

Program Assessment Plan
2005

Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences

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Department of Anthropology

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Mission

What is Anthropology?

Anthropology is the study of human life as a whole: its cultures, behaviors, and biology in the past, present and future. Our mission, in the Department of Anthropology, is to help students become better citizens of the world, to learn to look at life and cultures holistically and humanistically—in short, to look at the world differently. We hope that students, as a result of joining our program, will come to recognize their position and obligations in a complex, globalized world and to see that the human condition affects every single one of them. At the heart of the anthropological perspective is the idea that understanding *culture*, at the family, community, national and global levels, is vital. We all share in the responsibility of understanding how culture shapes our interactions, choices and behaviors at each of these levels.

Anthropologists pursue questions that involve the study of fossil and archaeological records, the interplay between historical, social and cultural factors in present-day populations, as well as numerous aspects of the diverse cultural traditions and languages of world peoples (including ethnic and socioeconomic groups within the larger American society). Subdisciplines of anthropology include sociocultural anthropology (the study of contemporary societies), physical or biological anthropology (the study of human evolutionary biology and human variation), archaeology/prehistory (the study of past human societies and cultural traditions), and anthropological linguistics (the study of language and its relationship with all culture). Anthropologists receive training in all subdisciplines and take an "interdisciplinary approach" in their research and teaching. In recent decades, more and more anthropologists do applied work at home and abroad, in areas such as forensic science, medicine, law, international development, cultural resources management, and social services.

Anthropology—as a broad interdisciplinary field—integrates the methods, approaches and explanatory goals of the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. Anthropology is well situated to help meet national and regional calls to "globalize" the curriculum and to train an increasingly diverse student population. Our curriculum is explicitly shaped by our conviction that every student who graduates from our program should be able to recognize and articulate the holistic, integrative, and comparative nature of anthropology and its unique perspectives, with special awareness of the ethics related to research and fieldwork. Further, students should have a familiarity (through direct hands-on experience) with the basic research methods and central tenets of our discipline. These tenets include cultural and biological diversity and evolution; ethnocentrism and relativism; issues of human rights; and contemporary social problems. Emphasis in all of our courses is placed on communication skills, interpretation and analysis of evidence, as well as presentation of arguments and data.

We, in the Department of Anthropology, are dedicated to providing a strong, carefully integrated undergraduate (Bachelor of Arts) program within the College of Arts and Sciences that contributes directly to the central liberal arts mission of the University. The Anthropology Department offers a broad spectrum of courses (ranging from large introductory, GenEd classes to smaller upper-division courses) in cultural anthropology, archaeology & prehistory, and biological anthropology¹. Experiential learning is central to our curriculum. We provide, in all of our courses, opportunities for laboratory analysis, interviewing and mini-ethnographic fieldwork projects, archaeological and forensic fieldwork projects, and/or individual and team-based research projects. Our faculty attempt to inspire curiosity; strongly encourage critical thinking; demand student competence in reading, writing and oral and graphic presentation; and require use of library, archival and scholarly electronic resources.

¹At present, our five faculty members represent three of the four subdisciplines, and we occasionally have team-taught a course in language and culture with linguistic colleagues in the Department of English.

The Department of Anthropology provides an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree. We feel strongly that the unique perspective of the discipline of Anthropology, detailed above, directly serves and reaffirms the mission of the University and the stated objectives of a general university education. In the *UND Academic Catalog* (2001-2003) the University's mission is described, in part as:

“[encouraging] students to make informed choices, to communicate effectively, to be intellectually curious and creative, to commit themselves to lifelong learning and the service of others, and to share responsibility both for their own communities and for the world.” (From the “Mission of the University,” p.2).

In describing the philosophy and goals of a general education, the UND General Education Requirements Committee has stated that:

“... a general education program should help students develop 1) the ability to make informed choices, 2) the ability to communicate effectively, 3) intellectual curiosity and creativity, 4) a continuing commitment to learning, 5) a capacity and interest in serving others, 6) a sense of responsibility both to specific communities and to a culturally pluralistic world, and 7) greater personal satisfaction through access to the larger social, political, economic, scientific, and aesthetic culture.”(From “The Purposes of a University Education,” *UND Academic Catalog* 2001-2003, p. 25).

Affirming these stated educational goals, then, the anthropology program offers multiple opportunities for students to develop intellectual curiosity and critical thinking skills, examine varying perspectives and methods across several disciplines, become familiar with cultures and times other than their own, engage in experiential learning in the lab and field, and reflect on their place in society and in the world.

Anthropology Program Goals

Given the broad mission statement presented above, it is essential to specify how our mission can be related directly to goals for student learning and achievement. Our program goals, listed here, specify outcomes for the Anthropology curriculum.

