

# 2017 SURVEY OF ANTHROPOLOGY GRADUATES

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## Summary

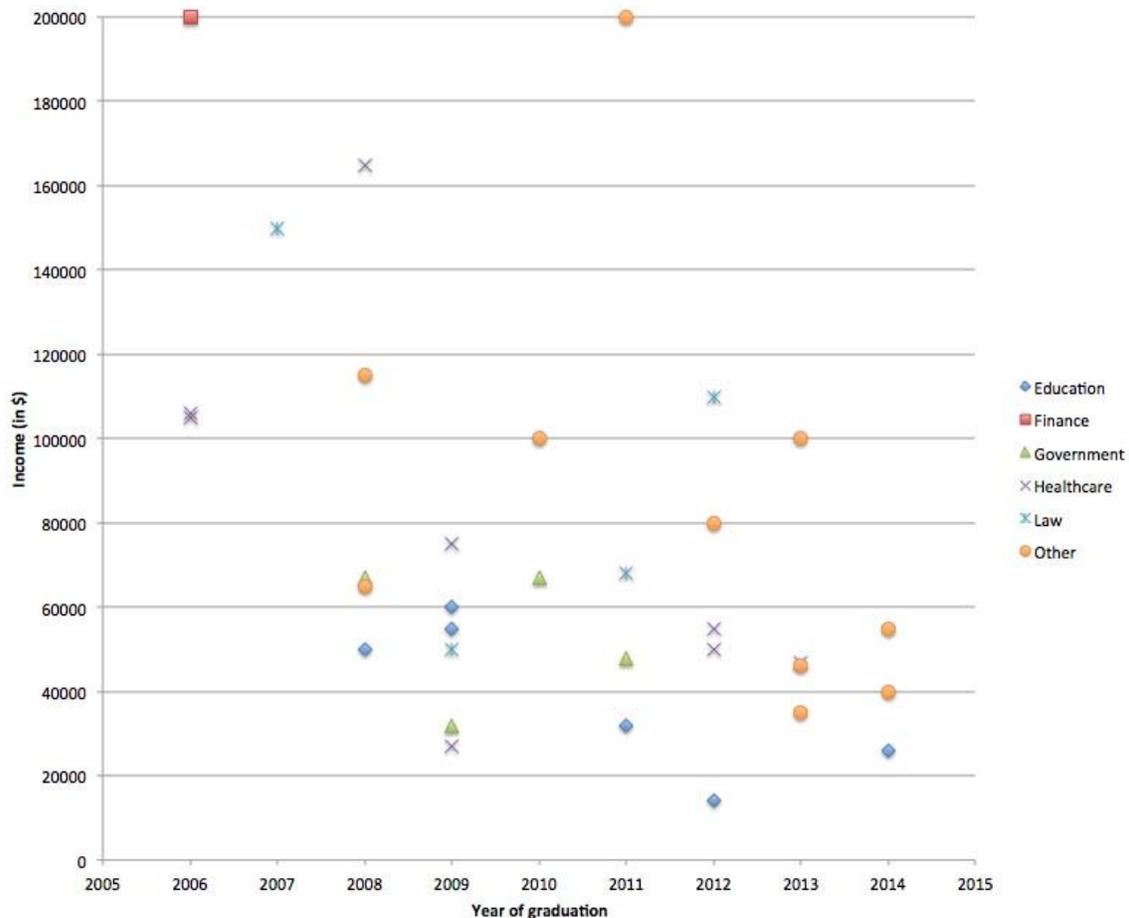
- Anonymous Spring 2017 survey of past anthropology graduates with quantitative and qualitative questions regarding the following goals:
  - (1) understanding the professional situation of anthropology graduates;
  - (2) getting their assessment of the anthropology program's usefulness;
- 44 anthropology graduates who majored between 2006 and 2016 responded to the survey (out of 226)
  - Vanderbilt's anthropology program has changed since 2006 and the responses of anthropology graduates may not reflect these changes.
- 84.1% are employed, 13.6% pursue a higher degree, only 2.3% (1 person) are unemployed
- Their annual salaries approximate the median income in the US; little evidence that anthropology graduates end up in low-paying jobs
- Almost all work outside anthropology (the exception are a CRM archaeologist and an anthropology teacher); yet, half say that their job requires anthropology skills
- Graduates highlight the following skills
  - Job-specific (e.g., physical anthropology for healthcare jobs)
  - General skills: academic writing and speaking; critical thinking / scientific method; cultural sensitivity; understanding (company) cultures
- Almost all would major in anthropology again and would recommend it as a major to current students

