



Oregon Archaeological Society Exploring Careers in Archaeology Fields Professional Anthropologist

What Does an Anthropologist Do?

Anthropologists study the origin, development and behavior of humans. By drawing and building on knowledge from the humanities as well as social, physical and biological sciences, anthropologists examine the ways of life, languages, customs, values, and social patterns of different cultures.

Some anthropologists study the social and cultural consequences of current human issues, such as globalization, colonization, marginalization, overpopulation, environmental impact and poverty. Others study the prehistory and evolution of humans. A growing number of anthropologists perform market research for business by studying the demand for products by a particular culture or social group. Using their anthropological background and a variety of techniques – including interviews, surveys and observations – they may collect data on how a product is used in specific demographic groups.

There are three sub-disciplines of anthropology, aside from archaeology which is explained in detail in another bulletin:

- **Biological/physical anthropologists** – research the evolution and development of the human species. They look for early evidence of human life, analyze genetics, study primates, and examine the biological variations in humans.
- **Cultural anthropologists** – study the customs, cultures, and social lives of groups. They investigate social practices and customs in setting that range from remote pre-industrial villages to modern urban settings.
- **Linguistic anthropologists** – study how humans communicate and how language shapes social life. They also study the role of language in different cultures, and how social and cultural factors affect the development of language. Many are focused on the cultural preservation of languages that are may be at risk to disappear.

Education and Experience Required

A minimum of a master's degree in archaeology, anthropology, history or related field is required for professional positions. In addition to a master's degree, specific work in the field, the laboratory or in research is required.

A Ph.D. may be needed with advanced technical knowledge for leadership positions. Additionally, anthropologists wishing to work internationally may also need a Ph.D. in order to comply with foreign regulations. A Ph.D. may take several years of study beyond a master's degree and require 2-3 years of field research and a doctoral dissertation.

Students who earn a bachelor's degree may begin their careers in internships, field school, or other volunteer field or laboratory work can work as field or laboratory technicians, or as research assistants, but will need a master's degree to advance beyond entry level positions.

What Important Skills Are Requested in This Field?

- Analytical Skills – must possess knowledge of scientific methods and data, which are often used in research.
- Critical Thinking Skills – must be able to draw conclusions from observations, laboratory experiments, and other methods of research.
- Investigative Skills – must seek and explore all facts relevant to their research. Must be able to combine various sources of information to try to solve problems and to answer research questions.
- Technical Skills – may use a variety of sophisticated tools and technologies in their work, including database, statistical, software and GIS tools.
- Communication Skills – will need to present research and findings to their peers and general audience, including public presentations. For those who choose academic careers in archaeology, teaching skills are also necessary.
- Writing Skills – need strong writing skills because they often write reports detailing their research findings and public results in scholarly journals and public interest publications.

What can I expect to be paid?

Based upon the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (2014) the median annual salary for an Anthropologists is \$59,280, the range between \$34,580-93,650.