The disciplines of anthropology and sociology aim to teach students how to enter into the social/cultural worlds of others, how to grasp those worlds from the viewpoints of their inhabitants, and how to articulate those denizens' habits of mind, worldviews, and values to broader audiences.

Anthropology critically analyzes social forms and practices in all their local and global diversity, illuminating the cultural grounding of the ideologies, narratives, and structures in which we are all implicated. Archaeology extends this analysis to social formations of the historical and prehistorical past. Sociology studies the nature and trajectories of modernity, examining the intricacies of industrial and post-industrial societies and the dilemmas that confront individuals in modern social systems. These disciplines introduce students to classical and contemporary theories that illuminate the contours and contradictions of social experience. The Anthropology & Sociology program promotes a critical engagement with these theories while at the same time bringing evidence and case studies into conversation with theory.

The Department emphasizes qualitative fieldwork in its many forms. We teach students how to formulate, frame, and address intellectual problems. We also teach students the empirical methods widely used in anthropology, sociology, and other related disciplines, including, but not limited to ethnography, participant observation, interviewing, discourse and visual analysis, archival research, oral history, and archaeological methods.

Because the program emphasizes critical thinking skills to assess social claims made by others, and the application of anthropological and sociological skills to present day concerns, undergraduate training in Anthropology or Sociology has proven invaluable to majors pursuing a range of careers, including public policy, diplomacy, international development, marketing, social media development, K-12 education, journalism, medicine, and law.

MAJORS
The department offers separate majors in both Anthropology and Sociology, with a broad and diverse array of courses in both disciplines. The department is committed, however, to the unity of the social sciences. To this end, Anthropology and Sociology offer joint core courses in methodology and theory, as well as several elective courses in common. All joint courses are designated “ANSO.”

Requirements
For the degree in Anthropology or Sociology, students must complete a minimum of nine courses as outlined below:

Core Courses
Majors in both disciplines must take a sequence of four core courses. Three of these are joint (ANSO) courses. The sequences are:

  Anthropology
  ANTH 101 How to Be Human

  Sociology
  SOC 101 Invitation to Sociology

Joint Courses
ANSO 205 Ways of Knowing
ANSO 305 Social Theory
ANSO 402 Senior Seminar

Elective Courses
Majors in Anthropology or Sociology must take five elective courses from the course listings of their respective disciplines or from the joint ANSO listings. Two of the courses chosen are normally at the 300 level or above. In close consultation with their departmental advisors, students may take some selected courses from other disciplines to fulfill major requirements in either Anthropology or Sociology.

Majors in each wing of the department are allowed to count up to two courses in the other wing towards fulfillment of their major requirements.
In addition to the nine total courses required for the major, it is recommended that Anthropology and Sociology majors take Statistics 101 or a comparable course in statistics and data analysis.

AREA STUDIES CONCENTRATION

Students who wish to combine a major in Anthropology or Sociology with an Area Studies concentration are encouraged to do so. Courses taken to satisfy an Area Studies requirement may be counted toward the major with prior approval of a student's departmental advisor. The only exception to this rule is the Area Studies senior seminar, which cannot ordinarily be counted toward the Anthropology or Sociology degree.

LANGUAGE STUDY, STUDY ABROAD, AND WINTER STUDY

Departmental advisors will help interested students integrate a major with study abroad, foreign language study, or field research during the winter study period. The department encourages Williams students to take advantage of established foreign study programs in Egypt, Japan, India, Hong Kong, and other countries. Because some foreign study programs do not offer courses that can be counted toward the Anthropology or Sociology degrees, however, sophomores planning to study abroad in junior year must consult with the departmental advisor before declaring a major.

FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

Yes. In some cases, provisional approval can be granted (students should be sure to contact the department for details). We welcome discussions of curricular plans for those major who travel abroad in their junior year. However, typically, students don't have access to all the salient information until AFTER they have taken the course.

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

Course title and description, and complete syllabus including readings/assignments. The syllabus and readings/assignment information is required in cases when the course title and description are not sufficient to ascertain whether a course should count towards the major. We also request information on course hours.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

Yes. We credit two, and in special cases three courses.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

Yes. The expectation is for an intellectually rigorous semester-long course with a paper/exam component.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?

Yes. ANSO 205, ANSO 305 and ANSO 402 are almost always taken in the department.

