Anthropology, PhD

Learning Outcomes

Disciplinary Expertise
Graduate students will gain an in-depth understanding of anthropology and the discipline’s contributions to our understanding of people and culture, in the past and present.

Skills for Independent Research
Graduate students will acquire professional and ethical research, reasoning, methodological, and management skills to identify important research problems. They also will learn how to design and execute a project, productively engage with feedback, and successfully report (via writing and presentations) the results of their independent research to diverse sets of audiences.

Teaching Contributions
Graduate students will learn how to communicate anthropological concepts and theories effectively and ethically to different audiences.

Disciplinary, Academic, and Community Contributions
Graduate students will develop service, mentoring, and leadership skills that enable them to advance and support professional, management, academic, and community needs.

Requirements
The PhD leads to the accomplishment of professional-level skills in conducting independent research, and normally features specialized training in one or two of the discipline’s subfields. Doctoral education is guided by a PhD committee composed of members of the faculty competent in the particular areas and topics chosen by a student. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.00.

The doctoral program includes an integrated process of progressively developing and completing reading lists, developing and submitting research proposals to funding agencies, developing and defending a dissertation prospectus, and writing two comprehensive exam essays. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination and the dissertation prospectus, a student advances to candidacy for the PhD. To complete the PhD, all doctoral candidates are required to conduct independent anthropological research, write a dissertation, and defend it.

For students who enter the doctoral program with an existing MA (in anthropology or a related field), the faculty develop an individualized program of study based on a student’s existing coursework and goals.

PhD students also may elect to pursue an optional concentration in either feminist anthropology or paleoanthropology.

For program requirements, refer to the current Graduate Student Guidebook on the Department of Anthropology website.

Admission

Applicants for admission to the graduate program in anthropology are considered regardless of their previous field of training. Students without previous training in anthropology are expected to perform additional work as necessary to achieve competence expected for their degree objective.

Students normally are admitted under the assumption that they intend to pursue the PhD. Students without an MA in anthropology devote the first two years to fulfilling the MA requirements. After those requirements are completed, the student’s committee may award the MA with admittance to the PhD program.

Students with an MA in anthropology from another institution may proceed directly into a PhD program organized around their special research interests. If they lack any of the requirements of the graduate program at the University of Iowa, they are informed of those requirements when admitted. Acceptance of credit hours from other institutions will follow UI regulations.

Applicants for admission to the graduate program must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

Anthropology graduate program applicants are required to upload the following documentation to the University of Iowa Graduate Admissions online application:

- official academic records/transcripts from previous institutions attended;
- a brief statement of interest or intent regarding why graduate study in the Department of Anthropology is desired;
- three letters of recommendation;
- a writing sample (preferably a research paper or MA thesis); and
- an application for graduate funding.

Applicants whose first language is not English must submit official test scores to verify English proficiency. Applicants can verify English proficiency by submitting official test scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Duolingo English Test (DET). Once recommended for admission, international students also must complete several additional requirements.

For more information concerning the required application elements, see Graduate Admissions Process on the Department of Anthropology website.

Financial Support

Financial assistance, usually in the form of teaching and research assistantships, may be offered to doctoral and potential doctoral students in good standing for up to five years. Students making satisfactory and timely progress through the graduate program are in good standing. The amount and types of aid depend on departmental needs.

Students are notified in writing of a provisional financial award before the semester or summer session for which the award has been granted. Although awards are made before the end of the previous semester, each award is contingent upon satisfactory completion of that semester’s work by the awardee.
Career Advancement

Graduates establish careers at universities, colleges, museums, healthcare institutions, and a diverse range of governmental and nongovernmental agencies. For more information, see Careers and Opportunities on the Department of Anthropology website.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

Anthropology, PhD

Course | Title | Hours
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Academic Career Any Semester
72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. a, b
Students may elect to pursue an optional concentration in either feminist anthropology or paleoanthropology; work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.
Students who are first-time teaching assistants must also complete ANTH:5001 Graduate Teaching Pro-Seminar Graduate Teaching Pro-Seminar.

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First Year

Fall
Seek Internal Review Board (IRB) Approval c
Required Theory course d
Elective course e
Elective course e

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Spring
Language Competency Requirement f
ANTH:5110 Anthropological Data Analysis
Elective course e
Elective course e

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Second Year

Fall
Elective course e
Elective course e
Elective course e

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Spring
Elective course e
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Third Year

Fall
Comprehensive Exam g

ANTH:7110 Research Design and Proposal Writing h
Elective course e
Elective course e

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Spring
Dissertation Prospectus i
Elective course e
Elective course e
Elective course e

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Fourth Year

Fall
ANTH:6015 Thesis

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Spring
ANTH:7501 Dissertation Writing Seminar
ANTH:6015 Thesis
Final Exam j

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Total Hours 72

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a A maximum of 18 s.h. of coursework outside anthropology (this includes and is not in addition to the 9 s.h. allowed at the MA level) may count towards the degree requirements; beyond the MA degree, no more than 9 additional semester hours of ANTH:6005 may count towards the PhD degree.
b Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.
c Students who conduct research involving human subjects (e.g., ethnographic research in the summer months) are required to submit a detailed application about the scope of their study and data collection methods through the HawkIRB system for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.
e Electives may include courses in other relevant study, a maximum of 18 s.h. of directed study, and dissertation credit. Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate level elective coursework and sequence.
f Students should consult with their advisor and committee and determine both existing and needed language competencies. A record of the status of, expected training in, and decisions (including waivers) related to language competency must be included in the student’s file by the time of candidacy. The Language Competency Report can be found on the department website.
g The student will prepare two comprehensive essays: one in the geographical area of specialization and the other in the primary topical area of specialization. In some subfields and for some projects, a geographical area may not be relevant, and the student will focus on two topical areas. Each paper will address a question posed by the committee in consultation with the student.
h Typically this course is offered in fall semesters only. Check MyUI for course availability since offerings are subject to change.
The dissertation prospectus should present a research question that contributes to ongoing discussions in anthropological scholarship, explain the background and significance of the question, and describe the methods that the student plans to use to answer it. The student publicly defends their prospectus before their PhD committee by the end of the final exam period of that semester. Dissertation defense.