

ANTHROPOLOGY

2009

Anthropology brings together various disciplines that study man in society and the characteristics that distinguish man from other animals: complex languages, rites and rituals, arts, religions, clothing, family relationships, habitats, the transmission of information, and perceptions of space and time. A major focus of anthropology today is to compare different groups and societies (the purview of ethnology), recognizing the essential unity of the human spirit amid the many diverse and fascinating expressions of that spirit. Situated at the frontiers of sociology, biology, and culture, anthropology also pays close attention to the consequences of technical change in our societies.

Field: Humanities and social sciences.

Also see the following profiles: Geography, History and archaeology, Psychology, Humanities and social sciences.

Sectors of activity: teacher; researcher for a government research center, university laboratory, or research organization specializing in consulting, marketing, or survey research.

ORGANIZATION OF STUDIES IN FRANCE

Universities

Anthropologists conduct direct field work to identify and understand the characteristics of cultural and social groups.

Some 10 French universities offer undergraduate (licence) degrees in anthropology. Technically, these are degrees in humanities and social sciences, with a concentration in anthropology or ethnology. The curriculum includes courses on the history of anthropology, great thinkers in the field (such as Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss), an introduction to specialized subfields by cultural area (anthropology of Africa, Asia, or Oceania, for example) or by topical area (the anthropology of religion, kinship, sports, or politics). Graduates may choose to pursue one of 50 professional and research masters, specializing in a cultural or thematic area such as the anthropology of politics, the law, the family, or religion.

Most students of anthropology pursue research degrees (2-year master's and doctoral), following studies that are increasingly specialized.

In the master's curriculum, the first year (M1) delivers the basics of content and method, whereas the second year (M2) is an introduction to research through specialized seminars, practical work (field surveys, archival research, internships, basic methods of visual anthropology), and the writing and defense of a master's thesis.

Other postsecondary institutions

- EHESS, Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (school of advanced study in the social sciences), <http://www.ehess.fr>

The research master in social sciences (concentration in anthropology, specialization in ethnology and social anthropology) is designed to train young researchers. Students are admitted based on their application and academic background, with each member of the faculty deciding on the prerequisites for success in his or her courses. See <http://www.ehess.fr/fr/enseignement/diplomes/master/>

The school offers a European doctorate in the history, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy of European legal cultures and a doctorate in social anthropology and ethnology.

- Muséum national d'histoire naturelle (national museum of natural history), <http://www.mnhn.fr/museum/foffice/science/science/Enseignement/rubmastere/sspresentmaster.xsp>

The master's program in change, natural heritage, and society at the National Museum of Natural History offers multidisciplinary training in the analysis of mechanisms of change in biodiversity and in strategies for its preservation within the context of sustainable development. The program trains future researchers and experts in 4 broad scientific fields: description and classification of natural entities and their historic interpretation; understanding of minute life processes; understanding of the mutual relations of man and his natural environment; and diffusion of the aforesaid knowledge to various audiences.

RESEARCH THEMES

The science of anthropology is in constant flux, its boundaries changing constantly. Although anthropologists remain interested in kinship, they have taken up many other questions, such as how societies treat the human body (the anthropology of health), economics, and the collective effects of information overload caused by the growth of the Internet (digital anthropology).

Many schools or traditions of anthropology are active around the world—the German, Anglo-Saxon, Brazilian, French, and so on. Today these schools share, to varying degrees, several broad trends: less dependence on the natural sciences and physical anthropology (the study of human groups from a physical and biological perspective) and on broad historical, political, and religious distinctions; growing interest in all expressions of diversity, learning, collective action, adaptation to local conditions, and beliefs; belief in an overarching unity beyond apparent differences, which are themselves valuable and enriching; and a critical approach to the western, European, or colonial view of human history.

INTERNATIONAL STANDING

French anthropologists Edgar Morin, René Girard, Georges Balandier, and Pierre Clastres enjoy international renown. Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Tristes Tropiques*, 1955), considered one of the greatest anthropologists of his era, reached readers far beyond anthropological circles. Françoise Héritier (*Masculin-Féminin*, 1996–2002), Lévi-Strauss's successor in the laboratory of social anthropology at the Collège de France, is also widely known on the world stage.

Websites

Associations and research organizations

- CNRS (national center for scientific research), <http://www.cnrs.fr>
- AFA (French association of ethnologists and anthropologists), www.afa.msh-paris.fr
- Collège de France, a prestigious center for learning and research in the humanities and social sciences, has been open to the public since 1530, <http://www.college-de-france.fr>
- Laboratory of social anthropology of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociales, <http://las.ehess.fr>
- IRESCO (institute for contemporary social research), a center for coordination of social science research in the Paris region, http://recherche.univ-paris8.fr/red_fich_equ.php?OrgaNum=1

Journals and information

- Socio-Anthropologie, <http://socio-anthropologie.revues.org/>,
- L'Homme, <http://lhomme.revues.org/>
- Bulletin et mémoires de la société d'anthropologie de Paris, <http://bmsap.revues.org>
- Anthropology's Web portal, <http://www.ethno-web.com>

Key words

archaeology – behavior – biocultural – biodiversity – biology – cognition – cognitive sciences – consulting – cultures – dance – earth sciences – economics – ecosystems – education – environment – ergonomics – ethnology – ethology – evolution – geosciences – gerontology – history of art – humanities – identity – informatics – interactions – languages – law – letters – life sciences – linguistics – man – mathematics – mediation – modeling – museum studies – mutations – natural heritage – neuropsychology – object – paleobiology – paleontology – philosophy – phylogenetics – political science – prehistory – psychology – religion – sedimentology – societies – social anthropology – social sciences – sociology – sport – sustainable development – texts – work – universe