Upon completion of the Anthropology Major, students should be able to:

1. recognize the holistic, integrative, and comparative nature of anthropology, with an understanding of how anthropologists employ scientific, social scientific and humanistic modes of interpretation in their study and research;
2. understand and appreciate cultural and biological diversity and recognize the common origin of humans, along with an awareness of the prevalence of ethnocentrism and prejudice across many world societies and communities, including our own;
3. demonstrate experience in carrying out a research project (laboratory, fieldwork-based, or library-based) in biological, cultural or archaeological anthropology, that includes: formulating and justifying a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and articulating conclusions;
4. understand the ethical problems related to a) the concept of cultural relativism, b) conducting ethnographic, archaeological or forensic/biological anthropological fieldwork in communities and with individuals in these communities, and 3) analysis, presentation, and interpretation of data;

5. recognize how anthropological approaches can be useful for understanding and can be applied to helping solve contemporary human problems;
6. develop and refine communication skills, including writing, oral presentation, and data presentation in various formats (e.g., posters, Websites, electronic presentation media, etc.).

These goals are shared by our faculty in the design and teaching of courses, and are understood as central to the discipline of anthropology (across the subfields). Moreover, these goals are assessable by methods appropriate to, and embedded within, the Anthropology curriculum and courses. Program goals are useful (indeed, essential) in guiding curriculum planning, course content and learning activities, and assessment methods.

Program Assessment, Departmental Activities and the Senior Capstone Seminar

We, in the Department of Anthropology, have been committed to developing a meaningful assessment plan that is used to enhance student learning and improve the quality of our program. One significant development in that plan was the initiation, in 1995, of our Senior Capstone Seminar. The seminar was designed to be an on-going opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our undergraduate anthropology program. The capstone course generates textual data (via essays and an undergraduate portfolio) that serve our Program Assessment Plan. It also represents a culminating experience that asks students to reflect on their undergraduate careers, to synthesize the big ideas and perspectives of the four-fold interdisciplinary field of anthropology, and to confront concerns about the transition to post-graduate life.

We view the capstone seminar as a primary way of understanding how our courses, advising, field and laboratory opportunities, and over-all departmental activities have contributed to student knowledge. The seminar also provides students with an important opportunity to apply this knowledge to current issues and topics with which anthropologists are engaged. The capstone seminar is coordinated by two faculty members who develop a syllabus and course materials to be addressed in the spring semester of that year, drawing upon the common ground of their areas of specialization. From 1995-2001, a theme was chosen that brought together information and approaches from several or all of the traditional “subfields” of anthropology (sociocultural anthropology, archaeology, anthropological linguistics and biological anthropology) [Table 1]. Beginning in 2002, the theme concept was dropped in favor of generalizing the structure and content of the course to address broader and more relevant course goals.

Table 1. **Themes of Senior Capstone Courses in the Anthropology Program.**

1995	“Origins and Evolution of Humanness” (Leach & Williams)
1996	“Applying Anthropology in the 1990’s” (Schneider & Lang)
1997	“Women, Men, Monkeys & Apes: Gender in Anthropological Perspective” (Leach & Lang)
1998	“Applying Anthropology in the Late 1990’s” (Lang & Schneider)
1999	“Race & Ethnicity” (Schneider & Williams)
2000	“Anthropological Approaches to Health, Illness & Disease” (Lang & Williams)
2001	“The First Americans: Problems and Controversies” (Schneider & Leach)
2002	“Taking Sides: Problems and Controversies in Anthropology” (Lang & Leach)
2003	“Taking Sides: Problems and Controversies in Anthropology” (Leach & Mikulak)
2004	“Taking Sides: Problems and Controversies in Anthropology” (Leach & Mikulak)
2005	“Taking Sides: Problems and Controversies in Anthropology”(Leach & Mikulak)

As a small department of five faculty, each with different but overlapping areas of specializations, we also felt that this *must* be an opportunity for two faculty to productively interact in a way that engages their own intellectual/research interests. The capstone seminar is also an opportunity to draw together our senior majors who have developed diverse, specialized interests (and often have a second major) for a final integrative and culminating experience in which they have an opportunity to again consider the key aspects of anthropological approaches.

