

Some Notes on Planning Your Trajectory as an Anthropology Graduate Student

This document contains suggestions and information for both MA students and doctoral students. Many of our MA students plan to go on to doctoral programs in anthropology, so may benefit from reading this document top-to-bottom!

Please note: the opinions expressed in the student quotes are not necessarily shared by all faculty. They are intended as starting points for your conversations with your own advisors, and should not substitute for advisor-advisee interactions.

Before reading: Please avail yourselves of other available resources

These include the graduate handbook (for all graduate students), which is replete with official specifications for your timeline, from coursework and residency requirements to your comprehensive/language exams and beyond. Doctoral students should also read two documents drawn up by Professor Ferry during her tenure as Director of Graduate Studies. One of these discusses taking the general exams; the other addresses the dissertation proposal. Both documents contain some important thoughts about managing your time during these crucial moments in your doctoral trajectory. All of these resources can be found on the right side of this page:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/anthro/grad/resources.html>

I'm an MA student. How many semesters should I take to complete my Master's degree?

Students typically take anywhere between 2 and 4 semesters to complete their degree; there are pros and cons to any of these timelines. Of course it's highly efficient and budget-conscious to complete your MA degree in just 2 semesters (note that sometimes students go beyond 2 semesters by writing the MA paper in the summer after they finish their courses, without paying anything extra). There are also some benefits to stretching your program out into 3 or 4 semesters. They include the following:

- You have a little more breathing room in which to work, think, live, grow, and plan as you take your courses and write your Master's paper.
- You can apply for GTR (department-internal) and GSAS (graduate-school internal) funds to conduct summer fieldwork after your first year; these are not likely to pay for an entire summer of international fieldwork plus travel, but could be a considerable help. In the GTR competitions, the department tries to give some assistance to most applicants for well-

conceived projects, contingent upon our budget. This fieldwork can form the basis of your MA paper, and give you wonderful experience and perspective if you plan to apply for doctoral programs in fall.

- If you wish to apply for doctoral programs, you can do so in the fall of your second year in the MA program; this way, our faculty know your strengths better, and you have much more anthropology under your belt (from coursework, possibly summer fieldwork, and the general intellectual life of the department) to enrich your application essay, as well as your writing sample.

Please note that your tuition fees go down somewhat in your second year. Second year MA students pay the “post-resident” tuition fee, sometimes called the “extended master’s fee” for each semester you stay on (there is a five year completion limit). For those entering in 2012-2013, the extended master’s fee beyond your first year is \$5,262 per year, or \$2631 per semester. If you serve as a course assistant in your second year, your fee will be partially waived for the semester in which you are teaching. (Note that course assistantships are competitive, so there are no guarantees of securing one.)

For August degree candidates, there will be no fee to register for “Continuation” through Summer 2013, but beginning in Summer 2014 there will be a fee of approximately \$1300.

Ultimately, you should choose the timeline that's right for you. Here are some accounts from current and past MA students about their own decisions:

“I took only 1 year for the MA, and [in hindsight] I wished I had taken 2 and taken my time moving into a PhD program. It would have made me a stronger PhD candidate and allowed me to explore one fieldsite and decide if this was the right site for long-term doctoral research.”

“In my opinion, although it is possible, it is really hard to crunch four courses into a semester and complete an MA program in a year. It can be done, of course, as many have done so, but the amount of information you later remember from each course is less, and if I could do it again, I would do it in three or four semesters. I believe that many who have completed their MA in a year also shared this view. Some students have told me that they felt like they did not have much time to digest what they have learned.... Also I think an incoming MA student should know that students who spend more than a year in the program [have a] higher chance...of getting into some program or finding a job.”

"I finished up in just 2 semesters. I chose to finish so fast because I realized quite soon in the program that academia isn't for me and neither is New England.

