

**Department of Anthropology, University of Arkansas**  
**Assessment of BA and BS Programs**  
**Spring 2018**

The Anthropology Department at the University of Arkansas presently offers two degree programs to undergraduate students—the BA (Bachelor of Arts), and the BS (Bachelor of Science). Because anthropology is equally humanistic and scientific in orientation and scope, the courses constituting the BA and BS degrees provide undergraduates valuable creative and analytic thinking tools. They also impart relevant research, observation and writing skills, while broadening students’ “real world” understandings of human culture and bio-cultural diversity on local, regional, national and international scales, from the ancient times to the immediate present. The Department is therefore committed to training students with skills needed to examine and interpret the past, present, and future human bio-social condition with discipline and ingenuity. Each semester, our faculty develops new courses bridging subfields of anthropology: medical anthropology and ecological anthropology, for example, are taught each semester, encouraging anthropology majors to forge meaningful linkages between various schools of thought in the field.

#### Cultural Anthropology

Courses in cultural anthropology offer introductory and advanced exposure to Native North American, Latin American, African, African-American, and Middle Eastern Studies; they focus on key approaches including visual anthropology and ethnographic documentation of expressive culture, performance, folk belief systems, social movements, ritual and religiosity. Globalization and diasporic movements are emphasized in cultural anthropology courses alongside emerging themes and topics including transnational identities, borderlands studies, gender role performance, human rights and patterns of conflict, violence, and resistance.

Biological anthropology courses emphasize human evolutionary origins and bio-behavioral diversity, dietary ecology, skeletal and anatomic adaptation, primate mating systems and social behaviors. They also include dental science, forensics, criminology, paleoanthropology and micro-wear analysis of fossilized bones and teeth; primate behavior and diet, morphometric analysis and biomechanics are also included, along with medical anthropology, paleopathology, and disease transmission analysis in the past and the present, including the impact of climate change on human health and subsistence.

Archaeology courses include advanced GIS (Global Information Systems) and remote sensing and prospecting in landscape archaeology, analysis of ancient human settlement patterns and cultural resource management; they articulate with several biological anthropology courses vis-à-vis paleopathology, osteology, and forensics; offerings span Native American, Mesoamerican

and Old World cultures, including Neolithic (stone-age) tool and ceramics analysis, and courses covering advanced laboratory techniques in cartography and digital image analysis.

The University of Arkansas' undergraduate anthropology curriculum has remained relatively stable since 2012 when the BA and BS programs were last revised. The number of anthropology undergraduate majors at UA has leveled off to around 230 as of 2016. This number has fluctuated between 200 and 400 over the last five years, yet recruitment efforts are ongoing within the department. Our highest-achieving undergraduates (e.g., those with cumulative GPAs of 3.25 or higher) are invited annually to join Lambda Alpha, the National Anthropology Honors Society, to commemorate outstanding performance and also to provide a collaborative venue for their own priorities.

Our faculty endeavors to ensure that undergraduates are provided ample diversity in course offerings each semester. Both the BA and the BS programs are "capped" by a proseminar, History of Anthropological Thought, which synthesizes major works of founding and leading contemporary anthropologists; the course also fulfills the Fulbright writing requirement and allows undergraduates an arena to extend and advance their own intellectual orientations within the discipline itself. This capstone course is generative and rigorous by design, and it provides BA and BS students the "toolkit" required to grasp relevant theoretical movements, research and analysis skills essential to succeed in academic and applied anthropology today.

To assess the undergraduate programs' relative success in preparing students for careers in academic anthropology or applied anthropology and beyond, we administered a written survey (see attached). Several key "themes" emerged in the survey data and have been culled and are highlighted below for the anthropology BA and BS degrees.

### **Anthropology BA Program**

The BA program requires 35 hours of anthropology credit hours beyond the Fulbright Core, and is designed to provide comprehensive training in cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, and archaeology. The BA is a fundamentally "liberal arts" degree by its very nature, and accordingly it seeks to develop skills for creative documentation and analysis of human cultural life, while advancing descriptive and expository writing skills to serve students beyond their undergraduate experience. The core courses for the BA consist of the following fourteen hours:

ANTH 1023: Introduction to Cultural ANTH

ANTH 1013/1011: Introduction to Biological Anthropology and Lab

ANTH 1033/1031: Introduction to Archaeology and Lab

## ANTH 4013: History of Anthropological Thought

To maximize exposure to the breadth of anthropology, students are also required to complete one upper-level course in each of the three subfields, such as Historical Archaeology, Human Evolution, and Anthropology of Religion. The BA also requires that students complete two courses covering two different geographic areas, such as North American Prehistory and Egyptology; others chose Power and Protest in Latin America and Women of Africa, to illustrate. Finally, two remaining anthropology courses of any level or subfield are required for the BA. Students appreciate the depth of exposure this requirement has contributed to their training. They also value the opportunity to “specialize” in any of the three subfields by concentrating their electives in archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and/or cartography/GIS/remote sensing.

