



# Master's Program in Social Anthropology

– An Introductory Guide



Stockholm  
University

# Introduction



Welcome to the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University! The Department is a world-leading research institution that provides a global perspective on the diversity of social and cultural forms of the contemporary world.

This guide is aimed at students who have enrolled in the Department's master's program. It provides students with useful information about the program, its courses and other helpful advice. It should be read in conjunction with course documents and the relevant education plans.

At the Department we are dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education we provide in all our degree programs and at all levels. Our programs are subject to constant review and improvement in order to ensure continued high quality teaching and to ensure that their content reflects the changing world around us. Input from our students is crucial to this process, and we encourage continual dialogue not only about the content of our courses but also your experience of and opinions about our teaching methods.

**Eva-Maria Hardtmann**

*Director of Studies, advanced level*

# Overview of the program

**The master's program consists of four terms/semesters made up of a combination of compulsory and optional taught courses and the thesis in social anthropology. In addition, students also attend the Writing Anthropology Workshop Series which runs throughout year one.**

The courses and the programs are designed and structured to provide students with relevant knowledge and skills to formulate an independent research project, carry out a longer period of fieldwork, and write a master's thesis. In other words, there is a clear link between the courses: year one is devoted to foundation courses and specialised/optional courses; year two to fieldwork and the collection of data, and academic writing.

## Overall purpose

The purpose of the master's program in social anthropology is to:

- **provide** students with advanced knowledge of the anthropological subject field, an in-depth understanding of anthropological theory and methods and insights into a number of specific theoretical and or regional areas of study
- **train and prepare** students to conduct an anthropological research project and carry out fieldwork by defining a problem, identifying relevant data, making methodology choices and presenting the data in a clear and easily understood manner
- **train** students in academic writing
- **qualify** students for further education, including PhD programs

## Overall skills and competences

Having completed the program, students are able to:

- **relate** critically to the choice of methodology and theory
- **apply** anthropological methodology and theory to identify, contextualise and analyse complex social problems
- **communicate** their knowledge in writing and orally and to discuss academically relevant problems with fellow students, faculty members and the general public
- **run** projects in challenging and constantly changing conditions that require ongoing development and a flexible approach to solving problems
- **take responsibility** for their own academic development and specialisation
- **take up employment** in both the public and private sectors

# Taught courses year one (term one)

## History and Philosophy of Anthropological Theory

### Course content

The course gives you a short overview over the major schools of thought in Western philosophy and their relevance for scientific inquiry in general and anthropology in particular. The course also gives you an overview of the major anthropological theories and methodologies, which define the anthropology of the twentieth century. The aim is to follow the development of anthropology as a discipline and also to show how these theories continue to have a bearing on present-day anthropology and other social sciences.

### Learning outcomes

Having completed the course, you will have acquired a broad knowledge of the history and philosophy of anthropological theory and enhanced your academic writing skills. You will also have improved your ability to examine critically anthropological theories, including their relations to social science and philosophy more generally.

### Teaching

Instruction consists of lectures and seminars, with one lecture and one seminar each week. The seminar group will be divided into teams, each of which will present on specific readings and themes during the seminar meetings.

### Examination

The course will be examined through two take-home essays, 2500-3000 words each. The first essay will focus on the relation between philosophy and anthropology. The second essay will focus on specific questions of anthropological theory.

## Key Themes in Contemporary Anthropology

### Course content

In this course you will study some key empirical and theoretical themes reflecting anthropology after globalization. You will be trained to gain insight into how contemporary anthropology has developed. Themes and reading lists are replaced on a regular basis to keep the course up to date. At the moment the course is organized into the following themes: *urban infrastructures*, *the politics of compassion*, *occult cosmologies*, and *fractured citizenship*. These themes address issues linked to global markets, transport systems, energy grids, waste management, development projects, humanitarianism, modern forms of magic and witchcraft, conspiracy theories, state institutions, refugees and other people on the move.

