

# INTRODUCTION TO ANTHROPOLOGY



**ANTH 101**

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WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS AT:  
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## A.1. Introduction

### 1. What is Anthropology?



Anthropology (from the Greek anthro=*human* and logos=*study of*) is the scientific study of human beings, particularly their origins, social relations and culture.

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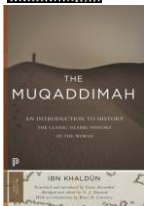
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## A.2. Origins



**2a. The first anthropological ideas might come from ancient Persia.**



**Ibn Khaldun** (1332 – 1406 AD) wrote a lengthy book – The Muqaddimah – on the relationship between cultures, long before colonialism emerged in the West:

**Cultural Relativism**—the idea that cultures are unique from one another and cannot be judged by a universal standard.

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## A.2. Origins

### 2. Origins of Anthropology:

- b. The 18<sup>th</sup> century “age of reason” led to the “**philosophy of liberty**” that birthed democratic self-rule, free-thinking, and the “Liberal Arts” college model.



Values of this mindset involved **embracing free-will and the study of society and humanity using evidence**, logical analysis, and a focus on moral and scientific progress.

**“The Enlightenment” led to “Colonialism”**

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## A.2. Origins

### 2. Origins of Anthropology:

- c. The historical origins of anthropology are rooted in the colonial enterprise, thus forever linking colonialism and anthropology. **Colonialism can be understood as the “establishment of foreign rule over a distant territory and the control of its people.”**



Today, anthropologists describe the cultural representations of non-European others and focus on the impacts of colonialism on the communities that were colonized. Research also examines the culture of the colonial project itself, focusing on the production of hierarchies and the process of exploiting human and natural resources to serve colonial needs. (Source: [Oxford Bibliographies](#))

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## A.2. Origins

### 2d. Franz Boas is often considered the founder of academic anthropology.

In his 1907 essay, “Anthropology,” Boas identified two basic questions for anthropologists:

“Why are the tribes and nations of the world different and how have the present differences developed?”



Franz Boas  
(German-American anthropologist, 1858-1942)

*Here, Boas interprets one of the ceremonial dances of the Kwakiutl “First Nations” native people of Southwest Canada.*



**The four-field approach** was one of Boas's fundamental contributions to the discipline made in the early 1900s.

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## A. Introduction

### 3. The Discipline of Anthropology



is split into *four fields*:

- a. Biological Anthropology
- b. Archaeology
- c. Linguistics
- d. Cultural Anthropology / Ethnology

You should recognize that the boundaries between fields are **not** distinct; in other words there is a **crossing of ideas and methods** between the four fields.

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## A.3. The Four Fields

### a. Weeks 1-6

#### Biological (Physical) Anthropology

The study of human evolution, human biological variation, human genetics, and primatology.



*Homo rudolfensis*

- Bio-anthropologists [investigate the fossil record](#) (like paleontologists) and try to solve [the riddle of human origins](#).

It is within this field of anthropology that much of the evidence has been collected to prove that humans, in fact, [evolved into our present state of \*Homo sapiens\*](#).

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## A.3. The Four Fields

### b. Weeks 7-8: Archaeology

The study of past cultures by observing, measuring, and theorizing their artifacts.

see [ArchaeologyInfo.com](#)

- Archaeology is often seen as the most exciting field of anthropology. The [Indiana Jones](#) film franchise did a lot to create this glamorous image of archaeology.

- However, **much of archaeological work is laborious and is done in a laboratory.**

- Archaeologists can investigate not only the ruins of *ancient* civilizations, but also the artifacts of *modern-day* cultures.

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## A.3. The Four Fields

### c. Week 9-11:

#### Linguistics

Describes the physical, psychological, and historical/social dimensions of human speech and communication.

Linguists [investigate recorded documents](#) (both current and ancient) to learn more about a people.

Language is as diverse as culture. Linguists create maps of the historic patterns of language diversity.



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## A.3. The Four Fields

### d. Weeks 12-15:

#### Cultural Anthropology: Ethnology

The study of contemporary cultures through fieldwork.

Cultural anthropology is best recognized in the work of famous anthropologists such as [Margaret Mead](#), who studied [Samoans](#) in great detail early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (before much was known of these people).

Other notable cultural anthropologists are [Bronislaw Malinowski](#) (who studied the South Pacific [Trobriand Islanders](#) in the 1920s) and [Napoleon Chagnon](#) (who studied the [Yanomamo Indians](#) of South America in the 1960s).

**Note**, early attempts at ethnography are today seen as **ethnocentric** (biased toward Western cultures).



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Does this picture [disturb](#) you?



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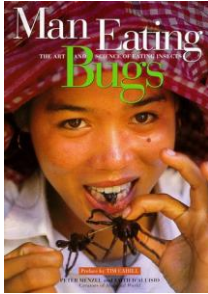
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How about this one?



Perhaps you are just being **ethnocentric?**

(clicky pic)

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## A.4. Anthropological Tenets

### a. Awareness of Ethnocentric Bias



**Ethnocentric:** to characterize by or base one's viewpoint on the attitude that one's own group is superior.

Why do human groups tend to be ethnocentric?

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## A.4. Anthropological Tenets

ii. **Ethnocentricity** arises out of the fact of cultural diversity and the need for protection of cultural practices.



- *Ethnocentricity is helpful* in enhancing group survival. Culture depends upon shared knowledge.

- *Ethnocentricity is harmful* when groups come into contact that have very different values which cannot be negotiated or understood.

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## A.4. Anthropological Tenets

**iii. Cultural Relativism** is the *opposite* of ethnocentricity



It is a "reaction to the fact of cultural diversity in which one attempts to understand and **to judge the behavior of another culture in terms of its standards of good, normal, moral, legal, etc. rather than one's own.**"

(<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415485395/glossary.asp>)

Franz Boas articulated the idea in 1887: "...**civilization is not something absolute**, but ... is relative, and ... our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes," (but Boas did not actually coin the term "cultural relativism").

([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_relativism](en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_relativism))

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