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

Yes. ANSO 305 is offered in the fall and ANSO 205 and ANSO 402 only in the spring. We advise our majors to be aware if they plan to spend all or part of their junior year abroad.

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

In one case, a student had assumed that he could take the equivalent of ANSO 205 abroad, and was disappointed to discover that was not the case. He ended up taking ANSO 205 his senior year.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN ANTHROPOLOGY OR SOCIOLOGY

Honors and highest honors are normally awarded for the completion of a year-long research project that has resulted in an original thesis of high quality. Students wishing to write an honors thesis should engage a member of the department faculty as a Thesis Advisor as soon as possible and must submit a proposal for the thesis for department approval no later than the end of spring reading period of the junior year. If the proposal is approved, they will be permitted to register for Anthropology and Sociology 493-W31-494, during which they will write and defend a thesis. If their overall work in the major continues to be of high quality and the thesis is deemed of a similar quality, they may be awarded honors or highest honors in Anthropology or Sociology.

ANSO 14 (W)  Epidemiology, Public Health, and Leadership in the Health Professions
Crosslistings: PHLH14 / ANSO14 / CHEM14

Primary Crosslisting

More and more, decisions in the health professions are being made on evidence from the medical literature rather than solely from the "experience" of the physician or other health practitioner. What kinds of questions (hypotheses) are being asked, and how are they answered, and answered reliably? How does a conscientious health professional keep up with this evidence and evaluate it both critically and efficiently? After a brief introduction to the history of epidemiology, the class will study a selection of "unknown" historic epidemics, and contemporary data sets in small groups, and present their conclusions in class. The remainder of roughly the middle third or so of the class will explore systematically the approaches and research designs epidemiologists use to answer, among others, questions of treatment effectiveness, preventive strategies, and to study cause and effect, e.g., is this exposure reliably related to an outcome of interest. And finally, how does one decide whether that relationship might be a causal one, and therefore actionable. The various research design applications will be illustrated by appropriate historic--some from the "canon" of the public health and clinical literature--or by more current papers. Although the first two weeks of this ambitious course is more about design issues than one of current topics in public health, about week 3--through lecture and perhaps student presentations--will apply the methodological "tool kit" to major current athletic health issues, e.g., athletic concussions and their short and long-term effects. The last week of the course the class will operate as a Journal Club, with individual and/or groups of students responsible for presenting and critiquing the design, conduct and analysis of a paper(s) concerning a current issue. These presentations may also look at athletic health issues. This WS course is designed to be a serious academic experience, with the rigor of a regular course. Adjunct Instructor Bio: Dr. Wright is a medical epidemiologist who first worked with maternal and child health and family planning programs in Alabama and Georgia. Later, after training as an EIS officer at the CDC, he was a resident consultant to both the Sri Lankan and Thai Ministries of Public Health. Still later, he was a faculty member in the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, in New Jersey.

Class Format: at least three times a week for a total of 6 hours

Requirements/Evaluation: 10-page paper, final project

Prerequisites: course in Biostat helpful, but not required

Enrollment Limit: 18

Department Notes: all interested students will be interviewed by the instructor

Materials/Lab Fee: Cost of books

Winter 2019

LEC Section: 01 Cancelled

ANSO 16 (W) The Ayn Rand Cult

Crosslistings: COMP16 / ANSO16 / RLSP16

Secondary Crosslisting

The broad, "underground" influence of publicist-novelist Ayn Rand stands as one of the more curious sociocultural phenomena to have emerged out of post-War America. Examples: A youthful Alan Greenspan was a dedicated disciple of Rand's in the 1940s and 50s; Michael Milken was reported to have kept twenty-six copies of Atlas Shrugged in his jail cell while serving time for securities fraud; Congressman Paul Ryan and Exxon CEO (and current Secretary of State) Rex Tillerson both are avowed fans of Ayn Rand; each year to this day, Rand's books sell hundreds of thousands of copies; and, in a crowning instance of "canonization," the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative stamp in Rand's honor (as part of its "Great American Authors" series) in April 1999. This course will examine the nature and origins of the Rand phenomenon through reading of relevant works of journalism, fiction, and philosophy. Titles to be studied: Jeffrey Walker, The Ayn Rand Cult; Mary Gaitskill, Two Girls: Fat and Thin; Gene H. Bell-Villada, The Pianist Who Liked Ayn Rand (selections) and On Nabokov, Ayn Rand and the Libertarian Mind; and John Locke, Second Treatise of Government. We will also view two films: the movie version of The Fountainhead (1949) and the 1996 documentary Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life. Note: No books by Rand will be read in this class! It is a course not "about" Rand but rather about the cultural sociology and anthropology of Randism.

