, who each produced richly detailed studies of indigenous North American cultures. They provided a wealth of details used to attack the theory of a single evolutionary process. Kroeber and Sapir's focus on Native American languages helped establish linguistics as a truly general science and free it from its historical focus on Indo-European languages.

The publication of Alfred Kroeber's textbook, *Anthropology*, marked a turning point in American anthropology. After three decades of amassing material, Boasians felt a growing urge to generalize. This was most obvious in the 'Culture and Personality' studies carried out by younger Boasians such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Influenced by psychoanalytic psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, these authors sought to



understand the way that individual personalities were shaped by the wider cultural and social forces in which they grew up. Though such works as *Coming of Age in Samoa* and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* remain popular with the American public, Mead and Benedict never had the impact on the discipline of anthropology that some expected. Boas had planned for Ruth Benedict to succeed him as chair of Columbia's anthropology department, but she was sidelined by Ralph Linton, and Mead was limited to her offices at the AMNH.

Ruth Benedict in 1937

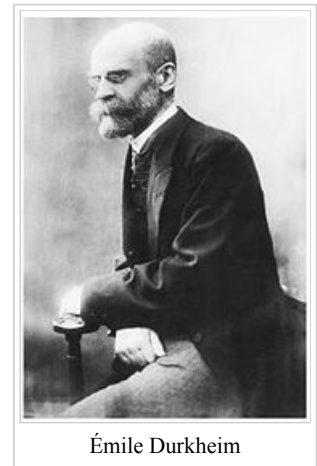
### Anthropology in Canada

Canadian anthropology began, as in other parts of the Colonial world, as ethnological data in the records of travellers and missionaries. In Canada, Jesuit missionaries such as Fathers LeClercq, Le Jeune and Sagard, in the 1600s, provide the oldest ethnographic records of native tribes in what was then the Domain of Canada.

True anthropology began with a Government department: the Geological Survey of Canada, and George Mercer Dawson (director in 1895). Dawson's support for anthropology created impetus for the profession in Canada. This was expanded upon by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, who established a Division of Anthropology within the Geological Survey in 1910. Anthropologists were recruited from England and the USA, setting the foundation for the unique Canadian style of anthropology. Early scholars include the brilliant linguist and Boasian Edward Sapir.

### Anthropology in France

Anthropology in France has a less clear genealogy than the British and American traditions, in part because many French writers influential in anthropology have been trained or held faculty positions in sociology, philosophy, or other fields rather than in anthropology. Most commentators consider Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), nephew of the influential sociologist Émile Durkheim to be the founder of the French anthropological tradition. Mauss belonged to Durkheim's *Année Sociologique* group; and while Durkheim and others examined the state of modern societies, Mauss and his collaborators (such as Henri Hubert and Robert Hertz) drew on ethnography and philology to analyze societies which were not as 'differentiated' as European nation states. Two works by Mauss in particular proved to have enduring relevance: *Essay on the Gift* a seminal analysis of exchange and reciprocity, and his Huxley lecture on the notion of the person, the first comparative study of notions of person and selfhood cross-culturally.<sup>[20]</sup>



Émile Durkheim

Throughout the interwar years, French interest in anthropology often dovetailed with wider cultural movements such as surrealism and primitivism which drew on ethnography for inspiration. Marcel Griaule and Michel Leiris are examples of people who combined anthropology with the French avant-garde. During this time most of what is known as *ethnologie* was restricted to museums, such as the Musée de l'Homme founded by Paul Rivet, and anthropology had a close relationship with studies of folklore.

Above all, however, it was Claude Lévi-Strauss who helped institutionalize anthropology in France. In addition to the enormous influence his structuralism exerted across multiple disciplines, Lévi-Strauss established ties with American and British anthropologists. At the same time he established centers and laboratories within France to provide an institutional context within anthropology while training influential students such as Maurice Godelier and Françoise Héritier who would prove influential in the world of French anthropology. Much of the distinct character of France's anthropology today is a result of the fact that most anthropology is carried out in nationally funded research laboratories (CNRS) rather than academic departments in universities.