### Learning outcome

After the course you will be able to demonstrate:

- your knowledge of these key themes and how they reflect the development of the discipline
- a critical and comparative perspective on anthropology after globalization
- why the selected themes have an important place in contemporary anthropology

### Teaching

The course consists of ten two-hour lectures and seven two-hour seminars. You are asked to be present and active during both lectures and seminars. The course also consists of a two-week fieldwork period. The fieldwork is carried out individually and linked to one of the current themes. In small groups you will also analyse abstracts from important anthropological journals to familiarize yourself with key debates.

### Examination

To pass the course you must complete four short reaction papers (2-3 pages) connected to the four themes of the course, make an oral group presentation of journal abstracts, finish the two-week fieldwork and write an essay based on that fieldwork. The final essay should be between 3000 and 3500 words.

# Taught courses year one (term two)

## Examples of courses previously offered

Transnational Migration

### Course content

There is increasing human mobility in the world today, but diminishing opportunities for unskilled migrants to cross national borders legally. This has led to intensified illegal migration, attempts by governments to control this movement under the guise of national security, as well as debates concerning human rights abuses against transnational migrants. In this context, the emergence of phenomena such as 'human trafficking' and the 'war on terror' are the most recent developments that affect the regulation of transnational mobility. This course investigates the changing relationship between transnational mobility, state regulation, economic inequalities and migrant subjectivity. It offers a global and historical overview using case studies from around the world.

### Learning outcomes

Having completed the course, the student is expected to:

- be familiar with anthropological and social scientific theory pertaining to transnational migration, including relevant concepts and analytical tools
- be familiar with a number of anthropological case studies dealing with transnational migration
- be able to identify and critically discuss key matters and questions pertaining to anthropological and social scientific debates on transnational migration

### Teaching

Instruction consists of lectures and seminars, with one lecture and one seminar each week.

### Examination

The course will be examined through a take-home essay.

## Media Anthropology

### Course content

The last century has been characterized by a large-scale development of new media which has provided humanity with plenty of opportunities for expressing itself and communicating in time and space, with important consequences for culture and society, not least in global relations. In the social sciences and thus anthropology, the concept of media refers to communication technologies such as digital channels. You will study indigenous media, social media, news media, television and film in terms of production, reception as well as questions of control, and the changing role of media in different societies.

### Learning outcome

After the course you are capable of:

- using anthropological theories and concepts to identify and explain the development and use of media anthropology
- relating anthropological theories to empirical case studies investigated during the course
- applying ethnographic research methods to studies of media
- understanding the processes of media production in terms of both control and aesthetic form
- consuming media with a critical mind

### Teaching

The course consists of four sets of lectures with four seminars and a final film screening. A short visual research fieldwork is required aiming to photograph or film a chosen topic. Interviews and/or participant observation should be included.

### Examination

The course is examined through a presentation and a home exam:

1. 15-minute presentation by each group (of about five students in each group) of your findings from the fieldwork to the class. The presentation should include a description of the fieldwork experience, a discussion of your findings and a conclusion of what you have learnt from this. You will submit individual reports of about 1000 words about this.
2. home exam (in English or Swedish) in the form of an essay on a topic selected among alternative given topics. The essay should be about 3000 words. You should not only make a summary of the texts, but provide a discussion of some aspects that you find particularly interesting.

## Anthropological Perspectives on Organizations

### Course content

The course provides an overview of anthropological theories on organizations and processes of organizing in contemporary globalizing society. The purpose is to provide you with knowledge about how different kinds of organizations – states, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations – can be understood and studied from an anthropological perspective. We will examine the concept of *organization* from a social anthropological perspective with the aim to understand how different organizational forms are expressed in different contexts, and what cultural patterns and flows that are intertwined in these. The course provides key theories and concepts, and looks at how organizations can be studied methodologically.

### Learning outcomes

When you have completed this course, you will be able to:

- give an account of central anthropological concepts with relevance for organizations
- describe the central problems in the course literature in relation to the empirical content of the readings
- compare, relate and discuss the different problems and questions that are raised in the literature, with emphasis on epistemological and methodological problems
- critically analyse, problematize and reflect on anthropological production of knowledge in relation to organizations, with emphasis on eventual epistemological, methodological and ethical problems raised during the lectures and in the literature.

