

Core Concepts

Basic Definitions

Anthropology:	The study of humanity, encompassing its evolutionary history, present biology, society, and culture.
Culture:	The learned and shared behaviors, beliefs, and values that characterize a group of people.
Ethnography:	The systematic study of people and cultures. It is a descriptive work produced from participant observation.
Holism:	The anthropological commitment to consider the full scope of human life, including culture, biology, history, and language, across space and time.
Ethnocentrism:	The tendency to view one's own culture as superior and to apply one's own cultural values in judging the behavior and beliefs of people raised in other cultures.
Cultural Relativism:	The principle that all cultural beliefs are equally valid and that behavior in one culture should not be judged by the standards of another.

Key Approaches

Evolutionary Approach:	Focuses on the biological and cultural evolution of humans over time.
Cultural Ecology:	Studies how humans adapt to their environment and the ecological consequences of human actions.
Interpretive Anthropology:	Focuses on understanding culture as a system of meaning and symbols.
Critical Anthropology:	Examines power structures and inequalities within and between cultures.

Subfields of Anthropology

Cultural Anthropology

Examines cultural variation among humans. Focuses on understanding how people in different societies live and make meaning of their worlds. Employs ethnographic methods.
Key Topics: kinship, religion, economics, politics, art, and social change.

Archaeology

Involves the study of past peoples and cultures by excavating and analyzing material remains.
Key Topics: prehistoric and historic archaeology, cultural resource management, and heritage studies.

Biological Anthropology

Focuses on the biological and behavioral aspects of humans, their extinct hominin ancestors, and related non-human primates.
Key Topics: human evolution, primatology, human genetics, and human variation.

Linguistic Anthropology

Studies language in its social and cultural context, across space and time.
Key Topics: language acquisition, language change, sociolinguistics, and linguistic relativity.

Theoretical Perspectives

Early Theories

Unilineal Evolutionism:	The 19th-century theory that all societies pass through a series of progressive evolutionary stages.
Diffusionism:	The theory that cultural traits spread from one culture to another.
Historical Particularism:	The idea that each culture has its own unique history and development.

Later Theories

Functionalism:	The theory that all aspects of a culture serve a function and contribute to the overall stability of the society.
Structuralism:	The approach that sees culture as a system of binary oppositions and underlying structures.
Post-Structuralism:	A theoretical development that critiques structuralism, emphasizing power, discourse, and the instability of meaning.

Research Methods

Qualitative Methods

Participant Observation: Immersing oneself in a culture to gain a deep understanding of its practices and beliefs.
Interviews: Conducting structured or unstructured conversations with individuals to gather information and perspectives.
Focus Groups: Facilitating group discussions to explore specific topics and gather diverse opinions.

Quantitative Methods

Surveys: Distributing questionnaires to collect data from a large sample of individuals.
Statistical Analysis: Using statistical techniques to analyze numerical data and identify patterns and relationships.
GIS Mapping: Using Geographic Information Systems to analyze spatial data and map cultural phenomena.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: Ensuring that research participants understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study and freely agree to participate.
Confidentiality: Protecting the privacy of research participants by keeping their identities and personal information secure.
Cultural Sensitivity: Respecting the cultural values and norms of the communities being studied and avoiding harm or offense.