Finances were a small part of my decision as well, as the interest builds fast on loans and cost-of-living in Boston is quite high. I managed to draw from fieldwork I did during my years as an undergraduate in writing my master's paper. I used information I had not really analyzed before and combined it with some of the theory I learned at Brandeis. I think this was a good plan for writing within my time frame, as it allowed me to work with both data and theory."

"I took two semesters to complete course work...I truly think this choice is based on individual circumstances and there are no clear right or wrong paths. Alternate possibilities to a second year of the MA program could be gaining work experience outside (or within) academia, or applying to doctoral programs in the first year and starting a PhD program a year earlier."

"When I first came to the MA program here, I planned to finish my MA study in two years, which means I would have applied to PhD programs or looked for jobs in the second year of my study. However, after one semester's study here I was deeply convinced that I would pursue a PhD, and I wanted to stay here at Brandeis....Fortunately, I got into the PhD program."

I'm an MA student considering applying for doctoral programs. What kinds of things should I be thinking about/doing as I contemplate this possibility?

If you are hoping to apply for doctoral programs (at Brandeis or beyond), we recommend you initiate candid conversations with your advisor and other professors you're taking courses with about your options and their opinions. Your professors may have a realistic assessment of your odds of being accepted at or succeeding in a given doctoral program, and some helpful suggestions regardless. You should also carefully consider the potential advantages to stretching out your MA program and applying for doctoral programs in fall/winter of your second year at Brandeis (see above). Extra coursework and the sophistication that (hopefully) brings, summer fieldwork, and/or a well-articulated MA paper project can go a long way toward impressing a doctoral admissions committee. Your letters of recommendation may be correspondingly more robust, too, because you will have had more time to develop a working relationship with (and, hopefully, to impress) your professors.

If you think you may want to apply to doctoral programs, you would do well to demonstrate your engagement in the discipline by participating in the intellectual life of the program as much as you can, by attending our departmental events, connecting with faculty within and outside of your classes, etc.

"I think the two most important variables in terms of deciding one's trajectory are 1) your adviser's honest evaluation of your chance of getting into a Ph.D. program

(if that is your goal); and 2) knowing what you would like to study (topic(s) and/or theoretical perspective(s)) for your Ph.D. I think our MA program is getting ever more competitive, and we [should request] feedback from our advisers as to how a professor may or may not be able to assist us if we were to come to Brandeis for a Ph.D., and what other possibilities might be out there outside Brandeis. [Getting an early assessment like this can help you] find programs with a better chance of acceptance or better fit. I was lucky enough to get a lot of encouragement from my adviser to apply for Brandeis early on, which helped me to stay focused and work toward goals such as finding a topic to study, taking courses that would benefit me in the future, etc...I feel that a student and his/her adviser should have a talk early on to discuss about the student's post-graduate prospects and come up with individual plan for his/her future academic trajectory."

I would like to serve as a Teaching Fellow (sometimes known as "Course Assistant" or "Teaching Assistant," depending on your structural situation), or: I need to hold down some other job to support myself. How might such jobs impede or help my trajectory?

"When I was a MA student, I was a course assistant for an advanced and intermediate [language course]. This job required 10 hours of work per week on average, so when I was offered a PhD position with TA responsibilities, I quit this job in order to better focus on my TA work. I have learned a lot from TAing in the anthropology department. I find TA-ships can be as time-consuming as [taking] a full course, but it is also very rewarding and certainly much more relevant to my PhD project than the language course I CA-ed for when I was a MA student."

(From a MA student): "I strongly recommend applying for CA-ships. The CA experience allows familiarity with the teaching aspects of academia. Working with students on their challenges and supporting their learning trajectories enriches your own education and growth process. A CA-ship is time consuming but definitely manageable with coursework; it's all about efficient time management and priorities."