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance and participation, short weekly journal entries, and a final 10-page paper

Prerequisites: some previous acquaintance with Rand's novels

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: by seniority (i.e. first seniors, then juniors, then sophomores, etc.)

Materials/Lab Fee: approximately $90 for books

Distributions: (D1)
ANSO 99 (W) Independent Study: Anthropology & Sociology
Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study
Distributions: (D2)

Winter 2019

ANSO 205 (S) Ways of Knowing
An applied exploration of how one makes sense of the social world through fieldwork. Some of the key questions of the course are: What are the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of social inquiry? How does one frame intellectual problems and go about collecting, sifting, and assessing field materials? What are the uses and limits of statistical data? What is the importance of history to sociological and anthropological research? How can one use archival and other documentary materials to enrich ethnographic research? What are the empirical limits to interpretation? What is the relationship between empirical data and the generation of social theory? How does the social organization of social research affect one's inquiry? What are the typical ethical dilemmas of fieldwork and of other kinds of social research? How do researchers' personal biographies and values shape their work? In the first half of the course, we will approach these problems concretely rather than abstractly through a series of case studies, drawing upon the field experiences of departmental faculty and guest speakers from different professional backgrounds. The second half of the course will be dedicated to a hands-on training in field methods, in which the students will design and undertake their own pilot field projects.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: full-participation in the seminar, several short papers, an independent ethnographic project and a final research proposal
Prerequisites: ANTH 101 or SOC 101 or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 25
Expected Class Size: 25
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: EVST Methods Courses; EXPE Experiential Education Courses; SCST Related Courses

Spring 2019

ANSO 214 (F) Performance Ethnography: Global Approaches to Dance
Crosslistings: ANSO214 / THEA215 / AMST214 / DANC214 / GBST215

Secondary Crosslisting
The course aims to explore the theory, practice, and ethics of ethnographic research with a focus on dance, movement and performance ethnography. Traditionally considered to be a method of research in anthropology, ethnography is the descriptive and analytical study of a particular community through fieldwork, where the researcher immerses herself in the culture of the people that she researches. In this course students will be introduced to (i) critical theory that grounds ethnography as a research methodology, (ii) will read ethnographic studies of dance and performance practices from different parts of the world, and (iii) will do field research in the local community for their own ethnographic projects. This is primarily a discussion-based seminar course and will include fieldwork, attendance at live performances, film screenings, workshop with guest artists etc. No previous dance experience required.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, reading responses and essays, fieldwork and field notes, and presentations
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under DANC or THEA; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under GBST, AMST or ANSO

Fall 2018
SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm     Munjulika Tarah

ANSO 305 (F) Social Theory
An introduction to social theory in anthropology and sociology, with strong emphasis on enduring themes that cut across disciplinary divides. What is modern about modern social theory? How do social thinkers construe "society" and "culture," and have these constructions withstood challenges over time? What role does human agency play in the unfolding of social life, and where does that sense of agency come from in the first place? What are the forces that animate social interaction on the level of individuals, social groups and complex units like nation-states? What are the possibilities and limits of systematic approaches to the study of human social experience? The course emphasizes major differences between interpretive frameworks as well as the common elements that contribute to a deeper understanding of the social world.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: full participation in the seminar, regular reading response memos, and three papers
Extra Info: formerly ANSO 206
Extra Info 2: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: ANTH 101 or SOC 101 or ANSO 205 or permission of the instructor
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Department Notes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives;

Fall 2018
SEM Section: 01    MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Olga Shevchenko

ANSO 402 (S) Senior Seminar
This capstone seminar combines intensive discussion and individual research. Half of the course will be dedicated to the discussion of current debates central to the concerns of both anthropology and sociology, such as the ethics of conducting fieldwork, humanitarianism and relief, global public health, poverty and the city, and environmental conservation. Among the topics discussed, the ethical dilemmas of conducting ethnography will be a common theme. The second half of the course will be devoted to independent individual original projects which should have a major ethnographic component. At the end of the course, students will present their projects to the seminar.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: full participation, major research project and paper (30 pages), class presentation; weekly short responses
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: only senior majors in Anthropology and Sociology, or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 12
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01    TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm    Antonia E. Foias