## **Anthropology BS Program**

The BS program in anthropology requires 29 hours of anthropology credits beyond the Fulbright core, plus 26 additional hours of courses in mathematics (one calculus course and one statistics course is typical) and any of the natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, and geology. The BS is designed for students with interests in the science of anthropology, including human health, medicine, dental science, paleopathology, bio-archaeology, medical anthropology, and any number of related social health research directives. The courses comprising the BS emphasize data-driven approaches and advanced mathematical modeling, hardware/software skills, digital imaging and other empirical modes of inquiry into human evolution, adaptation, and survival. The BS degree provides a distinctly human approach to training undergraduates seeking careers in medical sciences and dentistry, as well as those on pathways toward graduate-level studies in any area arena of biological anthropology, applied medical anthropology, forensics, and criminalistics. Core courses for the BS include:

ANTH 1023: Introduction to Cultural ANTH

ANTH 1013/1011: Introduction to Biological Anthropology and Lab

ANTH 1033/1031: Introduction to Archaeology and Lab

ANTH 4013: History of Anthropological Thought

BS majors are also required to complete five courses, or fifteen hours, or courses numbered 3000 or higher for the degree. A minimum of six hours of mathematics/statistics courses is required beyond College Algebra, in addition to 20 hours of science courses chosen from Biology, Chemistry, Geology, and/or Physics. BS students in pursuit of health-related careers are encouraged to choose biology courses such as Human Physiology, Principles of Zoology,

Evolutionary Biology, Cell Physiology, Comparative Vertebrate Morphology, Immunology, and Organic Chemistry, to achieve the fullest possible portrait of the human condition from a scientific approach.

### **Assessment of Learning Goals**

An exit survey has been designed to assess students' learning experiences in both the BA and BS programs (see attached). This survey will help ascertain the extent to which key concepts in the field are cognized and understood among our undergraduates. The survey will also indicate the extent to which qualitative and quantitative reasoning skills are acquired over the course of students' undergraduate training experience at UA. Data drawn from these surveys will be compiled and computed to identify departmental strengths and weaknesses, and will generate valuable insights into which courses should be offered, developed, and expanded. Over the course of a two to three years, trends in the data will become visible, allowing anthropology faculty to develop a stronger grasp on the effectiveness of our departmental curriculum, and areas that need strengthening, courses to be added, and so forth. Overall, these surveys will prove valuable given their capacity to provide portraits of which courses are preparing our students for career tracks relating to both the BA and the BS degrees. Other questions included in the survey address key issues for undergraduate learning enrichment including:

- How do the various sub-disciplines of anthropology interrelate and articulate?
- How has anthropological training contributed specifically to problem-solving skills?
- How have advanced math and statistics courses potentiated data analysis skills?
- To what extent have inductive and deductive reasoning skills been enhanced?
- Which courses have provided the most applicable information for career building?
- Which courses would you like to see offered in the future?

### **Undergraduate Feedback and Priorities**

Students identified several key strengths of the BA and BS programs, primarily strong topical articulation with other UA programs of study: Latin American Studies, Religious Studies, Africana Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies were all mentioned on survey forms. Students appreciate the opportunity to collaborate and "cross-pollinate" between research programs of anthropology faculty members and those in other programs and departments. Many vocalized enthusiasm for the department's diverse social, cultural, and geographic course coverage. Others cited highly favorable and rewarding experiences with faculty mentors and thesis supervisors, including those whose labs offer training with state-of-the-art facilities, and cultural anthropologists committed to developing research skills, ethnographic writing finesse, and publication opportunities. Archaeological field schools, especially the spring field session sponsored by the Arkansas Archaeological Survey, were

pinpointed favorably. Others discussed the benefit of participating in excavations in other regions of the state of Arkansas, while others highlighted the value of internships at local museums in Northwest Arkansas. Study-abroad opportunities were cited favorably, yet many were unsure of how to choose a field school germane to their interests.

The Department of Anthropology at UA is now strong in all sub-disciplines of the field, and our undergraduates stand to benefit accordingly. The department is well-positioned to develop existing strengths while accommodating intellectual priorities of students. Intra-departmental collaborations must continue to flourish in ways that will best serve the needs of undergraduates at the University of Arkansas.

## Department of Anthropology – Exit Survey/Questionnaire

This survey will be administered once a year in our capstone course:  
 ANTH 4013, History of Anthropological Thought

**Degree Sought:** BA \_\_\_\_\_ or BS \_\_\_\_\_

**Please tell us whether you are very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with each of the following.**

| Ratings                     | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neutral | Dissatisfied | Very dissatisfied |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| Overall academic experience |                |           |         |              |                   |
| Intellectual growth         |                |           |         |              |                   |
| Personal growth             |                |           |         |              |                   |
| Preparation for your career |                |           |         |              |                   |

**Please tell us whether you strongly agree, agree, neutral disagree, strongly disagree with each of the following.**

| Rating   | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I had access to an advisor in the Department of Anthropology when I needed one.                            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| The advisor(s) I consulted in the Department of Anthropology clearly explained my graduation requirements. |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I am satisfied with the courses I took in the Department of Anthropology.                                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I believe I made the right decision in choosing Anthropology as a major.                                   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I am satisfied that I am prepared for the job market.  |                |       |         |          |                   |

**Please answer the following questions. Please feel free to use the back of this survey to complete your answers.**

Is there a branch of anthropology that you focused on (archeology, biological, cultural) or all three?

Can you identify the linkages between the subfields (archeology, biological, cultural)?

Do you have a minor or another major? If so, in what area?

What language training have you had? What is the highest level of language completed?

How has the department of Anthropology contributed to the University of Arkansas' mission to enhance diversity?

Are there courses that you would like to see taught in the Department of Anthropology that are not currently taught?

If planning to attend graduate / professional school, in which school will, you enroll?

If you are not planning to attend now, do you plan to attend graduate/professional school in the future?

In your opinion, what are the strengths of the Anthropology Program? What is the Program doing well?

In your opinion what are the weaknesses of the Anthropology Program? How can we improve?