

# What is Anthropology?

Introduction to Anthropology

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# Tests or Projects?

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# Anthropology

- Anthropology is the brand study of humankind around the world and throughout time.
- It is concerned with both the biological and the cultural aspects of humans.



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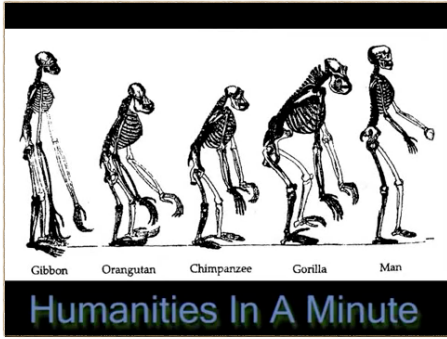
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## Four Areas of Anthropology

- Physical Anthropology - Mechanisms of biological evolution, genetic inheritance, human adaptability and variation, primatology and the fossil record of human evolution.
- Cultural Anthropology - Culture, ethnocentrism, cultural aspects of language and communication, subsistence and other economic patterns, kinship, sex marriage, socialization, social control, political organizations, class, ethnicity, gender, religion and culture change

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## Four Areas of Anthropology

- Archeology - Prehistory and early history of cultures around the world; major trends in culture evolution and techniques for finding, excavating, dating and analyzing material remains of past societies
- Linguistic Anthropology - the human communication process focusing on the importance of socio-cultural influences; nonverbal communication and the structure, function and history of languages, dialects, pidgins and creoles.

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What is the best way to really get to know another society and its culture?

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## Physical Anthropology

What Can We Learn?

- What can these things tell us about our past?
- 500 Years into the future archeologists come across the following items - what does it tell them about who we are, our lifestyle, culture and social practices?



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What do these things tell us about our past?



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What do these things tell us about our past?



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What will they say about us?



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What will they say about us?



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## What will they say about us?



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## What will they say about us?

- With a partner - choose two items that could be found in a dig that would give future generations an understanding of who we are and what our lives are about.
- Be prepared to share with the class

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## Participation-Observation

- Anthropologists have learned that the best way to really get to know another society and its culture is to live in it as an active participant rather than simply an observer
- By Physically and emotionally participating in the social interact of the host society, it is possible to become accepted as a member.

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## Dian Fossey

- Dian Fossey believed that in order to study gorillas effectively she had to immerse herself with them in an effort to get them to accept her presence



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**Why do we need social scientists?  
Don't they tell us what we already  
know to be true?**

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## Why we need Social Scientists?

- Intuition - is believing something to be true because a person's emotions and logic support it
- Intuition is not proof of fact - this is why we need social scientists - they prove or disprove what we BELIEVE to be true
- Question: When do you use your intuition? How do you prove or disprove what you believe?

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## What is Culture?

- Culture is learned - we learn our thoughts, behaviours and values, and we continue to learn throughout our lives
- Culture is shared - a group or society that thinks or acts in a particular way (in North American marriage = two people). Subcultures share characteristics of the overall culture, but also have distinctive ideas and behaviours.

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## What is Culture?

- Culture defines nature - it can limit, fulfill, expand or influence out biological needs and tendencies. We all need food (nature), but culture shapes what we eat (nature).
- Will you have the grasshopper or the pork today?

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# What is Culture?

- Culture shapes how we perceive and understand the world - e.g., the northern Inuit have several ways to describe snow because distinctions are important on their survival
- Culture also has patterns - they are not random collections of beliefs and behaviours. If one aspect of culture changes, so will others. We are often not aware of our values of our culture because they are self evident (e.g., Democracy)

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# Homework - Physical and Cultural Anthropology

- You must sit for 30 minutes (without interruption - no cell phones, computers, friends, music, etc.) and observe a group of people. You may choose to do this in the cafeteria at lunch, the library on your spare or a the mall. You may not talk to anyone during this time. You must only focus your attention on watching people.
- Write down your observations, including conversations you might hear, what they are wearing, what they look like, how they interact, their expressions, demeanour, etc.

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