## Results

- With the help of Brian McCray, I surveyed the anthropology majors who graduated between 2006 and 2016 ( $N = 226$ ); of these we e-mailed 135; the survey was sent out between March 28 and May 1, 2017.
- 44 people or **32.6%** responded (between 1 and 7 from each graduation cohort); their responses are anonymous
- The survey included the following goals: (1) to understand the professional situation of anthropology graduates; (2) to get their assessment of anthropology program's usefulness. Vanderbilt's anthropology program has changed since 2006 and the responses of the graduates may not reflect these changes.

## Professional situation

- Only one person was unemployed (2.3%); 84.1% had jobs, 13.6% pursued a higher degree
- Most found jobs outside of anthropology (only 2 [5.4%] have jobs directly related to anthropology: one works in CRM archaeology the other teaches anthropology).
  - 25.6% in Education
  - 20.9% in Healthcare
  - 11.6% in Law
  - 19.4% in 'Other for profit'
  - Note: We asked only for general job categories in the survey
- Almost all employed graduates (90.7%) have jobs that require a bachelors degree and many have jobs (44.2%) that require anthropology skills. The idea that anthropology graduates end up driving cabs is false.
- Annual incomes range from \$14,000 to \$210,000 (this includes unemployed and those continuing education)
  - Median income of \$60,000 for employed graduates ( $N = 37$ ). Averages for graduates in different fields:
    - Education: \$35,400
    - Government: \$53,500
    - Healthcare: \$78,750
    - Other fields: \$81,436
    - Law: \$117,600
  - Income and graduation year correlate negatively ( $r = -0.46$ ), meaning that older graduates tend to earn more than recent graduates ( $N = 33$ ). The 2009 recession left a profound impact, though. Incomes of students who majored since 2009 have essentially flatlined ( $r = -0.08$  for  $N = 22$ ).
    - Median for employed graduates from 2006–2008: \$106,000
    - Median for employed graduates from 2009–2011: \$57,500
    - Median for employed graduates from 2012–2014: \$48,500



### Assessing the anthropology program

- **86.7%** of graduates would major in anthropology again and 88.4% would recommend to current students to major in anthropology
  - Most graduates (81.8%) double-majored: 22.2% in a language (Spanish, English, French, Russian), 19.4% in MHS, 11.1% in history and art history (tie)
- How strongly do graduates agree or disagree with the following statements (from 1 'completely disagree' to 5 'completely agree'):
  - "I had a good/accurate impression of the careers available to me after graduation:" Average of  $3.0 \pm 0.7$
  - "Faculty in the anthropology department helped me choose my career path:" Average of  $2.7 \pm 0.8$
  - "Anthropology courses gave me the necessary skills to find a job and succeed professionally:" Average of  $3.1 \pm 0.9$
- Were any particular anthropology courses helpful toward your employment? ( $N = 25$ ; the full set of answers is attached below). – I divided the answers into three groups: anthro-specific, interdisciplinary, and general skills
  - Many students list specific courses or subdisciplines:

