Anthropology 101 Introduction Lecture

1. Anthropology is the scientific study of the origins, the behavior and the physical, social, cultural development of humans. It is the study of humankind, past and present, in all its aspects especially human culture or human development.

2. Anthropology is a very broad scope social science discipline. In fact, its broad scope is a defining characteristic of anthropology. Anthropology’s broad scope is evident in the sorts of questions that interest anthropologists. For example, questions might be, what makes humans different from other animals? Is there such a thing as human nature and if so, what is it like? How and why do human groups differ, both biologically and culturally? Why have human cultures changed so much in the last 10,000 years? How are people who live in industrialized urbanized nations different from “traditional” or “indigenous” people? We want to know why many Canadians and Australians like beef, which devout Hindus and Buddhists refuse to eat.
3. In short, anthropologists of one kind or another are liable to investigate almost everything about human beings: our evolution, our genes, our emotions, our behaviors, how people organize their living, our language, our religion, our behaviors and so forth. A good way to emphasize anthropology’s broad scope is to say anthropologists are interested in all human beings – whether living or dead, Asian or African or European—and that anthropologists are interested in many different aspects of humans, including their technologies, family lives, political systems, religions and languages. No place or time is too remote to escape the notice of anthropologists. No dimension of humankind from skin color to dress customs falls outside the anthropologist’s interest.

4. Because anthropology is such a broad discipline, no single anthropologist can master the entire field. Therefore, modern anthropologists specialize in one of the five subfields: archaeology, biological or physical anthropology, anthropological linguistics, and applied anthropology.
5. The word anthropology often calls to mind “Indiana Jones” character—an archaeologists digging in the earth. **Archaeology is the investigation of human past by excavating and analyzing human remains.** The goal of Archaeology is the reconstruction of human life ways in the past. Because it researches the many ways human life has changed over the centuries and millennia, archaeology has much in common with history. It differs, however, in its methods and, to some extant its goals. Modern archaeology is subdivided into two fields: prehistoric and historic archaeology.

6. **Prehistoric Archaeology is the study of ancient pre-literate cultures**—those that never kept written records of their activities, customs and beliefs.

Although prehistoric peoples lacked writing, some information about their way of life can be recovered from tools, pottery, ornaments, bones, plant pollen, charcoal and other materials they left behind, in or around the ground. Through careful excavation and laboratory analysis of such material remains, prehistoric archaeologist reconstruct the way people lived in ancient times and trace how human cultures have changed over centuries and even over millennia.
7. Contrary to the impression given by much North American media, the main goal of digging a particular site is not to recover valuable treasures and other artifacts. The goal is to understand how people of a particular place lived long ago.

8. To learn about people of the past who lived in literate societies, historians use written records such as diaries, letters, land records, newspapers, and tax collection documents. The growing field of Historic Archaeology supplements such written materials by excavations of houses, stores, plantations, factories, and other historic structures. For example, the cover story of the April 16th, 2001 issue of Time magazine was “What Jesus Saw: Jerusalem Then and Now.” Historic archaeologists worked with other scholars to reconstruct life in ancient Jerusalem, providing hard data on living conditions and other topics lacking in written records.

9. Many archaeologists today are employed not in universities but in museums, public agencies, and for profit corporations. State highway agencies employ archaeologists to conduct surveys of proposed new routes in order to locate and excavate archaeological sites that will be destroyed.
10. Another source of employment for archaeologists are the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service who hire archaeologists to find sites on public land so that the appropriate parties can make decisions about the preservation of cultural remains.

11. Those who work in the growing field of *cultural resource management* locate sites of prehistoric or historic significance.

