



Online Courses for High School Students
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Anthropology I

Uncovering Human Mysteries

What makes us human? Is it our ability to use language? Is it our abstract thinking skills or our use of tools and technology? In Anthropology 1: Uncovering Human Mysteries you will trace the history of homo sapiens and explore our evolutionary trail. This course offers an anthropologic lens to observe our movement from cave dweller to modern human. It sheds light on how we forged our way and developed all of the things that make us human, such as our cultures, languages, and religions. We, as humans in the 21st century, are highly intelligent, innovative people with astounding technological ability – how did we get this way?

Course Highlights

- Trace the evolution and development of humans throughout history.
- Examine cultural practices from around the globe.
- Explore the relationships between people and their environments.
- Investigate how materials, culture, food, and religion influence our lives.

Prerequisite: None

Course Length: One Semester

Required Text: There are no required textbook for this course.

Materials List: There are no required materials for this course.

Course Outline

Unit 1: Studying Humans: What Anthropologists Do

Anthropology is the fascinating study of what it means to be human. It is the only science concerned with the entire range of human existence. Anthropologists want to know who we are, how we came to be that way, and what we will be like in the future.

Unit 2: Culture & Language: Why Humans Are Special

Culture is the entire way of life of a group of people. All human cultures have similarities, called cultural universals. Culture includes the goods people make, the ways people organize themselves and interact with one another, what they believe and value, and the art they create.

Unit 3: Human Evolution: How We Got Here

Evolution is a change in a population's traits over time. It occurs as populations become better adapted to their environments. Evolution can lead to the formation of new species. Natural selection is the major process that drives evolution. Fossils and other evidence show how evolution has occurred.

Unit 4: The Human Animal: Who We Are

Humans are primates, the group of mammals that also includes animals such as lemurs, monkeys, chimpanzees, and gorillas. Chimpanzees are our closest living relatives in the animal kingdom. Some of the traits that set humans apart from other primates—including chimpanzees—are walking on two legs, having a very large brain, and relying on culture to adapt to our world. All humans are very similar in their biological traits but obviously not identical to one another. Humans vary in body shape, blood type, and skin color, for example. Skin color is often used to classify people into races. However, the concept of race is no longer used by most anthropologists. This is because it is misleading and leads to discrimination.

Unit 5: All About Food: What We Do In Order to Eat

Different cultures have unique cuisines, or types of food and ways of preparing them. Culture determines not only what people eat but also how they eat it. "Proper" ways of eating vary from one culture to another. Ways that people obtain food also vary. Four basic ways are foraging, pastoralism, horticulture, and intensive agriculture. How a society obtains food influences its social and political system and level of technology. Food is much more than a way to satisfy hunger and nourish the body. Food also serves many social purposes. Food may be a symbol of an entire culture, of wealth, of hospitality, or of many other things.

Unit 6: Material Culture: How Humans Are Handy

Archeology is the study of past cultures through the material remains that people have left behind. Archeologists find and excavate sites that people once occupied. From objects that people made and other evidence, they reconstruct how people lived, the problems they faced,

and how they used culture to solve them. Material remains are the only way to learn about much of our past. This is because there are no written records of what happened during most of human existence. Writing was a recent invention, and even after writing was invented, the lives of ordinary people were usually not recorded. Archeologists have documented the origins of culture. They have also documented major cultural changes, including the invention of agriculture. The knowledge gained from archeology helps us understand where we came from. This is important because the more we know about our past, the better we will understand ourselves.

Unit 7: Family Ties and Social Bonds: What Keeps Us Together

In all human cultures, family members share special biological and social bonds. A family usually begins with marriage. Marriage occurs in all human cultures, but how people choose marriage partners and how many spouses they can have vary from one culture to another. After people marry, they usually set up a household together. A household is the basic economic and social unit of society. An important influence on the makeup of the household is kinship. Kinship refers to relationships between individuals that have family ties. Some kin are related by marriage, others by descent. All people have the same types of kin, but the terms they use to refer to them may be different. Because humans are very social animals, most people belong to both kinship and nonkinship social groups. Within social groups, people have certain statuses and roles, and their behavior is guided by norms and social sanctions. All humans live in societies, but the societies vary greatly in size and complexity.

Unit 8: Religion: What We Believe

Religion is one of the universals of human culture. It may be defined as a set of beliefs and practices that relate to the supernatural, or things outside of nature. Religion serves important purposes, such as explaining the unknown and helping people cope with stressful events. Major world religions include Christianity and Islam. There are also hundreds of local, or folk, religions. Most religions share certain things in common, including myths, supernatural beings, religious practices such as rituals, and ideas about right and wrong. Most religions also identify people that play special religious roles. Like other aspects of culture, religion can change. This occurs most often when societies are under great stress.