

Anthropology at the Pre-College Level

Introduction

Since the late 1950s, U.S. anthropologists have attempted to bring anthropology to pre-college classrooms. Initially, many of these endeavors, such as the Anthropology Curriculum Study Project (American Anthropological Association and University of Chicago), Man: A Course of Study (Education Development Center, Inc.), and the Anthropology Curriculum Project (University of Georgia) were funded by the National Science Foundation and the United States Department of Education, but as the topics of the discipline clashed with local sovereignty and conservative beliefs, large-scale funding withdrew and use of the curriculum materials dissipated. Today, there are no standardized end-of-course or equivalency exams, outside of the International Baccalaureate program, for students enrolled in anthropology. Instead, state departments and individual teachers create anthropology course curriculum and standards for their districts. As an association dedicated to researching the field of anthropology, our research on the composition of K-12 anthropology curriculum and licensure requirements for teachers contributes directly towards public dialogue and education improvement efforts. This research project is a prelude to a larger venture to improve anthropology education, resources for teachers, and possibly, the creation of anthropology standards.

To complete this search, we did not file for a formal release of relevant data, relying instead on publicly-available information including state curriculum standards, year-end evaluations, course catalogues, curriculum grids, and programs of studies. Data was selected from the most recent school year (2016-

2017) when available. In total, there are 32 states that list anthropology as a course available to secondary students. As illustrated in Figure 1, courses are offered in two formats: as part of the International Baccalaureate program or independently by states, districts, and teachers. The latter of these formats is composed of three types of course offerings: traditional electives, dual enrollments, and in one case, virtual learning.

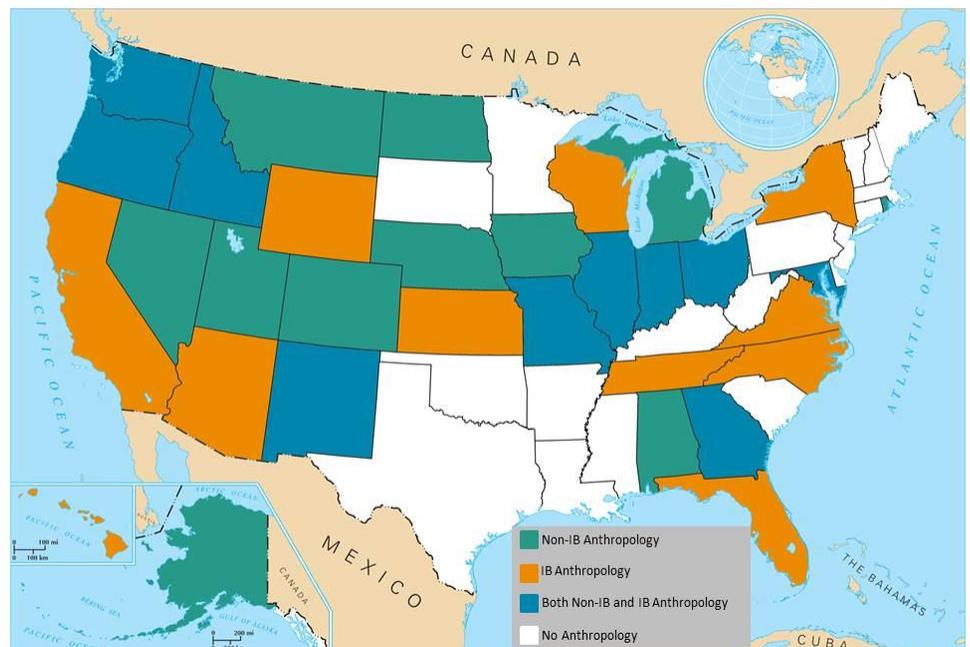


Figure 1: Anthropology courses across the nation

Anthropology as a Traditional Elective

A “traditional elective” is defined as a course that has been approved by the school district and the state department of education to be offered at public schools. In this analysis we included every state that had assigned a course code, description, and number of credits to an anthropology course.

Anthropology electives are available in 21 states and focus primarily on four-field (13 states), sociocultural (7 states), and biological/physical (3 states) anthropology, with some states offering more than one type of elective.

While these 21 states list anthropology as an approved course, rarely do they report how often these courses are offered and in which districts. Through communication with state administrators and anthropology teachers, we learned that some anthropology courses had been phased out years prior, yet remain listed as an available course on the state department website. We did not have a contact for every state; therefore, it is unknown how many of the traditional anthropology courses in this analysis are truly active. Consequently, this also means that the chance of a secondary student encountering an anthropology course at the pre-college level is likely much lower than is estimated in this report. Our current task of examining high school transcript data from the federal High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 will provide more insight on the frequency of actual anthropology course offerings and the number of students enrolled in them.