(From an international MA student): "As an international student I have only worked on campus and more specifically at the department (that was a benefit and a factor that made "going to work" easier!). I took on two jobs at the department which together might not have exceeded 20 hours per week and might have come down to only 4 hours in some weeks. Therefore, I would say that approximately 10 hours per week is reasonable, especially in a situation where work hours are flexible and vary from one week to another. Work did not affect the pace of my trajectory through the program."

(From a doctoral student): "As part of my financial aid packages from the department and GSAS, I had to act as a TA/TF for every semester since I came into

the program, unlike my doctoral cohort peers. It may have taken me longer to complete all my requirements because of the teaching, as well as outside fieldwork language study at another area university (commuting between schools hacked into my time spent at Brandeis). If you have the opportunity of a free semester from teaching, it is wise to take four classes instead of three as you can concentrate more on coursework."

(From a doctoral student): "I think teaching of any kind takes time and needs to be balanced with course loads. However, considering the job market, I think it better to do some teaching and take longer than to not do any at all."

(From a doctoral student): "I think it's a good idea to have an outside job but easier to have one at Brandeis as it allows for time flexibility not as easily found elsewhere. That said, I noticed as ESL teaching coordinator that the master's students often had the hardest time finding a balance. They usually wanted to tutor for 6-10 hrs a week (policy for new tutors is never more than 4 but sometimes we allowed up to 5 hrs) not realizing that classes at the graduate level take much more time and energy than classes while getting your BA. Obviously, the decision is ultimately financial but jobs during course years should never take more than half the hours that are being spent on classes and homework, being realistic about the number of total hours you can spend awake and working a day."

(From a doctoral student): "My other job was having a family with myriad responsibilities, tasks, and pleasures. It definitely slowed down my pace. Often, I wished for at least just a season of time to do only my work, to jump in more completely. But, I also benefited greatly from their love and support. When a department wants a diverse student body, it must expect diverse needs as well."

How do I choose a fieldsite?

Choosing a fieldsite is a very personal thing – intellectually, socially, emotionally, politically, aesthetically--yet the decision has very public ramifications. A dissertation fieldsite in particular stays with you and your career for a very long time. Doctoral students: thinking about potential fieldsites early in your trajectory is quite important. It helps to clarify what area-studies courses will lay the right foundation, and opens the possibility of your using several summers for preliminary fieldwork and language learning, both of which will vastly enhance your future dissertation project and your odds of securing grant money for your dissertation.

Doctoral and MA students alike: we recommend that you discuss your potential fieldsite(s) with your advisor and any other professors you think might be helpful, whether by virtue of their area-studies experience or their other insights. Some factors to consider in these conversations:

- Is this an area where my theoretical questions can be fruitfully pursued? Is this an area I can realistically get access to (at the level of visas and research clearance)? Is this an area I can realistically and safely live in for a long time? Is this an area I wish to return to again and again? Is it compatible with my long-term goals, including but not limited to my plans or hopes for family/children? Is it a place I can imagine taking some pleasure in?
- Is this an area that has been heavily studied already, or is it relatively neglected? What might be the pros and cons of either situation?
- Is this an area that is likely to be of interest to granting agencies? To future employers? If I plan to conduct fieldwork domestically, how can I counterbalance the fact that most anthropology grants and jobs are weighted toward those conducting fieldwork "away"?
- What resources/organizations might already be devoted to the study of a given field area? How might they help (or hinder) me?
- What kinds of topics and/or theories are often associated with fieldwork in this area? What are some pros and cons of these associations?
- What are the pros and cons of studying a fieldsite relatively unknown to my Brandeis mentors (assuming that you have something else in common with these mentors, such as theoretical/topical interests)?
- How might I gain area-studies expertise/do coursework on an area where there are no area-specialists at Brandeis or even in New England?

"I started to think about my field-site and dissertation topic when I was applying to the PhD program [from the MA program]...I think the lesson I learned from deciding on my PhD project is the sooner you are committed to on a topic, the better it will serve your coursework selections and summer field preparation."