- Bioarchaeology / physical anthropology (esp. human osteology, ancient health and disease; Biology of Inequality) – 5 graduates mention it
  - Cultural anthropology (esp. anthropology of healing, medical anthropology, human rights; Ethics in Anthropology) – 4 graduates mention it
  - Anthropology theory – 4 graduates mention it
  - Archaeology (esp. ancient cities; Empires of South America; The Inca) – 3 graduates mention it
- Discipline-specific: Healthcare professionals highlight the usefulness of medical anthropology courses; a professional archaeologist and an anthropology teacher applies their archaeology/anthropology skills (emphasizing field school opportunities); a PhD student relies on the theory class (Anth 3900)
- Interdisciplinary skills: Some students mention anthropology skills that they could apply to other disciplines; these include courses on human rights that led to a job at a civil/human rights law firm; a paper on illicit antiquities trade that was published in a law journal; a social studies teacher who uses anthropology “to teach within my content area.”
- General skills: Several students highlight the general skills that they acquired; these include critical reasoning and thinking, academic rigor, the ability to analyze and express results in writing, and the ability to navigate different communities or company cultures
- What are professionally relevant skills that you learned as an anthropology major? (N = 29; the full set of answers is attached below)
  - Scientific method (16 graduates)
    - Analyzing problems and issues through a variety of perspectives, Active Listening skills
    - Critical thinking: e.g. “Questioning and thinking outside of the box.”
    - Scientific literacy, data analysis, textual analysis: Research skills – Reading papers critically – Developing research questions – searching for research material in appropriate journals and properly citing sources – Data analysis
  - Academic writing (14 graduates)
    - *“Speaking and writing with precision” – “precise yet expressive writing skills ... and the ability to communicate findings” – “How to write an honors thesis” – “Writing skills and explaining complex ideas clearly”*
    - *“public speaking, leading productive class discussions (which isn't something many students have at the graduate level)”*
  - Cultural competence and social analysis (14 graduates)
    - cultural **relativism** and diverse viewpoints – cross-cultural sensitivity – How to understand cultural nuances – Ability to analyze people, social situations, etc. –The ability to better understand and respect other people. Cultural "economics".

- Taking a **holistic** approach to addressing issues in anthropology and in other fields
- Leslie Gill's class on **activism** and social change introduced me to activism in Nashville
- *"I think the understanding of culture and how people understand one another even in the face of cultural differences is really important in any workplace or graduate school setting."* – *"Appreciation for a wide variety of cultures"*

Specific knowledge (5 graduates)

- *Medical anthropology – "Medical knowledge - bioarch and medical anth." – "Learned a lot of basic anatomy through osteology courses which helped with med school"*
- *Excavation, skeletal analyses – experimental archaeology, project management, lithic analysis (professional archaeologist)*

Other (4 graduates)

- *Ability to work in groups and learning your strengths and weaknesses in a group setting*
- *"Not so much skills, but GREAT articles and texts that I STILL refer to, even if it just be during a discussion with a friend over a beer."*
- *Time management: managing a large work load*
- *"Liberal arts education isn't about learning and acquiring skills though, right? It's about developing your ability for curiosity, criticism, analysis. ... I still loved my anthropology major and value it greatly in shaping my development as a conscientious human being."*
- What are professionally relevant skills that you'd recommend current anthropology majors to acquire? (N = 25; the full set of answers is attached below)
  - Writing and oral presentation skills (14 graduates)
    - *"Focus on your refining on your writing skills, with an emphasis on conciseness. In the real world, few people read as much as anthropology majors; brevity is key."*
    - *Résumé writing*
    - *"I think courses that require students to lead discussions and prepare discussion questions for their peers is important in and outside academia"*
  - Critical thinking, scientific method (6 graduates) – research skills
  - Cross-cultural sensitivity (4 graduates)
    - *"People skills - cultural/linguistic studies help, but application in a business setting is the most important piece"*
  - Specific skills
    - *Second language skills (3 graduates)*
    - *Archaeology (2 graduates): Developing a skill in any statistical software or even GIS/GPS software; project management, lithic and ceramic analysis, and geophysical survey technologies.*
    - *"Navigating legal systems"*

