

Kottak Ch. 1

Anthropology & Its Applications

What is Anthropology?

- Anthropology is the study of the human species and its immediate ancestors.
 - Anthropology is **holistic** in that the discipline is concerned with studying the whole of the human condition: past, present and future.
 - Anthropology offers a unique **cross-cultural perspective** by comparing the customs of one society with those of others.

What is Anthropology?

- People share both society and culture.
 - Society is organized life in groups, a feature that humans share with other animals.
 - Cultures are traditions and customs, transmitted through learning, that govern the beliefs and behaviors of the people exposed to them.
 - While culture is not biological, the ability to use it rests in hominid biology (= adaptation)

Adaptation, Variation & Change

- Adaptation is the strategies used by organisms to cope with environmental change.
 - Human adaptation involves interaction between culture and biology to satisfy individual goals.
 - Some types of human adaptation:
 - cultural (technological) adaptation (stone tools, religion)
 - genetic adaptation (larger chests, longer legs)

Adaptation, con't.

- Humans are the most adaptable animals in the world, having the ability to inhabit widely variant ecological niches.
 - Humans, like all other animals use biological means to adapt to a given environment.
 - Humans are unique in having cultural means of adaptation.

Adaptation, Variation & Change

- Through time, social and cultural means of adaptation have become increasingly important for human groups.
- Human groups have devised diverse ways of coping with a wide range of environments.

We are Pros at Adaptation!

- The rate of this cultural adaptation has been rapidly accelerating during the last 10,000 years.
 - Food production developed between 12,000 and 10,000 years ago after millions of years during which hunting and gathering was the sole basis for human subsistence.
 - The first civilizations developed between 6,000 and 5,000 years ago.
 - More recently, the spread of industrial production has profoundly affected human life.

Anthropology & the “Four-fields”

- American anthropology is unique in that it includes four distinct fields:
 - cultural anthropology
 - archaeology
 - biological/physical anthropology, and
 - linguistic anthropology
- The four-field approach developed as (mainly U.S.) anthropologists studying native peoples of North America became interested in exploring the **origins** and **diversity** of the groups that they were studying.

Holism and the Comparative Method

- This broad, often comparative approach to studying human societies means that anthropology is holistic– it studies everything about humanity:
 - Our biological origins and genetic change
 - Our capacity for abstract thought & language
 - Our main distinguishing feature: **culture**

The Comparative Method, cont’.

- Focus on variation through “Time” (**diachronic** research):
 - using information from contemporary groups to model changes that took place in the past
 - using knowledge gained from past groups to speculate about the future (e.g. reconstructing past languages using principles based on modern ones).

The Comparative Method, con’t.

- Also look at “snapshot” variation in (**synchronic** research):
 - comparing information collected from human societies existing at the same or roughly the same time, but from different geographic locations

Voila!

- Any conclusions about “human nature” must be pursued with a comparative, cross-cultural approach that can be either diachronic or synchronic.
- Once you have this...congratulations! You have cultural anthropology (my favorite field)

Cultural Anthropology

- Cultural Anthropology combines **ethnography** and **ethnology** to study human societies and cultures for the purpose of describing AND explaining social and cultural similarities and differences.
- Called social anthropology outside of the U.S.
- Finds answers to the “nature vs. nurture” debates

What is Ethnography?

- Ethnography produces an account (a book, an article, or a film) of a particular community, society, or culture based on information that is collected during fieldwork.
 - Ethnographic fieldwork involves living in the community that is being studied for an extended period of time (6 months to 2 years).

What is Ethnography?

- Emphasizes **local** behavior, beliefs, customs, social life, economic activities, politics, and religion (= culture!), rather than developments at the national level.
- Since cultures are not isolated, ethnographers must investigate the local, regional, national, and **global systems** of politics, economics, and information that expose “the locals” to external influences.

...and Ethnology?

- **Ethnology** examines, interprets, analyzes, and compares the ethnographic data gathered in different societies to make generalizations about society and culture.
 - Ethnology uses ethnographic data to build models, test hypotheses, and create theories that enhance our understanding of how social and cultural systems work.
 - Ethnology works from the particular (ethnographic data) to the general (theory).

Ethnography vs. Ethnology

- A Quick Comparison:

ETHNOGRAPHY	ETHNOLOGY
requires fieldwork to collect data	draws upon data collected by a series of researchers
descriptive	synthetic
group/community specific	comparative/cross-cultural

Archaeology – A second field

- Archaeology reconstructs, describes, and interprets past human behavior and cultural patterns through **material remains**.
- The material remains of a culture include artifacts (statues, jewelry, tools), garbage, burials, and the remains of structures.