"Since the dissertation is culmination of all your work, it is never too soon to explore topic(s) in earnest...consider this decision a project with concrete steps; [you should] explore a bit [early on]. Career choices should be openly discussed in conjunction with interests, e.g., at-home research usually does not hold same cachet or value as away research...If I had known earlier of [my fieldwork site], I would have explored earlier and saved time. Also, I advise students to have on-going conversations with advisors, faculty, and other students about pitfalls, strategies, and pleasures of research/fieldsites."

"I had my thematic areas of interest, which surprisingly stayed the course for most of my graduate student career. I refined what I wanted to study in terms of a social process and phenomenon based on many of my courses, although in

retrospect, I wish I had broadened my courses beyond the geographic area of specialty...Don't be afraid to shop around!"

What's the best use of my summer time?

MA students who take more than 2 semesters to complete their degrees have one summer to consider. Doctoral students have many. Here are some things you can do with your summers:

- Conduct fieldwork toward your MA paper or pre-dissertation endeavors. We anthropology faculty strongly advise doctoral students to avail yourselves of this opportunity, and to apply for funding (e.g. GSAS, GTR) to do so. MA students can also benefit enormously from summer fieldwork, though it is not a must.
- Pursue language study toward your dissertation, whether at an institution abroad or a local one (again, apply for funding), or through a tutor. Often language study abroad can be paired with preliminary fieldwork.
- Attend a summer research or study institute – e.g. NSF Summer Institute in Research Design:
<http://qualquant.org/2010/04/summer-workshops-for-faculty-and-graduate-students/>
- Attend an archaeological field school (consult with your advisor- and possibly see as well this: <http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/fieldschools/>)
- Consider attending a conference/ writing a conference paper for the upcoming academic year
- Apply for IRB permission; write grants; write your MA paper; read for/ write your comprehensive exams; write your dissertation proposal; write your dissertation; if it doesn't impede your dissertation progress, write an article
- Form writing groups with other students for moral support, enforced deadlines, and valuable regular feedback
- Form reading/ study groups with other students, to strengthen your grasp of some relevant area studies or theoretical literature
- Teach a summer school course at Brandeis or another institution
- Work for the money you'll need to support yourself during your busy semesters
- Catch up with family, friends; recharge

Please be aware that while some of the students below recommend getting out to the field with alacrity, some faculty members feel that spending an early summer(s) on language training, or on deeply familiarizing yourself with classic ethnographic and historical studies of a region, can sometimes be more worthwhile than reconnaissance trips to the field. Ultimately this is a decision

that must be made on a case-by-case basis, and one you should make in close consultation with your advisor.

(From a doctoral student) "I would advise all incoming students to use all their summers wisely. That is, I've noticed many don't go out and do research the first year because they believe they have lots of time and because they aren't quite ready to try to write grants in the first or second semester. [I would emphasize] the importance of going out right away and proposing even general projects in order to figure out the landscape and meet people. I would also encourage students to start going to conferences that first year."[Note from JM: but see faculty caveat below about presenting at conferences "too" early...]

(From a doctoral student):"My summers have been great-- funded, and extremely useful in terms of language, fieldwork experience, and in learning methods and collecting data for conference papers. My only advice would be do a lot of fieldwork and in varied form; be careful to take notes so you can build on this data for conference papers. Try new methods and market these experiences as skills on your CV. Language also, focusing on language while doing fieldwork and even working a site into an area where language training is available was great."[This student studied language at an urban University abroad, and conducted fieldwork in outlying areas.].