Anthropology as an International Baccalaureate Elective

The most widely used high school anthropology curriculum is offered through the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program. Tracking anthropology courses through IB is simple due to its standardization of all courses and course reporting procedures; the information below is taken from the [IB website](#).

The IB program is an international education program for students aged 3-19 years-old. To become an IB world school, candidate schools must apply for one or more of the IB program types that fit the age range and interest of their students. After being selected, individual schools determine admission requirements and procedures for prospective students. While the previous discussion of traditional electives only addressed courses available in traditional public schools, IB schools include private and charter schools as well.

To contextualize the likelihood of a secondary student encountering an anthropology course at an IB school, Table 1 compares the total number of schools in each state that have a sociocultural anthropology elective to the total number of IB schools within that same state. For example, both Wyoming and Georgia have a single IB school with an anthropology course, yet one in three IB schools in Wyoming offer anthropology, whereas this is the case in only 1% of Georgia IB schools.

Table 1 Comparison of IB schools with anthropology courses to schools without anthropology courses by US state

State	# of IB schools w/anthropology elective	Total # of IB schools	Chance of Encounter
Wyoming	1	3	33%
Idaho	1	6	17%
Oregon	6	41	15%
Virginia	11	76	14%
Kansas	1	9	11%
New Mexico	1	9	11%
Hawaii	1	11	9%
Maryland	6	66	9%
Tennessee	2	26	8%
Arizona	3	36	8%
Wisconsin	2	29	7%
Florida	10	178	6%
Missouri	1	20	5%
New York	5	105	5%
Washington	1	40	3%
Ohio	1	49	2%
Illinois	2	82	2%
California	5	207	2%
Indiana	1	42	2%
North Carolina	1	70	1%
Georgia	1	86	1%
Total	63	1191	5%

The IB sociocultural anthropology curriculum is unique in that it is one of the few models of anthropology that standardizes the course content of anthropology at the pre-college level. The elective is offered at the IB standard level (SL) and higher level (HL) and consists of the following five parts:

Table 2: IB syllabus outline. Source: [International Baccalaureate, Programmes: Social and Cultural Anthropology](#)

Syllabus components		
Part 1: What is anthropology? (SL and HL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core terms and ideas in anthropology • The construction and use of ethnographic accounts • Methods and data collection 	Students of social and cultural anthropology should be familiar with the set of core terms, the methods used by anthropologists and issues associated with the construction of ethnographic accounts.
Part 2: Social and cultural organization (SL and HL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals, groups and society • Societies and cultures in contact • Kinship as an organizing principle • Political organization • Economic organization and the 	Both SL and HL students must have an understanding of all eight themes listed in Part 2. The themes are closely interconnected and should not be taught in isolation of each other. It is important that these themes should

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> environment • Systems of knowledge • Belief systems and practices • Moral systems 	be taught in relation to ethnographic material. The teaching of the themes should emphasize patterns and processes of change in society and culture and that anthropological knowledge changes over time.
Part 3: Observation and critique exercise (SL only)	In the first six weeks of the course SL students undertake an observation and produce a written report from their field notes. About six months later they are then required to produce a critique of their written report.	
Part 4: Theoretical perspectives in anthropology (HL only)	HL students are expected to have an understanding of theoretical perspectives in anthropology, their application to ethnographic materials and their manifestation in particular historical contexts. They should be able to use these theoretical perspectives to evaluate ethnographic material.	
Part 5: Fieldwork (HL only)	HL students undertake limited fieldwork, which they plan and produce a written report of.	

Anthropology Dual Enrollment Courses

Dual enrollment programs allow students, typically juniors or seniors in high school, to take courses at their current secondary school and another academic institution like a local college or university for college credit. We did not do a comprehensive search for dual enrollment programs that included anthropology courses because they exist as agreements at the district level or for individual schools. Aside from four-field anthropology, dual enrollment anthropology courses may focus on specific topics of anthropology such as forensic anthropology, cultural resource management, environment and ecology, and regional studies, depending on course availability at the partner college or university. It is unknown whether these courses serve as substitutes for other social studies electives or if the students enrolled in these programs continue studying anthropology for their post-secondary degree; however, these areas will be of interest in future research.

Anthropology Teacher Licensure

In addition to the types of anthropology courses, state policy documents also detail the required training of anthropology teachers in public schools, who are required to abide by the state licensure and endorsement requirements for their particular subject. Private and charter school teachers follow the requirements established independently of the state, so the information below only applies to states that have non-IB anthropology electives.

Endorsement requirements for public school anthropology were divided into three categories:

- 1) **Not Listed:** licensure requirements for anthropology teachers are not clearly defined.