The Archaeological Record

- The archaeological record provides a unique opportunity to look at changes in social complexity over thousands and tens of thousands of years (this kind of time depth is not accessible to ethnographers).

Not just stones n' bones

- Archaeology is not restricted to prehistoric societies.
 - Historical archaeology combines archaeological data and written records to reconstruct historically known groups.
 - “La Navidad” on Hispaniola
 - “Garbology”

Physical Anthropology – Field 3

- Physical anthropology investigates human **biological diversity** across time and space (= diachronic!)

Physical Anthropology

- There are a few popular subgroups of biological anthropology:
 - paleoanthropology: human evolution as revealed by the fossil record
 - human osteology: the study of primate bone and skeleton
 - primatology: the study of the biology, evolution, behavior, and social life of primates.
 - forensic anthropology: the study of trauma, abuse, and identification of remains

It's as diverse as cultural anthropology!

- Physical anthropology is multidisciplinary.
- Draws on biology, zoology, geology, anatomy, physiology, medicine, public health, osteology, and archaeology.
- Focus on genus *Homo*.

Linguistic Anthropology – Field 4

- The study of language in its social and cultural context across space and time.
- Some linguistic anthropologists investigate universal features of language that may be linked to uniformities in the human brain. (Chomsky and universal grammar)

Chen beeya' yetel taan

- **Historical linguists** reconstruct ancient languages and study linguistic variation through time.
- **Sociolinguistics** investigates relationships between social and linguistic variation to discover varied perceptions and patterns of thought in different cultures.

Applied Anthropology

- The application of any anthropological data, perspectives, theory, and techniques to identify, and solve contemporary social problems.
- In other words, moving toward a more proactive, policy-making role.

Fun Job Description

- Applied anthropologists also assess the social and cultural dimensions of economic development.

Applied Anthropology

- Some standard subdivisions have developed in applied anthropology:
 - medical anthropology
 - environmental anthropology
 - development anthropology
 - PAR (Participatory Action Research)

Applied Anthropology, con't.

- Applied anthropologists are generally employed by international development agencies, like the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations.

Medical Anthropology



- Medical anthropology studies health conditions from a cross-cultural perspective. In Uganda's Mwiri primary school children are taught about HIV.

Illness and Disease

- Medical anthropologists also study theories of illness, disease, and practitioner skills.
- Doctor, shaman, indian chief– there are many different medical systems and standards of what counts as health across the globe

Applying Applied Anthropology

- Development projects often fail when planners ignore the cultural dimensions of development.
- Applied anthropologists work with local communities to identify specific social conditions that will influence the failure or success of a development project.

■ Four Subfields & Dimensions of Anthro

GENERAL ANTHROPOLOGY	APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY
Cultural Anthropology	Medical Anthropology
Archaeology	Cultural Resource Management (CRM)
Biological or Physical Anthropology	Development Anthropology
Linguistic Anthropology	Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's)

Jacks and Jills of all trades

- Anthropology's own broad scope has always lent it to interdisciplinary collaboration.

Science AND Humanities

- Anthropology is a science, in that it is a systematic field of study that uses experiments, observations, and deduction to produce reliable explanations of human cultural and biological phenomena.

Science + Humanities

- Anthropology is also one of the humanities, in that it encompasses the study and cross-cultural comparison of languages, texts, philosophies, arts, music, performances and other forms of creative expression.

Anthropology and Education

- Research done in classrooms, homes, and neighborhoods.
- How do teachers and students interact across cultures? Are there similarities?
- How does kinship and family structure influence learning?
- How can we improve education for members of various ethnic groups?

The Rural-Urban Distinction

- Historically, anthropologists did research (ethnography) in relatively small, rural settings
- Now recognize that issues of the city, and living in cities help shape culture and human interaction (even growth!)

Anthropology & Business

- Along with research on cities and residents of cities, comes anthropology of the workplace and international business
- Yahoo!, Google, HP, GM, Coca-Cola, ALL have very highly paid anthropology staff
- Can study product-level (human factors) but also workplace issues (trust and hierarchy)

OK, I get it, but (*&(is CULTURE!

- Generally accepted definition:

Practices, ideas, feelings, that are **learned, shared, valued,** and **transmitted** through generations.

- We will explore all of these and more as the semester progresses.

Look out world!

- Visit www.aaanet.org and check out all the subgroups within anthropology
 - feminist anthropology
 - environmental/ecological anthropology
 - anthropology of aging
 - latino/a anthropology
 - www.aaanet.org/nasa : Student anthros

Ciao!

(And don't forget to read for next week!)