Other influential writers in the 1970s include Pierre Clastres, who explains in his books on the Guayaki tribe in Paraguay that "primitive societies" actively oppose the institution of the state. Therefore, these stateless societies are not less evolved than societies with states, but took the active choice of conjuring the institution of authority as a separate function from society. The leader is only a spokesperson for the group when it has to deal with other groups ("international relations") but has no inside authority, and may be violently removed if he attempts to abuse this position.

The most important French social theorist since Foucault and Lévi-Strauss is Pierre Bourdieu, who trained formally in philosophy and sociology and eventually held the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France. Like Mauss and others before him, however, he worked on topics both in sociology and anthropology. His fieldwork among the Kabyles of Algeria places him solidly in anthropology, while his analysis of the function and reproduction of fashion and cultural capital in European societies places him as solidly in sociology.

### Other countries

Anthropology in Greece and Portugal is much influenced by British anthropology. In Greece, there was since the 19th century

a science of the folklore called *laographia* (laography), in the form of "a science of the interior", although theoretically weak; but the connotation of the field deeply changed after World War II, when a wave of Anglo-American anthropologists introduced a science "of the outside".<sup>[21]</sup> In Italy, the development of ethnology and related studies did not receive as much attention as other branches of learning.<sup>[22]</sup>

Germany and Norway are the countries that showed the most division and conflict between scholars focusing on domestic socio-cultural issues and scholars focusing on "other" societies.

## Anthropology after World War II: Increasing dialog in Anglophone anthropology

Before WWII British 'social anthropology' and American 'cultural anthropology' were still distinct traditions. After the war, enough British and American anthropologists borrowed ideas and methodological approaches from each other that some began to speak of them collectively as 'sociocultural' anthropology.

In the 1950s and mid-1960s anthropology tended increasingly to model itself after the natural sciences. Some anthropologists, such as Lloyd Fallers and Clifford Geertz, focused on processes of modernization by which newly independent states could develop. Others, such as Julian Steward and Leslie White, focused on how societies evolve and fit their ecological niche—an approach popularized by Marvin Harris. Economic anthropology as influenced by Karl Polanyi and practiced by Marshall Sahlins and George Dalton challenged standard neoclassical economics to take account of cultural and social factors, and also employed Marxian analysis into anthropological study. In England, British Social Anthropology's paradigm began to fragment as Max Gluckman and Peter Worsley experimented with Marxism and authors such as Rodney Needham and Edmund Leach incorporated Lévi-Strauss's structuralism into their work.

Structuralism also influenced a number of developments in 1960s and 1970s, including cognitive anthropology and componential analysis. Authors such as David Schneider, Clifford Geertz, and Marshall Sahlins developed a more fleshed-out concept of culture as a web of meaning or signification, which proved very popular within and beyond the discipline. In keeping with the times, much of anthropology became politicized through the Algerian War of Independence and opposition to the Vietnam War;<sup>[23]</sup> Marxism became a more and more popular theoretical approach in the discipline.<sup>[24]</sup> By the 1970s the authors of volumes such as *Reinventing Anthropology* worried about anthropology's relevance.

Since the 1980s issues of power, such as those examined in Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History*, have been central to the discipline. In the 80s books like *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* pondered anthropology's ties to colonial inequality, while the immense popularity of theorists such as Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault moved issues of power and hegemony into the spotlight. Gender and sexuality became popular topics, as did the relationship between history and anthropology, influenced by Marshall Sahlins (again), who drew on Lévi-Strauss and Fernand Braudel to examine the relationship between social structure and individual agency. Also influential in these issues were Nietzsche, Heidegger, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Derrida and Lacan.<sup>[25]</sup>

In the late 1980s and 1990s authors such as George Marcus and James Clifford pondered ethnographic authority, particularly how and why anthropological knowledge was possible and authoritative. They were reflecting trends in research and discourse initiated by Feminists in the academy, although they excused themselves from commenting specifically on those pioneering critics.<sup>[26]</sup> Nevertheless, key aspects of feminist theorizing and methods became *de rigueur* as part of the 'post-modern moment' in anthropology: Ethnographies became more reflexive, explicitly addressing the author's methodology, cultural, gender and racial positioning, and their influence on his or her ethnographic analysis. This was part of a more general trend of postmodernism that was popular contemporaneously.<sup>[27]</sup> Currently anthropologists pay attention to a wide variety of issues pertaining to the contemporary world, including globalization, medicine and biotechnology, indigenous rights, virtual communities, and the anthropology of industrialized societies.

