

Career Brief

Career Planning and Placement
California State University, Bakersfield



Anthropology

Anthropology Career Facts

The CSUB Anthropology Major

See the CSUB General Catalog and/or contact the Sociology/Anthropology Department

Representative Employer Groups

Government Social Services Agencies
Colleges and Universities
Public School Systems
Museums
Contracting/Engineering Firms
Petroleum Exploration Firms
Business/Industrial Firms
Research Institutes
Community Services Organizations
Market Research Firms

Further Sources of Information

American Anthropological Association
450 N. Fairfax Drive #640
Arlington, VA 22203

Society of American Archeology
900 2nd Street, NE, #12
Washington, DC 20002

The Archeological Institute of America
135 Williams Street
New York, NY 10038

Society for Historical Archeology
PO Box 30446
Tucson, AZ 86751

Anthropologists study the origin and physical, social, and cultural development and behavior of humans. Anthropology attempts to provide the student with a better understanding of human physical differences, language systems, and the way cultures today compare with cultures of the past. Also included is the study of animal development and how it compares with human development. Anthropology is divided into the following sub-branches: cultural or social anthropology; biological anthropology; linguistic anthropology; and archaeology.

Anthropologists study and compare people from prehistoric to modern cultures in all parts of the world. They chart the past and present distribution of peoples. They examine their social behavior, customs, languages, traditions and possessions.

Professional Anthropologists, who are facing a somewhat limited job market, sometimes combine teaching and research in colleges and universities. Some may specialize in museum work combining administrative and managerial duties with field work and research, while most work as consultants or engage in writing or other activities.

The rather cross-disciplinary focus of the anthropology major, encompassing biological, physical, social, and behavioral sciences as well as providing a broad liberal arts orientation, is well preparative for careers in non-professional anthropological fields. Anthropology majors may enter a wide range of possible occupations in business, industry and government. Such peripheral fields include various sorts of administrative and managerial careers, social welfare, poverty programs, health and other types of research, personnel work, counseling, community action, writing, public relations and various phases of business.

More detailed information is available in the Career Library located in the Career Planning and Placement Office.

Anthropology Career Fields

Here is a partial list of careers for which an Anthropology major is particularly suited.

Biological Anthropologists: Studies human evolution, genetics or comparative physical characteristics of different groups of people as influenced by heredity and environment.

Social Anthropologists: Studies the customs, cultures and social lives of groups in settings that vary from non-industrialized societies to modern urban centers.

Archaeologists: Studies people of the past, either in historical or prehistoric time, in an effort to discern social and cultural makeup, physical characteristics, behavior and environmental response. Remains of homes, tools, clothing, ornaments and so forth are collected, analyzed, classified, studied and placed in museum collections.

Linguistic Anthropologist: Studies ways language is used and how it affects culture (past and present). Trace the way languages emerged.

Applied Anthropologists: An emerging specialization which uses anthropological data to solve contemporary problems.

Urban Anthropologists: Studies urban life, urbanization, rural-urban migration and the influence of city life.

Urban and Regional Planners: Specializes in human population by developing comprehensive plans and programs for the use of land for industrial and public sites. Planners prepare for situations that are likely to develop as a result of population growth or social and economic change.

Social Service Case Worker: Counsels, advises, guides and observes individuals or families including working with group and community organizations.

Eligibility Worker: Analyzes a welfare applicant's qualifications and needs for receiving welfare services and assistance.

Primatologist: Studies non-human primate species to discover behavioral patterns, social structures and relationships to human behavior and society.

Museum Curator: Administers and manages a museum along with field and specimen research.

***Teacher:** Teaches at all educational levels.

Social Service Administrator: Administers, manages and plans social service, poverty, and welfare or educational head-start programs and activities.

Probation and Parole Officer: Casework supervision, counseling and rehabilitative assistance to adults and juveniles on probation or parole.

*May require additional education.

Education, Training and Required Qualifications

A Master's degree is the minimum qualification for employment as a professional anthropologist with the Ph.D., becoming increasingly required for entry-level positions to top positions. In colleges, the Ph.D. is mandatory for a professorship.

A Master's degree, plus field experience, may be qualifying for certain professional positions, particularly in applied and urban anthropology. Training in both biological and cultural anthropology is expected with course work in mathematics, statistics, and computer science, and related social sciences highly desirable. Museum curator assistantships and junior positions in archaeological excavations are available to Master's degreed anthropologists, but, once again, the demand for the Ph.D. within the professional field is quite high. Field work experience, which is critically examined by employers of professional anthropologists, should be obtained in conjunction with either the Master's thesis or Doctoral dissertation in one's anthropological specialty.

The Bachelor's degree is usually not considered qualifying for work as a professional anthropologist, although it is quite acceptable for entry-level and trainee positions in business, industry and government -- examples might include administration, management, sales, social sciences, biology or physical sciences.

Those aspiring to become professional anthropologists should have above average interest in natural history or social studies and enjoy reading, research and writing. A desire to travel and the ability to cope with the disadvantages of remote work areas are sometimes necessary.

The ability to conduct and explain scientific research clearly, and to operate and use information derived from computers is essential for the anthropologist.

Employment Outlook

Anthropology comprises the smallest of the social sciences. Social science candidates, in general, can expect to encounter keen competition for employment. Overall employment of social scientists is expected to grow more slowly than average through the year 2006. Many graduates will find good employment opportunities in areas outside but related to the social sciences. Social scientists will face stiff competition for academic positions. Some prospects for jobs will be available for anthropologists in museums, in programs of archaeological research, mental and public health, poverty and community action, and in private industry. Employment of urban and regional planners is expected to grow more slowly through 2006 because many work for government agencies which will experience budgetary constraints now and into the future.

Anthropologists with Master's degrees will face very persistent competition for professional positions and in lieu of the Ph.D. may have to enter other fields as mentioned above. Opportunities in non-anthropological careers will be quite good both for anthropologists with the Master's and Bachelor's degrees. High school teaching positions may represent favorable opportunities to the teaching-credentialed anthropologist as more and more high schools add anthropology, genetics, ecology and environmental studies to their curricula.

Many anthropologists work at colleges and universities. They may travel extensively to conduct field work on the site where a group or culture lived. Field work is often slow and it may take years to uncover artifacts. Some cultural anthropologists conduct their studies among villagers in remote regions of the world. Others may study family groups in urban ghettos.

The most common way to enter the field is through graduate school. Students may work as research assistants or teaching fellows while in graduate school and this experience often qualifies them for a job.

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