### Teaching

The course is designed as a combination of lectures and seminars. The lectures will provide thematized knowledge on a particular topic. The seminars provide opportunities to engage in these topics and to discuss and present insights in class. In preparation for seminars, you will be provided with group exercises around key concepts and topics.

### Examination

The course examination is done by way of three shorter papers. Completion of the course requires your active participation in lectures and seminars as well as three approved papers.



## Environmental Anthropology

### Course content

In this course we will address various contemporary environmental issues and explore different ways of thinking about the nature-society interface. We will do so from the vantage point of present-day scholarship in environmental anthropology, broadly defined. The course is structured around four themes:

1. living the anthropocene,
2. rural livelihoods,
3. political ecology and
4. human-animal relations.

These themes overlap and several of the course readings concern more than one of the themes.

### Learning outcomes

Having completed the course, you will have acquired a broad knowledge of the history and philosophy of anthropological theory on nature and enhanced your academic writing skills. You will also have improved your ability to examine critically anthropological research concerning environmental issues such as climate change, subsistence livelihoods, land ownership and multispecies lives. After the course, you will be able to formulate an environmental anthropological research project.

### Teaching

Instruction consists of lectures and seminars. You will write a two-page reaction paper for each theme and these will be presented and discussed at the weekly seminars. The seminars are obligatory and the four reaction papers need to be approved in order to complete the course requirement. Beside the course readings, a number of texts, films and news items will be uploaded on Mondo as a complement.

### Examination

During the last week you will write a take-home exam with four essay questions; each question should be answered with 1,5-2 pages (not more than 8 pages in total). Grading is based on the take-home exam.

# The Writing Anthropology Workshop Series (year one)

## Workshop content

The practice of writing holds a central position within anthropology and is a perennial topic for reflexive discussion and debate. The Writing Anthropology Workshop Series consists of eight writing workshops. They are scheduled to run parallel to the other courses during the first year of the program. Participation in the Writing Anthropology workshops is important but does not provide any extra credits.

## Learning outcome

After completing the Workshop Series you will have improved your skills in:

- structuring your academic text
- mapping out an argument in text
- writing your own project description
- writing and working with your field notes
- writing ethnographic description
- writing within other genres
- finding your own writing style

## Teaching

The Writing Anthropology Workshop Series consists of eight three-hour workshops spread over the two semesters of the first year. Each workshop begins with the teacher introducing the workshop theme. This 30-minute introduction is the only “lecture-style” part of the workshop. The main part of each workshop is dedicated to reading and writing exercises. These exercises all entail sharing one’s writing with the other students and reading each other’s texts. Each workshop ends with a concluding discussion of the theme and a summary of the insights gained from the exercises.

# Taught courses year two (term three)

Individual tutorial

## Course content

This is a reading course. The literature is adapted to the individual student's special interest and upcoming thesis. The student is responsible for searching for and proposing relevant literature in consultation with a supervisor.

## Learning outcome

The student should be able to:

- display independence in formulating and defining a specific area for in-depth studies
- display independence in searching for and choosing relevant literature for an intended project/area of interest
- formulate a well-written academic text based on a specific problem
- discuss theoretical questions based on the literature

## Anthropological Methods

### Course content

Let's do some fieldwork! In this course you will learn about ethnographic fieldwork in theory and practice. The course literature covers essential aspects of fieldwork, from research design and ethical guidelines to interview techniques and visual methods. You will learn about different forms of fieldwork, from classical long-term immersion to multi-sited and urban ethnography. You will also get the opportunity to do fieldwork and try out a variety of research methods based on your own research design.

### Learning outcomes

After the course you will have acquired

- theoretical knowledge of anthropological fieldwork
- methodological strategies for data collection
- experience of doing ethnographic fieldwork

### Teaching

Lectures and seminars are combined with one week of fieldwork. The lectures (4 in total) cover topics such as fieldwork methods and field sites as well as urban, online and visual methods. The seminars (3 in total) offer an opportunity to probe more deeply into topics covered in the lectures and literature as well as to prepare and reflect upon your own fieldwork project. The fieldwork project will be carried out fulltime for a week in select field sites in Stockholm.