## Approaches to anthropology

### The "four field" approach

Principally in the United States,<sup>[28]</sup> anthropology is often defined as being "holistic" and based on a "four-field" approach. There is an ongoing dispute as to whether this makes sense theoretically or pragmatically in the structure of American academic institutions. Supporters<sup>[29]</sup> consider anthropology holistic in two senses: it is concerned with all human beings across times and places, and with all dimensions of humanity (evolutionary, biophysical, sociopolitical, economic, cultural, linguistic, psychological, etc.); also many academic programs following this approach take a "four-field" approach to anthropology that encompasses physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and cultural anthropology or social anthropology. The definition of anthropology as holistic and the "four-field" approach are disputed by some leading anthropologists,<sup>[30][31][32]</sup> that consider those as artifacts from 19th century social evolutionary thought that inappropriately impose scientific positivism upon cultural anthropology in particular.<sup>[30]</sup> The pressure for the "integration" of socio-cultural anthropology (inherently associated with the humanities), with "biological-physical anthropology" (inherently associated with

the natural sciences), has been criticized as an inappropriate imposition of positivism (the belief that the only proper knowledge is that derived from the scientific method) upon cultural anthropology.<sup>[30]</sup> This criticism argument has been raised towards the development of sociobiology in the late 1960s (by cultural anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins), and towards the "four field holism" of American Anthropology.<sup>[30]</sup> While originating in the US, both the four field approach and debates concerning it have been exported internationally under American academic influence.<sup>[33]</sup> (*for more details see the section on the relations with the natural sciences and the Humanities*)

The four fields are:

- **Biological or physical anthropology** seeks to understand the physical human being through the study of human evolution and adaptability, population genetics, and primatology. Subfields or related fields include paleoanthropology (study of evolutionary history of the human species), anthropometrics, forensic anthropology, osteology, and nutritional anthropology. On the basis of Tinbergen's four questions a framework of reference or "periodic table" of all fields of anthropological research (including humanities) can be established.
- **Socio-cultural anthropology** is the investigation, often through long term, intensive field studies (including participant-observation methods), of the culture and social organization of a particular people: language, economic and political organization, law and conflict resolution, patterns of consumption and exchange, kinship and family structure, gender relations, childrearing and socialization, religion, mythology, symbolism, etc. (U.S. universities more often use the term cultural anthropology; British universities have tended to call the corresponding field social anthropology, and for much of the 20th century emphasized the analysis of social organization more than cultural symbolism.) In some European countries, socio-cultural anthropology is known as ethnology (a term coined and defined by Adam F. Kollár in 1783<sup>[34]</sup> that is also used in English-speaking countries to denote the comparative aspect of socio-cultural anthropology.) Subfields and related fields include psychological anthropology, folklore, anthropology of religion, ethnic studies, cultural studies, anthropology of media and cyberspace, and study of the diffusion of social practices and cultural forms.
- **Linguistic anthropology** seeks to understand the processes of human communications, verbal and non-verbal, variation in language across time and space, the social uses of language, and the relationship between language and culture. It is the branch of anthropology that brings linguistic methods to bear on anthropological problems, linking the analysis of linguistic forms and processes to the interpretation of sociocultural processes. Linguistic anthropologists often draw on related fields including anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis.<sup>[35]</sup>
- **Archaeology** studies the contemporary distribution and form of artifacts (materials modified by past human activities), with the intent of understanding distribution and movement of ancient populations, development of human social organization, and relationships among contemporary populations; it also contributes significantly to the work of population geneticists, historical linguists, and many historians. Archaeology involves a wide variety of field techniques (remote sensing, survey, geophysical studies, coring, excavation) and laboratory procedures (compositional analyses, dating studies (radiocarbon, optically stimulated luminescence dating), measures of formal variability, examination of wear patterns, residue analyses, etc.). Archaeologists predominantly study materials produced by prehistoric groups but also includes modern, historical and ethnographic populations. Archaeology is usually regarded as a separate (but related) field outside North America, although closely related to the anthropological field of material culture, which deals with physical objects created or used within a living or past group as a means of understanding its cultural values.

