

Careers in Archaeology

What jobs are available for archaeologists?

Professional archaeologists work for universities, colleges, museums, the federal government, state governments, in private companies, and as consultants. They teach, conduct field investigations, analyze artifacts and sites, and publish the results of their research. The minimal educational requirement to work as a field archaeologist is a B.A. or B.S. degree with a major in anthropology or archaeology and previous field experience (usually obtained by spending a summer in an archaeological field school or participating as a volunteer, see question 5). While this is sufficient to work on an archaeological field crew, it is not sufficient to move into supervisory roles. Supervisory positions require a graduate degree, either an M.A./M.S. or a Ph.D.

Academic Positions. Academic institutions in the U.S. can be broadly divided into three groups: 1) universities (with graduate programs); 2) colleges (undergraduate programs leading to B.A./B.S. degrees); and 3) community colleges (two year programs leading to Associates degrees). A Ph.D. is required for faculty positions at colleges and universities. An M.A./M.S. is required for community college positions. Faculty teaching loads vary among these three groups. University faculty teach graduate courses, upper level undergraduate courses (for anthropology or archaeology majors), and introductory level courses. College faculty teach upper level undergraduate courses and introductory level courses. Community college faculty teach introductory level courses (and sometimes a few upper level courses). Requirements to obtain research funds and publish research results are highest in universities and lower in community colleges. Laboratory facilities are greater in universities than in community colleges. Most faculty positions are nine month appointments. During the summer, academic archaeologists conduct field research funded by grants or contracts, teach summer school, teach summer field schools, or work as private consultants. Research funds come from the archaeologist's school, from federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and from private foundations such as the National Geographic Society, Wenner-Gren, Earthwatch, and others. Within colleges and universities archaeologists are found in departments of anthropology, archaeology, art history, architecture, classics, history, and theology.

Museum Positions. Museums may be connected with a university or independent. Museum curators conduct research, publish the results, give public presentations, prepare displays, and conserve the museum collections. Museum positions require a graduate degree (M.A./M.S. or Ph.D.). Museum positions are usually full-year appointments.

State and Federal Government Positions. Many archaeologists work for the federal government. The U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have about 800 archaeologists among them. Many archaeologists also work for state government agencies. Every state has a State Historic Preservation Office with one or more archaeologists on staff. In addition, other archaeologists work in state parks departments, highway departments, and water resource departments. Some cities also hire archaeologists to handle local ordinances protecting archaeological sites. Federal

and state laws that protect the environment include protection for important archaeological sites. As a result the government is involved in managing archaeological sites on federal and state lands (parks, forests, etc.). Construction projects often require archaeological surveys to locate prehistoric or historic sites and the excavation of some sites before construction can begin. Federal and state archaeologists are involved in making these decisions and supervising the archaeologists who perform the work. This kind of archaeology is called cultural resources management (CRM). Most government positions require an M.A. degree.

Private sector archaeologists. Archaeologists also work for firms that conduct the CRM investigations required by law. They may work for laboratories or centers within colleges and universities, for engineering and environmental companies, for companies specializing in archaeological investigations, or as private consultants. Positions in CRM work require an M.A. to have a supervisory role. Private sector archaeologists conduct archaeological surveys to locate prehistoric and historic sites. They also excavate significant sites prior to their destruction by construction activities. Private sector archaeologists work in the field, in the laboratory analyzing the results of their field investigations, in the office writing reports on those investigations and preparing proposals to conduct additional work. These organizations also hire field archaeologists as temporary staff to assist with the field investigations. Field positions usually require a B.A. degree and previous field experience in an archaeological field school.

Most non-teaching jobs in anthropology are in the areas of: archaeology, applied anthropology, public anthropology, environmental anthropology, and medical anthropology. Some anthropology graduates use their Bachelor's degree in Anthropology to get jobs in anthropology and related fields:

- Museums
- Archaeology companies
- Historic preservation offices
- Libraries
- Archives
- Art galleries
- Zoos
- Parks and historic sites
- Community centers
- International development agencies
- Ethnic and cultural organizations
- Antique and collectibles shops
- Environmental organizations
- Social service agencies
- Refugee/immigrant services
- Federal/state/local/tribal government
- Colleges and universities
- Teaching
- Law
- Police work and forensics
- Military human terrain projects
- Travel
- Documentary film making
- Photography
- Environmental impact assessment
- Social impact assessment
- Diversity training
- Translating and interpreting
- Bilingual education
- Cultural brokerage
- International business
- Management
- Marketing
- Personnel (Human Resources)
- Public relations
- Public administration
- Politics
- Medical and health-related jobs
- Genetics counseling
- Fund-raising
- Consulting
- International diplomacy
- Mission organizations
- Women's organizations
- Publishing
- Media
- Scientific and creative writing
- and so much more...

What to do with a degree in anthropology

Anthropology graduates enter a variety of professions and their employability will no doubt increase as the world becomes ever more globalized.



Anthropologist Margaret Mead, centre. Photograph: Guardian

Ask people to picture an anthropologist and many will come up with someone like Bruce Parry who, in the BBC2 series *Tribe*, sampled life among indigenous peoples all over the world to study their cultures.

While this in-at-the-deep-end approach to anthropology still exists, most graduates go on to careers that differ greatly from this stereotype (it is perhaps no surprise to discover Parry isn't actually a trained anthropologist). Indeed, the subject is so wide-ranging that you may only have touched upon this kind of research while at university.

Due to the broad nature of the topic, there is no obvious career path as there is with, say, law or accountancy. Graduates enter a variety of professions and their employability will no doubt increase as the world becomes ever more globalized.

As the American anthropologist Margaret Mead (pictured) said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." As an anthropology graduate, you may be in a better position than many to be part of such an influential group.

What skills have you gained?

Anthropology has been described as the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences.

However, course contents will often vary between universities according to the biological or social focus of your degree. All will have equipped you with a set of analytical skills that may be applied to many different jobs.

Obviously, anthropology graduates also have high cultural awareness.

What jobs can you do?

"Careers where this knowledge is in demand include social and market research, government and international development," says Margaret Holbrough, a careers adviser at Graduate Prospects.

Of the anthropology graduates who left university in 2008, 51% were in employment after six months in a diverse range of careers such as advertising and sales (8%), business and finance (6%) and public or private sector management (12%). However, a large number were working in catering (15%) or in clerical roles (20%) – no doubt a reflection of the current scarcity of graduate-level jobs.

Anthropology graduates also commonly pursue careers in the civil service, conservation and heritage management. "Working for charities and museums, or lecturing, would also be potential options," adds Holbrough.

Postgraduate study?

Only a tiny proportion of graduates become anthropologists, as academics or researchers. However, a relatively high number of 2008 anthropology graduates did go on to further study (21%). Courses chosen by recent graduates include law, industrial relations, teaching, journalism, criminology and marketing.

Some students go on to study for master's degrees in areas such as visual or medical anthropology, while others pursue related disciplines such as sociology and economics. Vocational courses such as counseling, health and social work are also popular.