The capstone seminar is now a formal course requirement for the major in anthropology. Our objectives in the seminar include assisting students in the synthesis and integration of core concepts of anthropology, helping students prepare for the transition to post-college life (jobs/graduate school, etc.), and challenging students to observe, reflect on, and document their growth across their college career. Various activities and “products” of the seminar include:

- a competence-based, Functional Resume (stressing skills, academic experience, and civic involvement achieved during the undergraduate years;
- an Anthropology ‘mini-statement’ that briefly casts core concepts of the field within the context of the student’s interests and career aspirations;
- a series of critical essays and oral presentations analyzing scholarly articles that highlight current debates and controversies from an anthropological perspective;
- a substantial Self-reflection essay in which the student analyzes experiences, relationships, achievements, and course products over the entire undergraduate career; and
- a comprehensive Portfolio, introduced by a Portfolio Narrative, containing self-selected works (for example, posters, graphic presentations, essays, research papers, laboratory reports, journals, awards, group project reports) from all anthropology classes that reflect students’ experiences and achievements as a major anthropology and undergraduate student.

Assessment Methods

The Anthropology Department employs several assessment methods to evaluate learning outcomes from each of the program goals outlined above. The chief context of program assessment is the Senior Capstone Seminar. By regarding the capstone seminar as an opportunity to identify patterns of strengths or weaknesses among the students in that particular year’s seminar, we may be able to modify/place emphasis on some areas as we plan our courses for the next year.

We think that the products of the Capstone course and the student portfolio of works produced over the undergraduate career represent the best material evidence of student learning and level of achievement, but these are not the sole evaluative tools we use (see ‘Other Assessment Activities’ below). Student work products from the Senior Seminar (Table 2) are evaluated by a Senior Seminar assessment team, comprised of the two instructors of the seminar.

Table 2. Relationship of Program Goals to Assessment Methods in the Senior Seminar.

Goals	Assessment Methods
1. recognize the holistic, integrative, and comparative nature of anthropology, with an understanding of how anthropologists employ scientific, social scientific and humanistic modes of interpretation in their study and research	Senior Self-reflection Essay Portfolio Senior Anthropology Mini-statement Capstone Critical Essays Alumni Survey, Exit Survey (Qs #-)
2. understand and appreciate cultural and biological diversity and recognize the common origin of humans, along with an awareness of the prevalence of ethnocentrism and prejudice across many world societies and communities, including our own;	Senior Self-reflection Essay Senior Anthropology Mini-statement Portfolio Capstone Critical Essays
3. demonstrate experience in carrying out a research project (laboratory, fieldwork-based, or library-based) in biological, cultural or archaeological anthropology, that includes: formulating and justifying a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and articulating conclusions;	Portfolio Functional Resume
4. understand the ethical problems related to a) the concept of cultural relativism, b) conducting ethnographic, archaeological or forensic/biological anthropological fieldwork in communities and with individuals in these communities, and c) analysis, presentation, and interpretation of data;	Senior Self-reflection Essay Portfolio Senior Anthropology Mini-statement Capstone Critical Essays
5. recognize how anthropological approaches can be useful for understanding and can be applied to helping solve contemporary human problems;	Senior Self-reflection Essay Portfolio Senior Anthropology Mini-statement Functional Resume Capstone Critical Essays Alumni Survey, Exit Survey (Qs #-)
6. develop and refine communication skills, including writing, oral presentation, and data presentation in various formats (e.g., posters, Websites, electronic presentation media, etc.).	Senior Self-reflection Essay Portfolio Senior Anthropology Mini-statement Functional Resume Capstone Critical Essays Alumni Survey, Exit Survey (Qs #-)

Individual faculty who teach other anthropology courses regularly evaluate relevant course products and design assignments with our Program Goals in mind (Table 3). An annual faculty retreat allows instructors to share their assignments and to discuss how they relate to our program goals (for specific examples of assignment sheets, see ‘Program Assessment’ binder in Department of Anthropology). These various course assignments will subsequently be reviewed in the Senior portfolio.