- *“Statistics and economics”*
    - *“Understand current applications for anthropology - specifically how cultural anthropology is still relevant and studied in our own society as much as in others.”*
    - *“field school experience is important for building skills like teamwork and working in new, unfamiliar conditions”*
  - Other:
    - Initiative, confidence, humility, listening, research.
    - Networking (2 graduates)
    - Team working ability
- Would you recommend to current students to major in anthropology? Why or why not? (N = 26; the full set of answers is attached below)
  - (Non-Western) world view (8 graduates)
    - *“It shaped my view of the world” – “I actually was deeply intellectually stimulated by my anthropology courses. They taught me to think more deeply and critically. I would also say that they exposed me to new topics and ideas that I would have otherwise never learned.”*
    - *“I think the classes are great for personal growth and examining our own biases”*
    - *“I think anthropology as a major teaches students to see the world as a scientist, as a humanitarian, and as a problem-solver; I don't think any other major gives students that opportunity.”*
  - Cultural relativity, global perspective (7 graduates)
    - the major offered me a really interesting glimpse into how societies and cultures operate
  - Professional skills, professional perspective (6 graduates)
    - *“Hard to apply anthropology skills to business”*
    - *“Few jobs that don't require Master or higher, difficult to get into grad school”*
    - *“I love the subject matter and could not have enjoyed the program more! I just chose not to pursue it professionally.”*
    - *“I believe that any managerial skills are invaluable and much more "sell"able. If I were to do it again, I would probably pair Anthropology with HOD or Economics or Environmental Sciences or even English, honestly”*
    - *“If you're not interested in moving into a directly related field, it also applies well to research and other fields that require understanding current culture and trends”*
    - *“Helped give a great background for grad school”*
  - Interdisciplinary (5 graduates)
    - *“Cross-compatible skill set makes Anthropology majors universally employable in all fields”*
    - *“There is no other subject that transcends all other disciplinary boundaries like anthropology.”*
    - *“I liked that it was so broad and combined my interests in culture, science, archaeology, and linguistics”*
  - Critical thinking (4 graduates), research, writing, and presentation skills

Great department (3 graduates)

- *"The department was a community of people I admired and was excited to learn from and with"*
- *"The teachers, the classes, the subject matter, it is all so interesting"*
- *"I loved every minute of my Anthropology classes and am still close friends with people in my major and some of my professors"*

## Extended answers

### Were any particular anthropology courses helpful toward your employment?

- All archaeology based courses (employed as a professional archaeologist).
- All classes taught by Prof. Fischer.
- All of my anthropology courses helped develop my critical reasoning and thinking skills that are essential for any profession.
- All of my anthropology courses were relevant towards my employment
- All of my Cultural Anthropology course were helpful - particularly for approaching and working with different communities
- Anthropology Theory, Ancient Cities
- Anthropology of Healing and Medical Anthropology with Professor Conklin were integral towards how I view direct patient care delivery and thereby developing my practice as a nurse.
- Bioarchaeology
- Cultural anthropology - as a consultant I had to understand and adapt to company cultures regularly.
- History and theory
- Human Osteology, Anthropological Theory, Ancient health and disease
- I focused my studies on human rights, which led me to a job at a civil/human rights law firm. Dr. Gill was especially helpful to me and let me sit in on her graduate class on human rights.
- I found most of my cultural anthropology courses helpful in navigating work culture in general. My medical anthropology courses are particularly useful in my work in healthcare and health technology. For technology in particular, understanding how people are culturally different and why they do or don't engage or understand how wellness and well-being are presented is very helpful.
- I now teach Anthropology so all of them, especially the field school opportunities
- Intro to Biological Anthropology, Human Osteology, Empires of South America, Intro to Archaeology, The Inca, Ethics in Anthropology, Archaeology
- Medical anthropology
- My archaeology classes-I actually wrote a paper that was published by a legal journal while in law school about the sale of illicit antiquities at auction houses. The publication of this article helped in my job search.
- N/A
- Not any specific class

- Not directly because I am a physician
- Not directly. Freelancing in the film industry now. Indirectly, yes! Everything I learned, practiced, and developed in the anthropology major would be helpful and applicable to most employment options.
- Only marginally, in classes with a historical component
- Osteology
- Osteology, Biology of Inequality
- The ones that also overlapped with the MHS major, since I now have a career in public health.
- The theory class, but only because it gave me a foundation for continuing to learn about theory at a PhD level.
- While I do not rely specifically on anthropology coursework in my employment (entertainment industry), I believe that the emphasis on academic rigor in the department honed my abilities to think critically and express analysis in a meaningful way. This has absolutely helped me in my career.
- Yes; as a social studies teacher the broad knowledge inquired through anthropology assisted in my knowledge and ability to teach within my content area.

