Department of Anthropology

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Anthropology seeks an understanding of human nature, society, and culture in the widest comparative and historical framework. The department’s teaching program provides Ph.D. training for research workers and teachers in the various branches of anthropological science. Lectures, tutorial guidance, laboratory instruction, and research seminars provide opportunities for advanced study in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology and archaeology. Course work, but not a graduate degree program, is also offered in physical anthropology.

The purpose of the department is the advancement of anthropological research; this goal is achieved in the graduate program by the development of creative scholars and scientists. The various educational guidelines that are established from time to time by the department as a whole as well as by the particular specialized fields are
intended to aid in this development. All programs, however, are designed to be adaptable to the specific needs and research interests of individual students. Graduate students are encouraged to go forward as rapidly as previous preparation and special powers permit. The identification of specific research problems and the pursuit of these problems through the writing of original papers are skills that are emphasized and fostered as early as possible. This experience develops gradually into the substantial research project that is undertaken for the doctorate.

Graduate students and faculty in the department regularly participate in a large number of interdisciplinary workshops. Some are regional (e.g., African Studies; Latin America and the Caribbean; U.S. Locations; Art and Politics of East Asia; East Asia: Politics, Economy and Society; East Asia: Transregional Histories; Interdisciplinary Approaches to Modern France and the Francophone World; Latin American History; Middle East History and Theory; Theory and Practice in South Asia; and Visual and Material Perspectives on East Asia), some thematic (e.g., Interdisciplinary Archaeology; Ancient Societies; City, Society, and Space; Self and Subjectivity; Education; EthNoise!: Ethnomusicology; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Human Rights; Mass Culture; Knowledge/Value; Race and Religion; Reproduction of Race and Racial Ideology; Semiotics: Culture in Context; and Social History), and some theoretically oriented (e.g., Contemporary Philosophy; History, Philosophy and Sociology of Science; Political Theory; Social Theory).

Graduate students beyond the first year may serve as course or laboratory assistants, and later, as lecturers in College programs. The department also awards Starr Lectureships each year, on a competitive basis, to advanced graduate students. Starr Lecturers teach courses on their areas of specialization in the anthropology concentration in the College.

For additional information about the Department of Anthropology and the interests of its faculty members, please see: http://anthropology.uchicago.edu/

HOW TO APPLY

The application process for admission and financial aid for all Social Sciences graduate programs is administered through the divisional Office of the Dean of Students. The Application for Admission and Financial Aid, with instructions, deadlines and department specific information is available online at: https://apply-ssd.uchicago.edu/apply/

Questions pertaining to admissions and aid should be directed to ssd-admissions@uchicago.edu or (773) 702-8415.

Foreign students must provide evidence of English proficiency by submitting scores from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

PROGRAMS OF STUDY

SOCIOCULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Sociocultural anthropology is concerned with the investigation of human society, culture, and the human relation to nature through intensive ethnographic investigation and wide ranging comparison. It is closely related to the other generalizing social sciences and to the interpretive disciplines of the humanities. Cross disciplinary study is encouraged; graduate students in anthropology often include courses from related fields in their programs.

The Ph.D. program in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology has three prefield phases, each normally designed as one year’s work, although under certain circumstances accelerated progress through the later phases is possible.

Phase I introduces the student to the development of social and cultural theory and to the scholarly interests of the faculty in the department. First year students also take courses in particular specialist areas of ethnography and theory in order to frame research interests in preparation for the dissertation project. Course requirements in the first year include The Development of Social and Cultural Theory (two double courses) and Introduction to Chicago Anthropology. In addition students take four other courses dealing with their areas of interest selected in consultation with the first year advisor. The requirements of Phase I apply to all entering graduate students, regardless of whether they hold a master’s degree in anthropology from another institution.

Phase II training is directed toward acquiring a deeper knowledge of the special area and theoretical topics on which research will be focused, as well as toward obtaining a broader anthropological understanding in preparation for the Ph.D. qualifying examination. With the exception of those whose master’s theses from elsewhere are approved by the department, every second year student completes a master’s paper during that year. The Ph.D. qualifying examination is normally taken during the spring of the second year or the autumn of the third year. The department also requires all students in sociocultural and linguistic anthropology to take the course in Anthropological Research Methods and to demonstrate competence in a foreign language by achieving a High Pass on a University foreign language reading examination, preferably by the end of the second year. The language will be specified by the student's advisory committee. (A foreign language is required only for the Ph.D. degree. No foreign language is required for the M.A.)
Phase III is a pre research training period during which the student hones a dissertation proposal and grant applications and develops advanced research skills. Upon fulfillment of all pre dissertation academic requirements and the acceptance of the dissertation proposal at a hearing in the department, the student is admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree and proceeds to research and/or field work and the writing of the dissertation.

