



Modules

- SANL112: Introduction to key concepts in social anthropology
- SANL122: Introduction to themes in social anthropological research
- SANL213: Medical Anthropology
- SANL223: The anthropology of film and media (Potchefstroom Campus only)
- SANL225: Urban Anthropology
- SANL315: Theory, Ethnography and Representation
- SANL323: Globalisation and the power dynamics of exchange and belonging



Subject Group Leaders



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Faculty of Humanities
Social Anthropology





Why study social Anthropology

Social anthropology is a popular social science because it can be applied in many ways. The reason for this lies in its history. Initially, anthropologists studied non-Western societies to understand how people differ from each other and what characteristics are common to people across the globe. This project required anthropologists to study societies holistically. To do so, anthropologists had to establish themselves in a number of academic fields. These included politics, religious studies, economics, family dynamics, mythology and material culture. No single aspect of society could be emphasised, as was done by social scientists studying Western societies. Through this approach to non-Western societies, anthropologists gained an understanding of societies as complex, even confusing, networks of relationships between overlapping and conflicting powers and interests.



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Career opportunities

Today, anthropologists are increasingly sought after in the private sector as markets expand into social contexts that companies do not understand well. Many anthropologists, thus, find work in large companies, such as Microsoft, IBM and McDonald's, where they do 'corporate ethnography'.

For instance, they study the interfaces between people and technology such as how the use of cell phones and computers differs from place to place. Anthropologists, thus, help to develop products and marketing campaigns suited to social structures and cultural systems in emerging markets. In this regard, social anthropologists have begun to assume the role of traditional market researchers. According to Cathleen Craine of LTG Associates, social anthropology's approach fits well with the business world, which is becoming increasingly complicated and multi-faceted. This is because social anthropology does not consider a project or product in isolation. Anthropologists, rather, work to describe the political, economic, social, linguistic and cultural contexts within a particular product or service is to be incorporated into everyday lives. "When an anthropologist is included in a research group, it is like changing from a black-and-white to colour TV," says Crain. "We are able to identify shades of colour unnoticed by others. Anthropologists grasp complicated systems and can help to work out answers that reflect that complexity."

Social anthropology, therefore, offers a range of skills that will complement any career path. It offers the opportunity for you to become an expert observer able to identify and understand the complicated processes of everyday problems and human relationships in society. You will be able to analyse, describe and integrate these processes into plans of action. You will consequently develop insight and social imagination that will be extremely useful in your chosen career.



Sites of delivery

Potchefstroom
Vanderbijlpark

