ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Anthropology explores the dynamics and diversity of human cultures. Students have the opportunity to study social relations and inequalities, religion and world views, political economies and globalization, the connections among language and social processes, visual cultures and popular media, cultural understandings of medicine and disease, human evolution, and what we can learn about past societies through the study of material culture and the remains of the human body itself. With its focus on understanding and interpreting human diversity and group behavior, past and present, anthropology is both deeply introspective and highly applicable in business, medicine, law, education, public policy and more.

What makes the program distinctive?

Anthropology at Brandeis offers courses in the discipline’s four major subfields: social-cultural, archaeological, biological and linguistic anthropology. Students benefit from close collaboration with faculty and abundant opportunities to engage in fieldwork and to develop original research projects. The department’s emphasis on writing and in-class discussion sharpens students’ capacity for critical thinking and expression.

FAST FACTS

Current number of majors and minors: 150

Number of faculty: 10

Can you minor in this program? Yes

Emphasis within the major:
archaeology; biology; cultural, medical and psychological anthropology; gender and sexuality; linguistics; political economy and development; religion; visual systems

Popular second majors:
East Asian studies; health: science, society and policy; history; international and global studies; Latin American and Latino studies; sociology; women’s, gender and sexuality studies

Website:
brandeis.edu/departments/anthro
For 18 years before coming to college, I thought that my Indian family, with all of its fears, beliefs and superstitions, was just crazy. Then I started taking anthropology courses with this amazing department. What is so great about anthropology is that it gives us the means not only to understand diverse people’s beliefs but also to gain an appreciation for their existence.

Sandhya Narayanan ’10

Hands-on experience
Courses in field and laboratory methods offer students hands-on opportunities to conduct fieldwork within local communities, excavate archaeological sites near the Brandeis campus, and analyze ancient artifacts and skeletal remains. The materials in the archaeology lab and Material Culture Study Center provide internship and original research opportunities.

Independent student research
Jeffrey Dobereiner ’09 conducted X-ray fluorescence analysis of obsidian from the ancient Mayan site of San Bartolo, Guatemala. His study represented a key piece of research for understanding ancient trade routes in this important center of Mayan civilization. His work formed the basis of a senior honors thesis, and he pursued graduate studies at MIT before entering the PhD program in anthropology at Harvard.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Faculty awards
Recently, several faculty members have won prestigious research fellowships and awards from Fulbright, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation and National Geographic. Janet McIntosh received the Clifford Geertz Prize for her book “The Edge of Islam.”

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Thesis research
Eve Markvardt ’13 won the prestigious Doris Brewer Cohen Award in Justice and Public Life for her thesis, “Immigrant Russian Women in Helsinki: Beyond Stereotyping and Stigmatization.” In her thesis, she examined how Russian-Finnish women craft their identities as Russians, women and immigrants and grapple with Finnish stereotypes of Russian women.

Study abroad
Eli Terris ’11 studied abroad in Cameroon and says, “This was one of the most interesting, challenging and exciting academic semesters of my life. While I was in Cameroon, as little as opening my eyes felt like an intensified anthropology class; my preconceived beliefs about gender roles, religion, family and more were challenged through the act of living.” Terris served as a Peace Corp agro-forestry volunteer in Senegal through 2014.

Nonprofit work
Matt Kupfer ’12 received a Sorensen fellowship to investigate AIDS prevention efforts in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, during summer 2010. He worked for the International Research and Exchanges Board, a nonprofit organization focused on improving education and fostering civil society development in countries around the world.

AFTER BRANDEIS

Global service
Jessye Kass ’13 co-founded the Attukwei Art Foundation — an NGO providing therapeutic arts programs for children in Ghana — while a student at Brandeis. Her ethnographic research examined the ethical and political complexities of “voluntourism.” Kass recently taught English in Thailand on a Fulbright scholarship.

Journalism
Dina Fine Maron ’08 began her career as a journalist and received the 2009 Outstanding Media Award in News Reporting from the National Alliance on Mental Illness for her Newsweek piece exploring television coverage of mental illness and its impact on stigma. She is now associate editor at Scientific American in Washington, D.C., reporting on environment, energy, health, politics and culture.

Law
Anna-Lisa Macon ’12, recipient of the Betty and Harry S. Shapiro Endowed Award in Anthropology, went on to study at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Global connections
Khayam Allen ’07 received an MSc in 2008 from the London School of Economics and has since been working for the French NGO Solidarités International in Afghanistan.

Medicine
Ariel Barnehama ’13 received a paid internship while at Brandeis to work at the Weill Cornell Center for Complementary and Integrative Medicine in New York City. She is studying medicine at Jefferson Medical College.

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