Anthropology, the study of humanity in its broadest sense, was called by Alfred Kroeber "the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities." At Tulane anthropology is divided into four subdisciplines: archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology. These subdisciplines are not silos, however; anthropologists at Tulane often straddle the boundaries of the subdisciplines, and we collaborate with scholars from other departments and schools. Anthropology is perhaps the world's oldest cross-disciplinary discipline, and at Tulane anthropologists study topics as seemingly disparate as two million year-old fossil hominins, the impact of Islam in West Africa, Mayan hieroglyphic texts, political movements in Mexico, and variations in spoken New Orleans English.

The roots of Tulane's Department of Anthropology date back to 1924, when the Department of Middle American Research (now the Middle American Research Institute [MARI]) was founded. Anthropology courses were first offered at Tulane during the 1938-1939 academic year, and by 1947, anthropologists were employed in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology until a separate Department of Anthropology was established in 1967. From the early 1990s to today the Department more than doubled in size, and in 2010, the Department and MARI moved into newly-renovated space in Dinwiddie Hall.

Tulane's Department of Anthropology's traditional strength has been in the archaeology, cultural anthropology, and linguistics of Mesoamerica (that region from Central Mexico to Nicaragua). However, today the teaching and research interests of our faculty have a much more global reach: North America, especially the southeastern United States and the Gulf South, South America and other parts of Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, East, South and Southeast Asia, and Europe.

We offer an M.A. degree to our current Tulane undergraduate students who by taking two 6000-level anthropology classes (six hours) while earning their B.A./B.S. degrees, are able to apply these six hours toward an M.A. degree. They then spend a fifth year taking 24 hours of anthropology classes to earn their M.A. degrees (30 hours total).

We also offer an M.A. degree to our Ph.D. students midway through their training for the doctorate.

Requirements

MA Degrees for both "4+1" and PhD Students

General Requirements for MA Degrees

The requirements for MA degrees in anthropology for students in the PhD program are the following.

- The completion of 30 hours of graduate coursework, or 24 hours for students doing an MA thesis. Note that for "4+1" students, 6 hours (2 courses) are taken in the student’s fourth year, before admittance to the MA program. A minimum of 6 credit hours must be taken at the 7000 level. Students must earn grades of "B-" or better to receive graduate credit, but the department generally expects PhD students to earn grades of "B" or better in graduate coursework.
- Certification in one foreign language by the Department (see Foreign Language Requirement in PhD Requirements section). This must be completed before the student is admitted to the program or as soon thereafter as is possible.
- Demonstration of competence in basic statistics (see Quantitative Methods Requirement in PhD Requirements section).

Comprehensive exams and advancement to PhD candidacy are not requirements for MA degrees in anthropology.

A student intending to defend a thesis must inform the Chair of the Department, in writing, of that intention during the first 2 weeks of the semester in which he or she wishes the defense to be scheduled. When the thesis has been completed to the satisfaction of the Chair of the thesis committee and approval of the committee has been given, the director will then recommend it to the faculty for acceptance and the candidate will be advised to complete the preparation of the manuscript in accordance with the rules of the Graduate School as set forth in the Graduate Handbook.

Students wishing to receive an MA degree with a thesis at May graduation must submit complete copies of their theses to their committee members by February 1. Students wishing to receive an MA degree at August graduation must submit complete copies of their theses to their committee members by the last Monday in March. To receive an MA degree in December, students must submit complete copies of their theses to all committee members by November 1.