A number of subfields or modes of anthropology cut across these divisions. For example, medical anthropology is often considered a subfield of socio-cultural anthropology; however, many anthropologists who study medical topics also look at biological variation in populations or the interaction of culture and biology. They may also use linguistic analysis to understand communication around health and illness, or archaeological techniques to understand health and illness in historical or prehistorical populations. Similarly, forensic anthropologists may use both techniques from both physical anthropology and archaeology, and may also practice as medical anthropologists. Environmental or ecological anthropology, a growing subfield concerned with the relationships between humans and their environment, is another example that brings cultural and biological—and at times, archaeological—approaches together, as it can deal with a broad range of topics from environmentalist movements to wildlife or habitat conservation to traditional ecological knowledge and practices. Biocultural anthropology is a broad term used to describe syntheses of cultural and biological perspectives. Applied anthropology is perhaps better considered an emphasis than a subfield in the same sense as the standard four; applied anthropologists may work for government agencies, nongovernmental agencies, or private industry, using techniques from any of the subfields to address matters such as policy implementation, impact assessments, education, marketing research, or product development.

More recently, anthropology programs at several prominent U.S. universities have begun dividing the field into two: one emphasizing the humanities, critical theory, and interpretive or semiotic approaches; the other emphasizing evolutionary theory, quantitative methods, and explicit theory testing (over idiographic description),<sup>[36]</sup> though there have also been institutional pressures to rejoin at least one high-profile split department.<sup>[37]</sup> At some universities, biological anthropology and archaeology programs have also moved from departments of anthropology to departments of biology or other related fields. This has occasioned much discussion within the American Anthropological Association, and it remains to be seen whether some form of the four-field organization will persist in North American universities.

As might be inferred from the above list of subfields, anthropology is a methodologically diverse discipline, incorporating both qualitative methods and quantitative methods. Ethnographies—intensive case studies based on field research—have

historically had a central place in the literature of sociocultural and linguistic anthropology, but are increasingly supplemented by mixed-methods approaches. Currently, technological advancements are spurring methodological innovation across anthropology's subfields. Radiocarbon dating, population genetics, GPS, and digital video- and audio-recording are just a few of the many technologies spurring new developments in anthropological research.

## Controversies about the history of anthropology

Anthropologists, like other researchers (esp. historians and scientists engaged in field research), have over time assisted state policies and projects, especially colonialism. <sup>[38]</sup><sup>[39]</sup>

Some commentators have contended:

- That the discipline grew out of colonialism, perhaps was in league with it, and derived some of its key notions from it, consciously or not. (See, for example, Gough, Pels and Salemink, but cf. Lewis 2004).<sup>[40]</sup>
- That anthropologists typically have more power than the people they study and hence their knowledge-making is a form of theft in which the anthropologist gains something for him or herself at the expense of informants.
- That ethnographic work was often ahistorical, writing about people as if they were "out of time" in an "ethnographic present" (Johannes Fabian, *Time and Its Other*).

### Anthropology and the military

Anthropologists' involvement with the U.S. government, in particular, has caused bitter controversy within the discipline. Franz Boas publicly objected to US participation in World War I, and after the war he published a brief expose and condemnation of the participation of several American archeologists in espionage in Mexico under their cover as scientists. But by the 1940s, many of Boas' anthropologist contemporaries were active in the allied war effort against the "Axis" (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan). Many served in the armed forces but others worked in intelligence (for example, Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information). At the same time, David H. Price's work on American anthropology during the Cold War provides detailed accounts of the pursuit and dismissal of several anthropologists from their jobs for communist sympathies.