Table 3. Sample Individual Class Assessment Tools, correlated with Program Goals

Anthropology Program Goals. At the completion of a major in Anthropology, students should be able to demonstrate that they can ...	SAMPLE Individual Class Assessment Tools	
	Course #	Assignment Title
1. recognize the holistic, integrative, and comparative nature of anthropology, with an understanding of how anthropologists employ scientific, social scientific and humanistic modes of interpretation in their study and research;	100 325 372 309 340 270 171 171 426	Primate Behavior Biological Lab Social Facts: Durkheim Cross-Cultural Childrearing Ecological Model for Human Health Skeletal/Biological Profile Cultural Fieldwork Mini-Ethnography Lithic Analysis
2. understand and appreciate cultural and biological diversity and recognize the common origin of humans, along with an awareness of the prevalence of ethnocentrism and prejudice across many world societies and communities, including our own;	309 350 171 170 309 330 346 440 171 171	Cross-Cultural Childhood Development Social Constructions of Body British Marriage Ritual Analysis Understanding Race Video Response Primate Conservation Summary Human Variation Power Point Presentation Osteology Lab Exercise Osteology Notebook Cultural Fieldwork Nacirema
3. demonstrate experience in carrying out a research project (laboratory, fieldwork-based, or library-based) in biological, cultural or archaeological anthropology, that includes: formulating and justifying a research question, collecting and analyzing data, and articulating conclusions;	350 309 345 270 388 300 325 100 171 172	Stepping In/Stepping Out: Understanding Cultures Fieldwork in Public Schools Group Project: Forensics Lab Biological Profile Poster Project Archaeological Research Design Laboratory Methods Journal Human Origins Hot Topics Presentation Primate Behavior Observation Proxemics and Gender Study Faunal Analysis
4. understand the ethical problems related to a) the concept of cultural relativism, b) conducting ethnographic, archaeological or forensic/biological anthropological fieldwork in communities and with individuals in these communities, and 3) analysis, presentation, and interpretation of data;	372 350 346 378 309 309 171 388 200	Film: Life & Debt Response Paper Institutional Review Board (IRB) Course and Exam Ethics discussion and Exam 1 Question 1 Human Variation IRB Course and Exam Primate Conservation Summary Papers Traditional Ecological Knowledge Case Study Circumcision Response Native Amer. Reburial and Repatriation Response Looting and Intellectual Properties Response
5. recognize how anthropological approaches can be useful for understanding and can be applied to helping solve contemporary human problems;	309 340 350 171 171 171 171 340	Primate Conservation& Deforestation Response Projects: Alternative & Traditional Health care Ethnographies and Local Subcultures Anthropology In The News Report Hunting Endangered Species Debate Indigenous Cultures in Crisis Paper African Applied Medical Anthropology Response Critical Viewing Film Response American Diet
6. clearly communicate in a variety of ways, including writing, oral presentation, and data presentation in various formats (e.g., posters, Websites, electronic presentation media, etc.).	426 388 309 350	Lithic Analysis PowerPoint Oral Report w/ stats Scholarly Article Critical Evaluations for Theory Student Webpages Childhood Cross-Culturally Powerpoint Presentations Ethnographic Studies

6. clearly communicate...(continued)	376	Oral and Written Maya Presentation
	379	Oral and Written Micronesia Presentation
	345	Homicide Investigation Group Project
	270	Biological Profile Poster Presentation
	170	Biological Anthropology Powerpoint Presentation
	325	Human Origins Hot Topics Presentation

Timeline for Review of Program Assessment Results and Feedback to Curriculum

At the end of each senior capstone seminar (in early May), the Portfolio, the Functional Resume, the Anthropology ‘Mini-statement,’ the Critical Essays, and the Self-Reflection essay will be evaluated by at least two faculty members (instructors of the Senior Seminar) to determine if program goals have been achieved. Also reviewed is the Portfolio Narrative, which requires the students, themselves, to address how specific products demonstrate each of the program goals. Data are collected on standardized departmental forms that qualitatively consider the adequacy of the products’ demonstration of each goal.

Immediately after this intensive post-seminar review, the reviewers will communicate their assessment results to the department as a whole during a half-day, all-faculty retreat. In this retreat, we will review program goals, and document our assessment methods, and current course objectives. Finally, we will review our curriculum and our sense of student strengths and weaknesses as they have proceeded through our courses, and consider our department offerings and our assessment process. Explicit discussion will identify which goals are not being met adequately and how we can address any weaknesses in our upcoming course assignments and curricular planning.

At the close of the semester, a centralized file will be created for each year’s program assessment data, results, and process documentation.

Observations generated by all assessment methods will contribute to on-going curriculum and course development in the department in the coming year. Any consideration of new courses or curricula should explicitly address how they will address our program goals. Finally, our program goals should be reviewed and amended bi-annually.

Other Assessment Activities

Since 1992, we have distributed a survey/questionnaire to alumni soliciting information about program effectiveness. Specifically, questions about experiential learning opportunities, advising and mentoring, curriculum quality, capstone experiences, and emphases on communications skills and post-graduate transitions are posed. This survey has been distributed twice in the last ten years (1992 and 2002). In the future, we intend also to distribute the survey to each cohort of graduates two years after their commencement, as an ‘exit’ survey.

For four years, we have published an Alumni Newsletter and distributed it to ca. 400 alumni and friends of the department. We regularly invite alumni back to the department to speak to our graduating seniors about their careers and accomplishments, and the relevance of anthropology in their lives and work. In this way, we get rich feedback about the value and relevance of our program.