(From a doctoral student): "About summer fieldwork I have two suggestions. Firstly, always apply for funding. One reason is that there are actually funding opportunities for summer travel in the department and in the university. Another reason is the application process could help you to prepare your field ahead and think through your project (literature to read, theoretical orientations, locating specific field site, etc)"

(From a doctoral student): "In retrospect, [I wish I had completed my MA during] my first summer, as those two simple letters actually do give some legitimacy to email signatures and introductions, especially during initial fieldwork. I was lucky to have had the advice from a committee member to read up on some theory, although I wish I had formulated an instrumental approach and solid reading lists...Language study over the summers helped me immensely and I advise all incoming students to seriously consider participating in some sort of language program if it is not available during the academic year. Also, initial fieldwork trips are crucial. You will feel totally lost and drowning, as it is not likely that you will have formulated any serious research questions or are going in with any cohesive research agenda. Nevertheless, it is crucial to familiarize yourself with the place and people, find some friendly contacts there and locally in Boston (you can judge whether these folks are representative or useful to the project later on; some of my earliest and initial gate-keepers are now totally peripheral and I only contact them once in a great-while). I would suggest

writing grant applications over the summer only after you have had some fieldwork experience in that place or with that group. You will have first-hand, experiential knowledge that will make for critical conversations with the literature. You will have to demonstrate your unique approach and unique questions, which will be all the more illuminating if you have some previous experience there...I was successful in my research grant applications (Fulbright, SSRC) after these initial fieldwork trips because I could show how what I am doing is something fresh and unlike what was already reported by others in the literature."

(From a doctoral student): "I felt that I would have to get to my field at least once or twice before the dissertation, as I felt I had little first-hand experience and any idea of what was happening on the ground given the scant ethnographic literature on the place. Summer was the best time to dedicate to short trips for exploratory research, with IRB approval submitted in the preceding spring. Summer also seemed to be the best time to seriously engage the fieldwork language. I unsuccessfully applied for language-training at the Boston Language Institute during my first summer, but was able to take up training in the fall via consortium agreements with an area university. The language classes turned out to be a life-changing and marvelous experience, but perhaps stretched out my student career a bit longer than usual. However, you will reap much more from a yearlong language class than one that is accelerated in a month or two in the summer."

(From a doctoral student): "I have spent every summer since my first year doing research of some sort in my fieldsite. Through 5 summers I've participated in a few different archaeological projects. The first few were about acquiring the proper skill set or learning a new technology that was relevant to me. I think all these activities ultimately helped me, but it did feel like I was circling around trying to figure out my larger doctoral project but not adding to it. This was in part because some of the leads I thought I had initially didn't pan out. That is of course part of the nature of the work but was exceedingly frustrating at the same time when I had invested so much time in writing grants or getting relevant permission to do work that ultimately will not go into my dissertation."

(From a doctoral student): "Most of my summers were spent writing and catching up on my life, i.e., family time, some travel, reading for pleasure, including anthropology texts of interest and novels. I did attend language school abroad one summer – really fun and really helpful for exam prep. I wish I had known more about summer research institutes...I would advise incoming students to take some time over summer to enjoy themselves because they are going to work very hard during school year. At the same time, I would also frame the program as a year-round endeavor with outside of classroom opportunities to advance particular interests and goals. Pre-dissertation fieldwork (which I think

more students do now than when I began) is invaluable, as well as reading/writing on a regular schedule. Several summers, I participated in study groups...The camaraderie and intellectual stimulation were validating and helped to alleviate feelings of distance from the discipline."

(From a doctoral student): "Since I knew from the beginning that my knowledge in anthropology was scant, I spent my first summer reading literature on anthropology. Professor Parmentier's list of important readings available on Latte is very helpful...As for summer research, IRB applications, and grant proposals, I found the design course very helpful. Those students who are interested in conducting fieldwork during summer should be encouraged to take the course."

I'm a doctoral student. What's the relationship between my dissertation proposal and my dissertation grants?

To begin with, please look again at Professor Ferry's detailed document about the process and intellectual purpose of writing a Dissertation Proposal:

<http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/anthro/grad/download/WritingProposal.pdf>

And when do people write their dissertation proposal? Professor Ferry writes: "I would say that four to seven months from [comprehensive] exams to dissertation proposal defense is ideal, depending on what else you need to do during that time."