Attempts to accuse anthropologists of complicity with the CIA and government intelligence activities during the Vietnam War years have turned up surprisingly little (although anthropologist Hugo Nutini was active in the stillborn Project Camelot).<sup>[41]</sup> Many anthropologists (students and teachers) were active in the antiwar movement and a great many resolutions condemning the war in all its aspects were passed overwhelmingly at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). In the decades since the Vietnam war the tone of cultural and social anthropology, at least, has been increasingly politicized, with the dominant liberal tone of earlier generations replaced with one more radical, a mix of, and varying degrees of, Marxist, feminist, anarchist, post-colonial, post-modern, Saidian, Foucauldian, identity-based, and more.<sup>[42]</sup>

Professional anthropological bodies often object to the use of anthropology for the benefit of the state. Their codes of ethics or statements may proscribe anthropologists from giving secret briefings. The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth (ASA ) has called certain scholarships ethically dangerous. The AAA's current 'Statement of Professional Responsibility' clearly states that "in relation with their own government and with host governments ... no secret research, no secret reports or debriefings of any kind should be agreed to or given."

However, anthropologists, along with other social scientists, are once again being used in warfare as part of the US Army's strategy in Afghanistan. The Christian Science Monitor reports that "Counterinsurgency efforts focus on better grasping and meeting local needs" in Afghanistan, under the rubric of *Human Terrain Team* (HTT).

## Major discussions about anthropology

### Focus on "other cultures"

Some authors argue that anthropology originated and developed as the study of "other cultures", both in terms of time (past societies) and space (non-European/non-Western societies). For example, the classic of urban anthropology, Ulf Hannerz in the introduction to his seminal *Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology* mentions that the "Third World" had habitually received most of attention; anthropologists who traditionally specialized in "other cultures" looked for them far away and started to look "across the tracks" only in late 1960s.<sup>[43]</sup> Now there exist many works focusing on peoples and topics very close to the author's "home".<sup>[25]</sup> It is also argued that other fields of study, like History and Sociology, on the contrary focus disproportionately on the West.<sup>[44]</sup>

In France, the study of existing contemporary society has been traditionally left to sociologists, but this is increasingly changing,<sup>[45]</sup> starting in the 1970s from scholars like Isac Chiva and journals like *Terrain* ("fieldwork"), and developing with the center founded by Marc Augé (*Le Centre d'anthropologie des mondes contemporains*, the Anthropological Research Center of Contemporary Societies). The same approach of focusing on "modern world" topics by *Terrain*, was also present in

the British Manchester School of the 1950s.

It has been reported that there has been an "institutional and academic apartheid" between the two sorts of anthropology, the one focusing on the "Other" and the one focusing on the "Self" contemporary society; an apartheid ranging from a "no contact" status to even open conflict. The countries where this was greater were Germany and Norway, but it was also significant in the 1980s France.

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## See also

- Anthropological Index Online (AIO)
- Anthropologists
- Anthrozoology
- Ethnology
- Folklore
- Human evolution
- Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Madison Grant
- Memetics
- Philosophical anthropology

- Prehistoric medicine
- Sociology
- Theological anthropology, which is not part of anthropology but a subfield of theology


## External links

- Anthropology.net Community orientated anthropology web portal with user run blogs, forums, tags, and a wiki.
- University of Pennsylvania's "What is Ethnography?" Penn's Public Interest Anthropology Web Site
- <http://www.etnoloji.com/> Turkish Ethnology Web Page

 Look up ***Anthropology*** in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.

## Organizations

- American Anthropological Association Homepage Home page of largest professional organization of anthropologists
- American Association of Physical Anthropologists
- European Association of Social Anthropologists
- National Association for the Practice of Anthropology
- The Royal Anthropological Institute Homepage—The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (RAI)
- The Society for Applied Anthropology

 At Wikiversity you can learn more about **Anthropology** at: The School of Anthropology

## Resources

- Anthropology departments around the world
- Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History Online collections database with detailed description and digital images for over 160,000 ethnographic artifacts.
- National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution Collects and preserves historical and contemporary anthropological materials that document the world's cultures and the history of anthropology
- Online Dictionary of Anthropology
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