### Examination

The course is examined through written and oral assignments.

## Fieldwork

### Course content

During this course you will conduct a 2-3 months long period of fieldwork with the help of anthropological methods and based in anthropological theory. The purpose of the fieldwork is to provide you with materials and knowledge on which your thesis will be based. You can choose to conduct your fieldwork in Sweden or elsewhere in the world, but you have to finance it yourself. At the end of the course you will write a fieldwork report.

### Learning outcome

After the course you will be able to:

- formulate, plan, and successfully conduct anthropological research based on ethnographic fieldwork
- collect and compile empirical data for a scientific analysis
- apply the relevant anthropological methods and theories suited to your research
- critically reflect on anthropological theory and method based on your own fieldwork experiences

### Teaching

Apart from the fieldwork which is the central part of the course, the course consists of weekly tutorials at the department. For students conducting their fieldwork abroad, the tutorials are provided through e-mail and/or skype.

### Examination

The course is examined through a fieldwork report.

# Thesis and seminars

## Thesis (year two, term four)

The length of the thesis should be 25,000 words excluding bibliography, appendices, etc., but including footnotes. The topic is left to students to decide depending on their interests and subject to the agreement of the relevant supervisor. Students will be assigned a supervisor at the beginning of term four (year two). Students who are Swedish citizens or have a permanent residence permit can (subject to availability) apply for a Minor Field Study grant and carry out fieldwork in a “developing country” prior to writing their thesis.

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*"Please ask questions on points that you don't understand – it helps the whole class to learn."*

## Seminars

During seminars you should come prepared (when you are presenting but also when you are not presenting) and be ready to explore the topics under discussion.

In addition to the course literature reading list, you can find interesting and relevant articles in the latest issues of the most important journals (for example: *American Anthropologist*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *JRAI*, *American Ethnologist*, *Current Anthropology*, *Ethnos*, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *Public Culture*, *Social Anthropology*). Your goal is to:

- identify the key questions that are being addressed in the literature;
- explain how researchers are going about answering them, and what they have found;
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches and answers.

Please ask questions on points that you don't understand (it helps the whole class to learn). The success of the group's learning experience depends as much on your contribution as it does on that of the discussion leader. The most important thing is to be active during seminars!

## Other resources and advice along the way

Please feel free to **contact researchers and teachers in the Department!** Visit the Department website to find out office hours or when and how to contact staff. If you have a particular research interest, ask questions and discuss with a member of staff who shares your enthusiasm.

**The Departmental research seminar** is held on Mondays and is a crucial element of the shared intellectual life of staff and PhD students. Invited speakers will present work in progress, much of it is at the cutting edge of anthropological research. If a topic is of particular interest, please feel free to attend. Visit [socant.su.se](http://socant.su.se) for details.

Stockholm University hosts a variety of **public lectures, conferences and seminars** which are prominently advertised on [www.su.se](http://www.su.se). If you have a regional interest, then make a point early in the year of locating the relevant department or centre where you will find information about forthcoming meetings.



Remember to visit **Stockholm University's student web pages** as well as the library website. The university offers various courses and seminars on academic writing and the library runs information meetings, for example, on how to search for literature or how to use different reference programs.

**Learning is a collective practice!** Interact with your fellow students and create a social network – meet up with each other to discuss the literature, how to answer exam questions, or share ideas on thesis topics or fieldwork experiences. Do this right from the beginning of the first semester!

**Explore what's going on outside the university!** Stockholm has a lot to offer when it comes to various cultural events, activities, public discussions and seminars. The theme of the course you are taking might be discussed in a literary talk in town. Take advantage of such events to establish new contacts and get inspired and informed from non-textual sources!

# How to contact us

[www.socant.su.se](http://www.socant.su.se)

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## The Student Council

The Student Council of Social Anthropology is the student union body for student governance in the Department. The Student Council is open to all students in the Department and it is of course desirable that as many students as possible get involved.

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