The relationship between one's proposal and grants varies a good deal from one person to another. In some cases the proposal precedes the grants; in others, some grants precede the proposal; in some cases there is overlap between them. Ideally we would like each of these documents to facilitate the writing of the other(s). Please consult your committee about your own upcoming timeline/grant deadlines so that they can help you plan. In some cases, it may make sense to write a dissertation proposal in a way that closely resembles a grant proposal. However, remember that the audience for each of these is different. The dissertation proposal will be read by a quorum of five or more anthropology faculty members, and tends to provide an opportunity for faculty to provide detailed feedback on your theoretical and methodological approaches. Hence, while the proposal ought to be tightly written and thought-through, the proposal *can* also be a space in which to air some bold ideas that may not hang together perfectly; indeed, the defense can be a space in which you receive valuable suggestions about how to make your project as grant-able as possible. (I write this hesitantly, not wishing to provoke a wave of loosely conceived dissertation proposals; please be clear that you must still strive for a very

strongly argued and carefully wrought proposal.) Grant proposals, on the other hand, tend to have very strict page/word limits and absolutely no forgiveness for loose ends. *In some cases* this can lead to the need to appear somewhat more theoretically or methodologically lock-step than one would in a proposal that allows space for a bit more intellectual expansiveness.

If you would like to use your proposal draft as a draft for grant proposals, as some students do, it would be especially prudent to consult with your committee members well in advance about the timing of the process so that everything gets done in time for the grant deadline. You need mutually-agreed upon dates—ideally, fixed in all your calendars!—for when you will produce a draft, and when the faculty member(s) will be able to give you feedback in time to incorporate it into a grant proposal draft. Once the semester gets rolling it can be hard for faculty to turn things around quickly, so this kind of advance planning can help avoid rockiness.

“My grant application cycle came before the dissertation proposal itself. I had my thematic areas of interest, which largely drove me to formulate my grant applications. The broader intellectual argument/project didn’t fully formulate until after the cycle, but was definitely born from what I wrote in the grant applications. I was away in my fieldsite on language study the summer before the fall grant application cycle, so I did not have time to seriously craft a full draft proposal. The grant applications served as useful small drafts for the later proposal. I think it is better to do the grants before the proposal. The grant applications will force you to synthesize and summarize an expansive set of ideas you have in your bag to put together for the final proposal. It is better to have something concise and coherent to expand from later, rather than a large mass from which you have to whittle down a 2-10 page grant application.”

“I started writing grants my first year so my dissertation proposal obviously was just folded into the larger scheme of grant writing every year. Obviously, over the course of the years, the grants became larger and more complicated. I ended up writing my dissertation proposal at the same time as I did 2 large grants--the Wenner Gren and the SSRC--and before I wrote my NSF...[I wish I had known I could] substitute an actual grant application for one of these large national grants (Fulbright, SSRC, NSF, etc) as my dissertation proposal.”

“On comprehensive exams and dissertation proposal timing: It is easiest to start coming up with your bibliography for your exam the semester before you actually wish to take your exams in order to get it approved and track down the relevant literature. This allows you to have the whole following semester for reading towards your exam. I believe the easiest timing is to have that done by the end of the 3rd year. This should give you the background literature to write your proposal

which should really be written as a first draft by the end of September of the 4th year in order to have it be most useful towards the fall grants. "

I'm a doctoral student. What are the merits of presenting at academic conferences? And: should I aim to publish something before I've defended my dissertation?

Occasionally we have offered workshops on these topics, so keep an eye out for those opportunities for lengthier discussion of this subject and more in-depth tips.

