Welcome to Anthropology  
Anthropology & 115  
Our Place in Nature  
Chapter 1

What is Anthropology?  
- Anthropology is the study of humanity in all its times and places.  
  - The word anthropology comes from the Greek words *anthropos* (man) + *logos* (science of)  
  - This means the discipline of anthropology is a very broad one; in fact, most anthropologists consider themselves as generalists. Even so, there are 4 sub-disciplines in anthropology:  
    - Biological anthropology (also called physical anthropology)  
    - Archaeology  
    - Cultural anthropology (also called ethnology)  
    - Linguistic anthropology  
- Because of the broad scope of this discipline, it rests in both the sciences and the humanities.  
  - The scientific method is employed  
  - So are interpretative methods

Content of the Course  
- This course covers 2 of the 4 subfields of anthropology: biological anthropology and archaeology.  
- This course is what is referred to as a survey course. By this, I mean that it will introduce broad areas of study, not delving deeply into any one area.  
  - Therefore, if you have determined that you wish to major in anthropology, this is not the course for you.  
  - If you want to be better informed about primates, human variation, fossils, ancient peoples and places this is the course for you.  
- One notice I need to emphasize is that evolution forms the basis of this course.  
  - I do not expect you to “convert” to a belief in evolutionary views.  
  - However, I do require that you learn these views and be able to articulate them. At a minimum, one should be able to explain that with which one disagrees (or agrees).  
- While religious views are equally valid, they do not form the basis of this course.

Anthropology as a Discipline  
- **The scope of anthropology**  
  - Every part of the world that has ever contained human beings.  
  - Thus, any explanation for human behavior should evidence itself across time and space.  
- **The holistic approach**  
  - Research takes into account the totality of human experiences  
  - Holism is often referred to as the ‘glue’ that holds anthropology together.  
  - Anthropology embraces what it calls the biocultural approach, which look at the links between biology and culture  
    - The culture concept is central as all anthropologists work within questions about culture  
    - Context as the time, place, and circumstances from which the object/observation came is also a part of the biocultural approach
• **Anthropological curiosity**
  o There is a curiosity about the typical characteristics of human populations and the variation within this species
  o Think about all the sciences that relate back to the question of what it means to be human and you can see why anthropology asks many questions.

**Biocultural Approach**
• This diagram sums up the approach of anthropology as holistic and comparative
• Note that even as we diagram this concept, in reality no one can be an expert in all parts of anthropology so the next few slides will introduce the sub-fields of the discipline.

**Cultural (Social) Anthropology**
• Cultural anthropology focuses on the study of existing and recent cultures
  o Uses participant-observation to study culture through the use of fieldwork (full immersion into a culture)
  o Culture is the strategy people use in adapting to the natural and social environments in which they live.
  o Culture can also be defined as the socially acquired way of life in a social group. The process of acquiring culture is referred to as enculturation.
• A cultural anthropologist is often called an ethnographer
  o An ethnographer is someone who undertakes field research in the form of an ethnography. Ethnography is a detailed description of many aspects of customary thought and behavior of a people
  o Ethnology is a cross-cultural comparison, which tries to understand what it means to be human. This term is also used to mean the study of cultural anthropology.
• **Examples include urban anthropology and medical anthropology**

**Linguistics**
• Linguistics (also called linguistic anthropology) is the study of human speech and language.
  o The use of language is a unique human characteristic.
  o Linguistic includes 4 areas of study:
    • Descriptive linguistics (also called theoretical or structural linguistics) is where one might look at grammatical systems and similar work
    • Historical linguistics where the reconstruction of an ancient language or looking for language origins are only two options. How languages change over time and how they may be related
    • Sociolinguistics may include looking at language planning or help with one’s accent. How language is used in social contexts. For example, one might study:
      • Types of language and appropriate of use
      • Formal and informal sides of language
      • Ethnolinguistics has the focus of looking at how language influences our cultural understandings
  • Within anthropology, you are more likely to see sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics being studied.

**Biological (Physical) Anthropology**
• Your book uses the older term: physical anthropology.
  o I prefer the newer term of biological anthropology or even bioanthropology.
- No matter the term used, each refers to the study of human biology within the framework of evolution.

- Consists of three sub-disciplines (sub-fields): paleoanthropology, primatology, and human variation/adaptation.
  - Paleoanthropology (also called human paleontology) is the study of human evolution
    - The fossil record (at least that of the last 65 million years) is of interest to biological anthropology;
    - Emergence of hominins and their later evolution is the specific focus of ‘paleo’
      - The interdisciplinary approach to the study of earlier hominins, their chronology, physical structure, archaeological remains, habitats, etc.
      - Includes areas such as anthropometrics, osteology, and paleopathology, as well as borrowing from chemistry, geology and other disciplines
    - Also included the use of anthropometry (the measurement of the human body) is key to the data sets for paleoanthropology

