

Anthropology Program Writing Plan

1. What does your discipline value in written communication?

Anthropologists write to communicate information about their findings, both to other anthropologists and to the wider public. They value detail and precision, fluency in the terminology of the discipline, and clarity. In two of anthropology's subfields, cultural and linguistic anthropology, narrative skill is particularly valued. In the other two, archaeology and biological anthropology, straightforward and scientific prose is preferred. Whether enumerating qualitative or quantitative evidence, anthropologists value persuasiveness on the basis of evidence.

2. What kind of texts do scholars and practitioners in your discipline create?

As a group, anthropologists write articles, books, article and book reviews, field reports, professional presentations, grant applications, and grant reports. Anthropologists working outside of academia often write reports that differ in style from the genres listed above. Cultural and linguistic anthropologists, archaeologists, and some biological anthropologists keep field notes, the basis for their published texts.

3. What kinds of skills or experiences help them to learn to write in those ways?

Anthropologists learn to write scholarly pieces, including articles and books, by reading these writings and by practicing their conventions in class assignments, such as research papers. They may also be trained to write field notes, but they often learn and refine this skill in the course of fieldwork. Practicing anthropologists outside of academia learn to write reports for external audiences on the job, although for a new generation, some training may be provided in applied anthropology programs.

4. What courses or assignments are best suited to giving students access to and practice in these skills and experiences?

In ANT-215, students learn to write field notes, literature reviews, and reports through class assignments based on fieldwork projects. Class work includes practice in paraphrasing and citation and training in the Chicago citation style.

In ANT-450, students learn to write annotations of texts and gain practice in persuasive writing through a research paper assignment. Class work includes practice in paraphrasing and citation and training in the Chicago citation style.

In the 400-level ANT topics courses (484, 486, 488), students learn through essays and research papers to write evidence-based persuasive academic pieces.