Some thoughts on conference-going: It can be a great idea, though faculty are somewhat wary about students delivering papers so early in their trajectory (e.g. in their first and possibly second years) that their work feels "undercooked". It is important not to rush into the performance of professionalism, without tackling key analytic and interpretive problems first. If and when you feel the moment has come, you can aim for the AAAs, and/or for more specialized theory- or area-based conferences. You can also apply for funding from GSAS and GTR funds. Presenting at conferences will be a vital part of your professional life; it gives valuable practice in presenting a high-quality argument via public speaking; it often fosters valuable personal connections with other scholars; it can lead to publication opportunities; it gives you a chance to hear the up-to-the-moment thoughts and projects of other scholars, including leaders in the field. If you choose to present a conference paper, we strongly suggest you work with your peers to practice the paper and strengthen it before presenting publicly.

Some meetings are announced on the AAA website's searchable "bulletin board":

<http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/coop.cfm>

...and on the Chronicle of Higher Education's "events" site:

<http://chronicle.com/section/Events/77/>

Some thoughts on early publishing: Your first priority while in the dissertation writing phase should be completing a strong dissertation; this is the *sine qua non* of getting a job and moving forward in your career, and it is certainly possible to procrastinate this task to the point of disaster. You will eventually turn your dissertation into a book (and probably one or two articles) down the line, but focus first on completing a defensible dissertation.

That said, it is wonderful if you can come out of the gate with not only a dissertation in hand, but a short publication or two (or something "in the

pipeline”). This is impressive to prospective employers, and can make an important difference in this competitive job market. Sometimes, for instance, your Master’s paper can be developed into an article (assuming that IRB approval was given *in advance* of data collection from human subjects); sometimes an AAA (or other conference paper) can become a chapter in an edited volume that emerges from the conference panel. You may also have your eye on some field data that doesn’t fit directly into the dissertation but would make for a wonderful “bite sized” publication. If you pursue such an option, just be sure it does not divert too much time from the main prize: the dissertation.

Early publishing venues vary greatly. There are pros and cons to aiming high or low if you’re submitting to a journal. **Some pros of aiming high:** you will get feedback from very skilled reviewers, which can be really useful even if you don't get accepted; the stakes for getting rejected are low at this stage of the game; it never hurts to try and if you succeed you have a tremendous feather in your cap. **Some cons of aiming high:** the odds of having your article accepted are pretty low. **Some pros of aiming low:** you're more likely to be published; even a publication in a relatively minor journal looks very good on your CV and provides is good evidence that you are a horse that can run. **Some cons of aiming low:** if you have great material and a highly sophisticated argument, you may be underselling it and may later feel you buried it in a low-profile journal.

Here are some tips from AAA for junior scholars seeking to get started publishing:

<http://www.aaanet.org/publications/Where-can-I-publish-my-research-article.cfm>

I'm a doctoral student. What kind of literature should I be familiar with?

This is a fine question, and one that will continue to evolve throughout your career. Generally we anthropology faculty feel that you need a strong foundation in the classical literature in anthropology, AND an understanding of how longstanding questions and other, newer ones run through contemporary materials. The literature you are asked to read in your required, foundational courses and electives is obviously very important, but as a doctoral student the onus is on you to familiarize yourself with the literature relevant to your area of study and the theoretical concerns you'll bring to bear on your dissertation. An important part of the dissertation project is to engage in contemporary intellectual conversations, and you'll find as you proceed that colleagues will (increasingly) expect you to know something about the most visible intellectual debates in the discipline. Reading the abstracts in *American Ethnologist* and

American Anthropologist each month, and selectively skimming articles, can be a good start. Here are a couple of further tips from doctoral students:

"Attending advanced students' proposal defenses or dissertation defenses can help one to be familiar with the kind of literature an anthropology student should be aware of."

"Be diligent, comprehensive, and current when crafting reading lists...Find some cohort peers who are serious about your field-site or theoretical approach and have each other read and critique your lists.[K]eep abreast of relevant literature and contemporary intellectual debates. When attending conferences, I feel junior and seasoned faculty are...interested in listening to graduates students who are well read on current material (but have at least some foundation in the classics)."

