



CONSIDERING ANTHROPOLOGY?

A Message from the Department of Anthropology

Anthropology at Columbia is the oldest department of anthropology in the United States. Founded by Franz Boas in 1896 as a site of academic inquiry inspired by the uniqueness of cultures and their histories, the department has fostered an expansiveness of thought. Cross-cultural interpretation, global socio-political considerations, a markedly interdisciplinary approach, and a willingness to think otherwise have, from the outset, informed the spirit of Anthropology at Columbia. Boas himself wrote widely, on “pre-modern” cultures and modern assumptions, on language, on race, on religion, politics, art, performance, and much else, as did his students, including, for example, the well-known Ruth Benedict, Zora Neal Hurston, Margaret Mead, and Ella Deloria, a Dakota Sioux author trained as a linguist who also, like Hurston, was both an ethnographer and a talented novelist.

In our current times of heightened global awareness, this same spirit of mindful interconnectedness guides the department. Professors in Anthropology at Columbia and at Barnard teach and write widely--on colonialism and postcolonialism; on matters of race and issues of gender; on theories of history, knowledge, and power; on language, law, magic, mass-mediated cultures, modernity, and flows of capital and desire; on nationalism, ethnic imaginations, and political contestations; on material cultures and environmental conditions; on ritual, performance, and the arts; on symbolism and questions of representation. Anthropologists at Columbia and Barnard write across worlds of similarities and differences--concerning the Middle East, China, Africa, the Caribbean, Japan, Latin America, South Asia, Europe, Southeast Asia, the United States. We write as well of other increasingly transnational and technologically virtual conditions of being.

At the heart of anthropology is a concern with possibilities of difference, engagement in the world, and the craft of writing. Anthropology at Columbia has emerged as a particularly compelling undergraduate liberal arts major; in the last decade, the number of majors has tripled. Undergraduates now come to the Anthropology major with an astonishingly wide variety of interests, pursuing overlapping interests in, for example: the environment, performance, human rights, language and literature, religion, writing, race, law, ethnicity, mass-media, archaeology, teaching, history, art, linguistics, the environment, music, medicine, film, and many other fields of study, including geographical areas of particular interest and engagement. Such interests can be brought together into creative conversation with a major or concentration in Anthropology.

The requirements for a major in Socio-Cultural Anthropology are relatively minimal: 30 points in Anthropology courses including within these 30 points: ANTH1002 *The Interpretation of Culture*, ANTH2004 *An Introduction to Social and Cultural Theory*, and ANTH2005 *The Ethnographic Imagination*. The requirements for a concentration in Socio-Cultural Anthropology are similarly minimal: 20 points in Anthropology courses, including within these 20 points, ANTH1002 *The Interpretation of Culture*.