



# Social Anthropology

## Making the familiar strange, and the exotic familiar

"An Otago Anthropology degree gave me knowledge, skills and a more holistic perspective to analyse complex social issues. This is invaluable for my work with community and government organisations, evaluating social programmes."

Sue Carswell BA(Hons) PhD  
Research and Evaluation Consultant  
(Specialising in Criminal Justice)

Social Anthropology explores the cultural grounding of social life. By studying people who are 'not like us' – from whichever group of people it is that 'we' as researchers might belong – anthropologists learn about the surprising differences in everyday living around the world.

Otago offers a range of interesting and challenging study options within Social Anthropology. Visit our webpage to see our courses in Pacific cultures, friendship, reproduction and kinship, the anthropology of money, rites of passage, death studies, health studies, sex, cultural politics, religion and the supernatural, and anthropological technique and theory.

Learn about other groups of people and, in the process, find out more about yourself.

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## Why study Social Anthropology?

Anthropology will broaden your understanding of the human condition and how this is changing around the world. What are the patterns by which people organise their lives? How do ideas of difference and sameness come about? How does the movement of people through a globalised world impact the meaning and experience of culture and our sense of belonging and heritage?

Anthropologists ask questions about human variation and human differences. They study issues that affect different societies, such as changing economic and political arrangements of power, sustainable living alternatives, the tensions around community inclusion and exclusion, and the contributions of local revivals, resurgences and resistance to our changing worlds.

Anthropology gives you the academic tools to create meaningful connections with a wide diversity of people. You will learn to engage with cultural groups ethically and explain social life through systematic questioning and critical analysis.

## Background required

There are no specific subjects you need to have studied at school in order to study Anthropology.

## Career opportunities

A Social Anthropology degree provides broad-based training that can lead to a wide range of careers. Students acquire a high level of expertise in sought-after skills. These include problem-solving, analysis of information, research and writing skills, emotional and ethical intelligence, independent thinking, project management, and expertise in audio-visual presentations.

Graduates in social anthropology find work in museums, as policy advisors for the government or local bodies, in community development, the police force, and project co-ordination and management for non-governmental organisations such as Volunteer Service Abroad.

Other interesting careers include journalism, film and media industries, foreign affairs, international aid, teaching, tourism, working with refugees, disaster relief, management, historic preservation, social impact assessment, environmental management – the list is almost endless.

There are also opportunities for pursuing careers specifically in Anthropology, such as working in universities, museums, consultancy, applied research, which require further postgraduate training after finishing the BA.

## Social Anthropology at Otago

Anthropology has been taught as a major for the Bachelor of Arts (BA) since 1966. The major normally takes three years and requires a minimum of nine papers in the subject, out of 20 papers for a BA. We also offer our graduate students a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts, which are both one-year courses available following the completion of a BA. Those students who do not want to major in Anthropology can pick up some anthropology papers as part of their degree, or do a minor in the subject, which requires a minimum of five papers.

Two first-year papers provide an introduction to Anthropology:

### ANTH 103 Introduction to Anthropology

An introduction to the fundamental concepts and history of general anthropology, including archaeology and social anthropology.

### ANTH 105 Global and Local Cultures

Being human, and humane, in a world where worlds collide. An introduction to cultural studies of globalisation, multiculturalism, tourism, media.

At the second- and third-year levels of the degree, you will begin to specialise in the areas of social anthropology that interest you the most, drawing on the specialisations and research interests of our internationally recognised lecturing staff.

Topics include Pacific societies, current issues in anthropology, and the ethics, politics and practice of ethnographic representation, a chance for 'hands-on' learning through

immersion in the ongoing friendship research project, cultural politics, grieving and ritual, new reproductive technologies, the anthropology of money, the study of religion and the supernatural, and ideologies of health.

These subjects lead to our strong postgraduate programme, which offers papers in the Anthropology of Evil, Transnationalism, Medical Anthropology, Anthropology and the Past, and independently studied research dissertations. Students may then continue to a Master of Arts or a PhD.

## Teaching style

Our programme offers a relaxed intellectual exchange with staff dedicated to good learning outcomes for students. All of our staff are active researchers and award-winning teachers who incorporate their research findings into their teaching.

## Double major/degree options

It is possible to qualify with an Anthropology degree in which all of the papers are social anthropology, although we recommend taking some archaeology papers.

In addition, some useful double major options include History, Classics, Politics, Film and Media Studies, Māori Studies, Pacific Studies, Languages, Gender, Sociology, Criminology, and Religious Studies. Social Anthropology (because of its diverse subject area) also combines well in double degrees with subjects in Commerce, Law, Science and Health Sciences.

## Student exchange

The University of Otago has exchange agreements with more than 70 institutions in over 30 countries. If your marks average B or better, you may qualify to attend one of these institutions for one semester or one year. Exchange programmes are particularly beneficial to Anthropology students for the learning experience of deep immersion into another culture.

## PROFILE

### Edward Ennion-Dickison

BA, Anthropology and Politics (majors), TESOL (minor)

"Social Anthropology offers a fantastic opportunity to combine your interests with your study because it encompasses such a wide array of topics; during my degree I analysed and wrote about subjects as varied as superhero comics, money laundering and hip hop. I felt encouraged to make my studies relevant to my own experience, and I was able to research topics linked to Africa and the African Diaspora at a time when I was exploring my own Afro-Caribbean identity.

I didn't know what to expect from Otago, even having gone to school in Dunedin. I feel like the transition from high school to university opened up an entirely different range of experiences. The most significant of these was the opportunity to study abroad for a year in Brazil and the US.

One piece of advice to anyone thinking about studying at Otago would be to try many different subjects and papers in your first year.

While I knew from the start that I wanted to follow the Anthropology path, I included Linguistics, Politics and Music papers in my first year, and that range helped me decide on Politics as my second major and TESOL for my minor.

I'm about to start a graduate policy role at the Ministry of Social Development through the Ministry for Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme. The programme is open to graduates from a range of degree backgrounds, and aims to provide an entry pathway into the public service for skilled graduates from a range of ethnic communities in New Zealand. I'm most looking forward to getting to know and develop professionally alongside the other members of my graduate cohort. And I very much feel the placement I am about to undertake will use the skills I developed during my time studying at Otago."



For questions about  
Anthropology  
[otago.ac.nz/anthropology](https://otago.ac.nz/anthropology)