MISCELLANEOUS ADVICE:

On matching your coursework to potential aspirations outside of the academy:

If you are considering a non-academic career, or a career that combines academic and applied job opportunities, we recommend you consider exploring the course offerings at Brandeis' Heller School of Social Policy and Management (located just a couple of minutes from the anthropology department). Heller offers courses in such things as research methodologies, sustainable development, international health, and statistics that can be especially helpful for those considering a more applied route. It might be good for you to have a few such courses on your CV to market yourself in a more applied fashion:

<http://heller.brandeis.edu/>

On contacting scholars outside of Brandeis:

It can sometimes be a wonderful idea to contact scholars outside of Brandeis (whether in the US or abroad) to inform them about your research or seek help. Sometimes an outside scholar ends up on a dissertation committee, to the student's great benefit. It is also considered a courtesy to contact scholars who have conducted fieldwork where you intend to pursue dissertation research. Consult with your advisor about whether and when this is appropriate in your case; usually one does not want to contact outside scholars immediately upon choosing a fieldsite, but rather to wait until one is focused and can use their advice well (as well as make a good impression).

On maximizing feedback on your grant proposal drafts:

We strongly encourage peer-review among students. Reading each other's grants can help you see strengths and weaknesses with new eyes, and can inspire with new ideas and opportunities.

When seeking faculty feedback on a grant proposal draft, it is a good idea to print out or otherwise summarize the grant proposal guidelines for the faculty member (e.g. what questions are being asked of you, in what format are you expected to respond, what is the page or word limit, and how close are you to it?). All grants are different in format, and faculty don't always know what prompts you are responding to.

On drawing up a timeline for yourself:

(From a doctoral student): "I would advise new students that they need to create a calendar for themselves about their research and their commitments to Brandeis and stick to it. Figure out how long you want to take to do the program and how you are going to complete it. In most cases, we work in places that are cheaper to live than Boston so even if you were not to receive a lot or any funding for your dissertation research year (if you decide to take that long) it might be best not to put your studies on hold but to just go and do it. I think it is particularly important to balance out a need to finish quickly with a reality check of what we're doing. It will likely be very hard to finish this program in under 6.5-7 years because of the way this one is set up."

On finding the right academic advisor and/or MA paper readers:

(From an MA student): "I find it very important to be able identify a professor one can work with who respects your ideas and is willing to support your path. Intellectual guidance and support is crucial when one is trying to develop their academic trajectory in a new setting. Beyond common interest, it is important to have a good personal communication with your advisor/ professor you will work with."

On asking for help:

(From a doctoral student): "I wish I had known that it was okay to ask for help earlier. That may sound weird but when I first arrived it seemed like I was supposed to figure it all out on my own... I think this is in part just learning to communicate...[now there are more] activities within the department which I think help give perspective to students."

On faith in yourself as an anthropologist:

(From a doctoral student): "Do anthropology reading, writing, talking almost every day. Take a break, but know this is what your life is about while in grad school and expect faculty and dept to support your endeavors to live as an anthropologist. At some point, when a student questions her worth, her direction, and her motives for pursuing this path, talk to others in the same boat now or in the past, and BELIEVE that you are worthy, have a reasonable and exciting direction, and your dreams and desires that led you to apply, to imagine yourself as an anthropologist, are real, important to your well-being, and do-able."

On further internet resources to help you feel connected:

Consider the website of the National Association of Student Anthropologists, which has links and tips for grants, publications, conference opportunities, and more:

<http://www.studentanthropologists.org/>

The Chronicle of Higher Education is replete with helpful material, from concrete data on faculty salary ranges to first-person essays about job hunting in the academy:

<http://chronicle.com/section/Home/5>

And please don't forget to explore and subscribe to updates from our **Graduate Anthropology Resource Latté site**, which includes helpful material on topics including proseminars, grants, journal readings, jobs, essay competitions, social nights, and much more.