### Biological (Physical) Anthropology 2

- Primatology is defined as the study of the living nonhuman primates
  - Primates include prosimians (older term), monkeys, and apes, and humans
  - Primate paleontology (also called paleoprimatology) is an example of overlap between these foci of anthropology and studies the evolutionary history of ancient primate species.
- Human genetics is the study of gene structure and action and the patterns of inheritance of traits from parent to offspring.
  - Genetic mechanisms are the foundation for evolutionary change
  - Leads to studies of human variation based on scientific explanations of human biological diversity.
    - Ask how and why contemporary human populations vary biologically
    - *Homo sapiens*, the ‘human’ species, though is surprisingly similar, population to population when compared to other species.
    - Through the use of these types of data they determine the human adaptations (functional responses of organisms and populations to environments):
      - Also look at population biology (impact of environment), and epidemiology (impact of diseases). Molecular anthropology is another specialty

### Archaeology

- Archaeology (older spelling archeology) is the study of past cultures through their material culture, especially artifacts (objects or materials altered by humans).
- The text suggests that archaeology is a body of methods and so reflects many different kinds of archaeology:
  - Classical archaeology is the study of the Mediterranean world’s ‘classical’ civilizations, such as the Romans and the Greeks. They usually are found in departments of art history, classics, and architecture, and less commonly in anthropology
  - Archaeological anthropology refers to applications of archaeological methods to the origins and diversity of modern humans.
    - Focuses on the archaeological record
    - Deals, in addition to artifacts, with sites (i.e., a kill site) and features (i.e.; hearths) of human activity
- Archaeological anthropology (We will call this archaeology for the remainder of the course) has many have many areas of expertise:
  - These studies include two major time frames:
• Prehistory: The time before written records (where we will spend most of our time in this course)
• Historical archaeology: The study of the remains of peoples who left written records
  o Ethnoarchaeology uses ethnographic data from modern peoples to help explain past cultures. Another example of the blurring of the lines between the subfields of anthropology.

Applied Anthropology
• Applied anthropology involves the use or application of anthropological knowledge to help solve social problems
• A separate field?
  o Just like theory, application should be a valued part of every field of anthropology
  o May be most helpful to think of this as a dimension of anthropology, not a field
    o Dimension ranging from completely academic to completely applied
    o Academic word and applied work co-exist and create a series of information feedback loops between them.
• Most applied anthropologists are trained as cultural anthropologists, such as the urban and medical anthropologists mentioned earlier
  o Other examples of applied anthropology include:
    o Training in English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor.
    o Forensic anthropologists who help identify cause of death and identity of remains, as they apply anthropological techniques to legal issues

The Scientific Method 1
• Science is a process of understanding phenomena through observation, generalization, verification, and refutation.
  o This requires an objective, empirical approach
  o Interestingly, in cultural anthropology they have challenged (I think well) the concept that we are objective.
• Scientific method is a research method whereby a problem is identified, a hypothesis is stated, and that hypothesis is tested through the collection and analysis of data.
  o Step 1: State the research problem.
    o Gather information to resolve it (the observation component) in the form of data (facts from which conclusions can be drawn; scientific information)
    o Can be quantitative (numbers based) or can be qualitative (based on descriptions as is common in cultural anthropology)
  o Step 2: Develop a hypothesis.
    o Hypotheses as plural; hypothesis is a provisional explanation.
    o Some call this an ‘educated guess’ I call this a perspective (as compared to an opinion)

The Scientific Method 2
  o Step 3: Test the hypothesis through data collection and analysis.
    • Repeated testing is required.
      • (Re)test the hypothesis/hypotheses
  o Step 4: Propose a theory
    • If the hypothesis is supported, it becomes a theory.
    • A theory and a fact are NOT the same thing
      • A fact is another name for an observation
      • A theory is a set of hypotheses that supports a well-substantiated explanation of natural phenomena.

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Please, do not say that evolutionary theory is ‘just a fact’. I am fine if you disagree with evolutionary views, but precision of terms is key in science so please be aware of this.

Also do not mix up hypothesis and theory as in ‘I have a theory’. No! One has a hypothesis.

The Anthropological Perspective

- Anthropological perspective is a broad perspective that helps us understand the diversity of the human experience within the context of biological and behavioral continuity with other species.
  - By learning about cultures other than our own, we can avoid an ethnocentric view of other cultures.
    - Viewing other cultures from the inherently biased perspective of one’s own culture.
    - Ethnocentrism often results in other cultures being seen as inferior to one’s own.
  - Counter ethnocentrism with cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is the view that cultures have merits within their own historical and environmental contexts and should first be understood within those contexts.
- Why the anthropological perspective matters
  - Anthropology offers a wider appreciation of the human experience, in order to understand human beings and how our species came to be.
    - By recognizing that we have similarities with other animals, we may recognize that they have a place in nature just as we do.
    - How humans differ from and are similar to other animals, including nonhuman primates
  - Understand the limits and potentials of humankind
  - Allows us to understand other people’s concerns and view our own culture from a broader perspective.