The linguistic anthropologist is concerned with phonetic, phonological, grammatical, semantic, and paralinguistic systems and with their relations to social, cultural and personal ones. A student who chooses linguistic anthropology as the major sub field within the Department of Anthropology should prepare at least one sub field each in linguistics and anthropology and satisfy the language requirement. Students of linguistic anthropology are generally advised to take at least six courses in technical linguistics.


In addition to linguistic anthropology as a sub field within the Department of Anthropology, there is also a joint Ph.D. program available to students who are admitted first to the Department of Anthropology and subsequently to the Department of Linguistics. Joint degree students complete the requirements of both departments, including distinct introductory and advanced courses stipulated by each, the departmental qualifying examinations in appropriate special fields, and the language requirements, including additional foreign languages for the Linguistics Ph.D. The student’s dissertation advisory committee consists of three or more members of the faculty; at least one must be a member of the Department of Anthropology but not the Department of Linguistics, and at least one in Linguistics but not in Anthropology. After approval for hearing by the advisory committee, the student’s dissertation proposal must be approved in a hearing open to the faculty of both departments, and similarly for the final defense of the single doctoral dissertation that the student writes.

Admission to the Joint Degree Program in Anthropology and Linguistics cannot be approved until at least the second year, after successful completion of the core (first year) coursework and examinations in Linguistics, although students should declare interest in the joint program on the graduate application and to the chair of the Department of Anthropology and to the linguistic anthropologists soon after arriving on campus.

A R C H A E O L O G Y

The archaeology program emphasizes the comparative study of complex societies throughout the world grounded in a close articulation of archaeology, history and sociocultural anthropology. The program stresses the integration of social and cultural theory in the practice of archaeology and, in particular, forges strong links with the historical anthropology that is one of the recognized strengths of the department. In addition to preparing archaeology students for anthropologically informed fieldwork and interpretation, an important element of this interdisciplinary approach is the inauguration of a training program offering students the methodological skills and theoretical grounding necessary to undertake innovative ethnoarchaeological research.

Current faculty strengths include archaeology of Latin America (focusing on the later prehistory and colonial periods of the Andes and Mesoamerica), the United States (focusing on the historical/urban archaeology of New Orleans and Birmingham, creole societies, race and ethnicity, material culture), Europe (from the Paleolithic to the Celtic Iron Age), and China and mainland southeast Asia (Bronze age, imperialism, cross cultural interactions) as well as ethnoarchaeology in Africa and experimental archaeology in South America. Associated faculty at the Oriental Institute and in other University departments specialize in complex societies of the Near East, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, and China.

Research interests include: urbanism, state formation, imperialism, colonial interaction, industrialization, art and symbolism, spatial analysis, politics, ritual and religion, human environment interactions, agricultural systems, material culture, economic anthropology, political economy and the socio historical context and politics of archaeology. Faculty members in archaeology have major, ongoing field research projects in Bolivia, Peru, France, Spain, Cambodia, China, Senegal, and the southern & southeastern United States and also have research interests in Kenya.

The archaeology program requires that students complete a total of 18 courses to qualify for the Ph.D., some of which may be reading and research in the field of specialization. Students normally enroll in nine courses per year during their first two years in the program. Within the first two years, students will complete five required courses that are designed to provide a comprehensive grounding in social and cultural theory, as well as the theory and specific methods of archaeology. (A foreign language is required only for the Ph.D. degree. No foreign language is required for the M.A.)

In the first year, course requirements include The Development of Social and Cultural Theory offered over the autumn and winter quarters. The two quarter sequence is equivalent to four course credits. In the spring archaeology students take Theory and Method in Archaeology, also a double credit course. The remaining course requirements in the program, to be met in the first or second year, are Introduction to Chicago Anthropology, and a quantitative methods course approved by the faculty. For the rest of their course work, students enjoy a broad range of elective courses in archaeology, sociocultural anthropology, history, physical anthropology. Classical or Near Eastern studies, statistics, computer science and geophysical sciences. In addition, archaeology students are strongly encouraged to gain technical experience in one of the university’s regular summer field schools or other research excavations.
By the end of the first year in residence, the archaeology student must form an advisory committee of three faculty members. The committee will be chaired by the faculty member of the student's choice. With the exception of those students with A.M. theses from other institutions which are approved by the department, each student will complete an A.M. paper during the second year. In addition, by the end of year two, each student takes an written and oral examination from the members of his/her advisory committee in the areas of chosen specialization. The oral examination, lasting roughly an hour and a half, is designed to test basic command of the literature and methods necessary to pursue Ph.D. research in a chosen area. In the third year, having passed the qualifying exam, archaeology students are required to take the archaeological research design seminar. By the end of the third year, students must defend a dissertation proposal before the faculty and interested students. Upon fulfillment of all academic requirements and the acceptance of the dissertation proposal, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Courses in physical anthropology, mainly directed towards evolutionary anthropology and primatology, are offered in the department; but applications for graduate study in Physical Anthropology are no longer accepted.

COURSES

The department website offers descriptions of graduate courses scheduled for the current academic year: https://anthropology.uchicago.edu/graduate-programs/courses