12. Finally, Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, private corporations and government bodies that wish to do any form of construction must file a report on how the construction will affect historical remains and on the steps taken to preserve them. Because of this law, *the business of contract archaeology has boomed in the united states.*

13. Biological (also called Physical) anthropology is concerned with the anatomy and behavior of monkeys and apes, the physical variation between different human populations, and the biological evolution of the human species. The specialization of primatology studies the evolution, anatomy, adaptation, and social behavior of primates, the taxonomic order to which humans belong. We humans or Homo sapiens sapiens share 98% of our genes with chimpanzees.
14. Another type of biological anthropologist studies how and why human populations vary physically due to hereditary, genetic factors. This subfield is known as human variation. All humanity belongs to a single species—Homo sapiens sapiens. One of the most important findings of biological anthropology is that physical/genetic similarities among the world’s peoples far outweigh the differences. Indeed, many anthropologists today believe that the term RACE has little biological meaning, no matter how much importance people attach to visible physical differences in their cultural ideas and beliefs.

15. Another important goal of biological anthropology is to understand how and why the human species evolved from prehuman, apelike ancestors. The specialization that investigates human biological evolution is known as paleoanthropology. Paleoanthropologists have reconstructed the history of how humans evolved anatomically.

16. Through analyzing fossils, comparing DNA sequences and other methods, the outlines of human evolution are becoming clear. Many scholars agree that the evolutionary line leading to modern humans split from those leading to modern African apes, chimpanzees and gorillas around 5 to 6 million years ago.
17. While most biological anthropologists work in universities or museums as teachers, and researchers, many people trained in biological anthropology apply their knowledge of human anatomy to solve problems. For instance, specialists in forensic anthropology work with law enforcement and other agencies where they help to identify human remains and identify the circumstances of death. For example, teams of forensic anthropologists exhumed human remains from graves in Bolivia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Haiti to identify victims of political assignation and determined their cause of death.

18. Cultural Anthropology is the study of contemporary and historically recent human societies and cultures. The main focus of cultural anthropology is culture—the customs, beliefs, behavior of some human group. Cultural anthropology is divided into numerous areas of specialization including medical anthropology, psychological anthropology, economic anthropology, political anthropology, business anthropology and so forth.

19. Overall objectives of Cultural Anthropology are 1. Studying first hand and reporting about the ways of living of particular human groups. 2. Comparing diverse cultures in the search for general principles that might explain human ways of living. 3. Trying to understand how various dimensions of human life—economics, family life, religion, art, communication, and so
forth—relate to one another in particular cultures and in cultures generally.

4. Understanding the causes and consequences of cultural change. Finally, enhancing public understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and multicultural diversity.

20. Cultural anthropologists believe that the study of other cultures help them better understand their own cultures

21. To do research and collect information about particular cultures, cultural anthropologists conduct fieldwork. Fieldworkers ordinarily move into the community so that they can live in close contact with the people. If practical they communicate in the local language—they learn the local language or use translators. Daily interactions with the members of a community provide anthropologists with firsthand experiences that yield insight and information that could not be gained any other way.

22. A written report of fieldwork—of how a single human population live—is called an ethnography.

23. Language interests anthropologists for several reasons. For one thing the ability to communicate complex messages with great efficiency maybe the most important capability of humans that makes us different from other primates and other animals.

24. Cultural anthropologists are interested in language because of how the culture and language of a people affect each other. The subfield of
Anthropological Linguistics is concerned with the complex relations between language and other aspects of human behavior and thought. For example, anthropological linguists are interested in how language is used in various social contexts: How does one order a drink in China? What style of speech must one use with people of high social status? Does the language we learn while growing up have any important effects on how we view the world or how we think and feel?

25. Applied Anthropologist are problem solvers. They solve problems drawing upon the cultural context for clues about how to address a problem in ways that will make sense to the people of that culture. Today, hundreds of anthropologists hold full time positions that allow them to apply their expertise in government agencies, nonprofit and for profit organizations, and international agencies. Applied anthropologists can be medical anthropologists—investigate the complex interactions among human health, nutrition, social environment and cultural beliefs and practices. Also development anthropologists—apply their expertise to the solutions of practical human problems especially in the developing world—development anthropologists provide information about communities that help agencies adapt projects to local conditions and local needs. Development anthropologists working for US Agency for International Development, the World Bank, United Nations Development Program provide policy makers with knowledge of local-level ecological and cultural conditions, so that projects will avoid unanticipated problems and minimize negative impacts.