### **What are professionally relevant skills that you learned as an anthropology major?**

- Ability to analyze people, social situations, etc. Medical knowledge - bioarch and medical anth.
- Academic writing, archaeological and scientific method, experimental archaeology, project management, lithic analysis.
- analysis, communication, cross-cultural sensitivity
- Analyzing problems and issues through a variety of perspectives, Active Listening skills, Ability to work in groups and learning your strengths and weaknesses in a group setting, Speaking and writing with precision,
- Appreciation for a wide variety of cultures
- Critical thinking, precise yet expressive writing skills, data analysis and the ability to communicate findings
- Critical thinking, written communication, critical analysis
- Critical thinking; writing skills; searching for research material in appropriate journals and properly citing sources. Not so much skills, but GREAT articles and texts that I STILL refer to, even if it just be during a discussion with a friend over a beer.
- Cultural competence/sensitivity
- cultural relativism and diverse viewpoints
- Developing research questions, managing a large work load, public speaking, leading productive class discussions (which isn't something many students have at the graduate level), taking a holistic approach to addressing issues in anthropology and in other fields
- Excavation, skeletal analyses, critical thinking and writing
- How to understand cultural nuances.
- How to write an honors thesis and analyze human remains

- I made a video while doing research with Tiffany Tung in Ayacucho the summer before my sophomore year, which was one of my first experiences in film production. Leslie Gill's class on activism and social change introduced me to activism in Nashville, which overlapped with many of the film projects I worked on in which I learned the skills I have today in film production. Liberal arts education isn't about learning and acquiring skills though, right? It's about developing your ability for curiosity, criticism, analysis. Most of what I know about film production and cinematography I taught myself or learned on the job. I still loved my anthropology major and value it greatly in shaping my development as a conscientious human being.
- I think the understanding of culture and how people understand one another even in the face of cultural differences is really important in any workplace or graduate school setting.
- Interacting with people of different cultures and backgrounds
- Learned a lot of basic anatomy through osteology courses which helped with med school. Learned cultural competency, helpful for patient interactions.
- Mainly just improved writing skills
- Medical anthropology
- N/A
- Open mindedness, willingness to abandon status quo
- Questioning and thinking outside of the box.
- Reading papers critically
- Research skills
- Research, problem solving, writing skills, along with cultural insight and an ability to build an understand of my students and their background.
- Research, writing, seeing things from multiple perspectives, cultural sensitivity, linguistic analysis, problem solving
- Scientific literacy, data analysis, textual analysis
- See above.
- Strong writing and communication skills, ability to be consider different view points
- The ability to better understand and respect other people. Cultural "economics".
- Writing skills and explaining complex ideas clearly

### **What are professionally relevant skills that you'd recommend current anthropology majors to acquire?**

- A second language
- Academic writing, archaeological and scientific method, project management, lithic and ceramic analysis, and geophysical survey technologies.
- Although the department requires a great deal of writingâ€”it allows students the ability to explore their own inquires, and express their knowledge in a respectful and nurturing environment.
- Being able to appreciate people with different cultural backgrounds
- Critical thinking, presentation skills
- Cultural competence, writing skills, listening
- focus on research if you have even a small desire to explore that field.

- Focus on your refining on your writing skills, with an emphasis on conciseness. In the real world, few people read as much as anthropology majors; brevity is key.
- Having since transplanted to France and being in the midst of a very challenging job hunt in the European market, absolutely developing language skills is a must. Along with that, oral communication and presentation. Developing a skill in any statistical software or even GIS/GPS software (which I recall Vandy having the lab but I never took advantage of this) would make me a much more competitive candidate now.
- How to understand cultural nuances.
- Initiative, confidence, humility, listening, research.
- N/A - since my professionally relevant skills come from my Master of Public Health degree
- Navigating legal systems
- Networking
- Networking, resume writing, foreign language
- People skills - cultural/linguistic studies help, but application in a business setting is the most important piece
- Presentation/public speaking
- Proficiency in reading and writing, Writing precisely, Ability to approach an issue or situation from multiple perspectives, respect for the views of others even if (especially if) you disagree, working in groups and learning your strengths and weaknesses in a group setting
- Same as above
- See next answer.
- Statistics and economics
- Strong writing skills, communication skills
- Understand current applications for anthropology - specifically how cultural anthropology is still relevant and studied in our own society as much as in others.
- Whether or not they decide to go into an academic career, field school experience is important for building skills like teamwork and working in new, unfamiliar conditions. Learning how to read critically and write are imperative, so taking courses that require students to write research papers is important. I think courses that require students to lead discussions and prepare discussion questions for their peers is important in and outside academia: many students leave universities without ever having to give a presentation or lead discussions in their classes, and those are skills they will certainly need.
- Writing
- Writing skills

### **Would graduates recommend anthropology as a major? Why or why not?**

- with a caveat - I don't think it's a particularly useful degree on its own, but I really enjoyed my classes and I think the classes are great for personal growth and examining our own biases

- Cross-compatible skill set makes Anthropology majors universally employable in all fields.
- It shaped my view of the world.
- Hard to apply anthropology skills to business
- I actually was deeply intellectually stimulated by my anthropology courses. While the content may not be relevant to my current career path, I would say that my worldview was heavily shaped by my anthropology courses. They taught me to think more deeply and critically. I would also say that they exposed me to new topics and ideas that I would have otherwise never learned. I also found them to be a nice reprieve from my heavier science coursework.
- There is no other subject that transcends all other disciplinary boundaries like anthropology. Students who are taught to think like an anthropologist trains them to see the variety of ways people around the world in the present, and in the past, address the issues that face their society. I think anthropology as a major teaches students to see the world as a scientist, as a humanitarian, and as a problem-solver; I don't think any other major gives students that opportunity.
- I think the major offered me a really interesting glimpse into how societies and cultures operate, and that perspective has enhanced my education and worldview.
- Yes - even if they don't intend to pursue anthropology post-graduate degrees, having an understanding of critical thinking and global perspectives will help in any field.
- Yes - however, get a second major or masters as well if you want to enter the corporate world
- I think it was a really interesting major and I liked that it was so broad and combined my interests in culture, science, archaeology, and linguistics.
- The intellectual curiosity and understanding of a wide variety of populations and worldviews is incredibly useful and applicable in most global fields.
- Few jobs that don't require Master or higher, difficult to get into grad school
- Anthropology was fundamental to shaping my worldview. I learned
- The department was a community of people I admired and was excited to learn from and with. Even if a student is not necessarily planning to remain in academia (like myself), the material allows students to make connections and explore their place in the world. The skills acquired through research, writing, and classroom debates can be used in any professional setting.
- I love the subject matter and could not have enjoyed the program more! I just chose not to pursue it professionally.
- To provide a different perspective on how you and others live their lives
- My background in anthropology helped me understand that no one comes from a cultural vacuum and that every culture has value. If more people understood this, our society would probably be in a more empathetic and compassionate state right now.
- Its a great liberal arts foundation that provides a strong interdisciplinary skill set

- I say yes tentatively. For anyone planning on working abroad, I believe that any managerial skills are invaluable and much more "sell"able. If I were to do it again, I would probably pair Anthropology with HOD or Economics or Environmental Sciences or even English, honestly. Again, as someone in the midst of a stressful job hunt in the European market, many jobs available to Americans are favoring business majors, English majors, and finally I have found a couple energy-related jobs that could have been interesting but for which I could have made a more compelling application with some environmental sciences background. I really believe that is the future.
- Helped give a great background for grad school
- The teachers, the classes, the subject matter, it is all so interesting
- I chose to be an anthropology major because I love the field and enjoyed studying it. If you're not interested in moving into a directly related field, it also applies well to research and other fields that require understanding current culture and trends - relates well to social psychology and organizational psychology.
- I loved every minute of my Anthropology classes and am still close friends with people in my major and some of my professors
- helps you understand human societies and interactions
- I never used my anthropology degree, but if a student is interested in anthropology, I wouldn't discourage it.
- Anthropology taught me so much about the world, people, power, history, culture, and the the connections between all these things.
- Because it gives non-Western perspectives on the world