

*Department of Anthropology*  
**SUNY OSWEGO**  
**PLAN FOR WRITING ACROSS THE DISCIPLINE**

**Basic Philosophy:** Following the great intellectual and literary critic Roland Barthes, we say that research is inherent in the activity of writing. Whatever the search, it cannot be divorced from its language. Fieldwork in anthropology especially begs this problem. The fieldworker necessarily shuffles between research and writing and the cross-cultural context makes attention to the kinds of language and forms of expression used even more essential. The anthropology curriculum is designed to introduce students to the nature, uses, and objectives of research with a focus on reporting it through writing. Our courses collectively guide novice researchers through the complexities of planning, organizing, and drafting reports that pose significant problems and offer convincing solutions within all subfields of anthropology. The coursework literature is supplemented by a short but strategic departmental reading list that focuses on research methods and writing. Through these sources we encourage our students to write like readers - maximizing clarity and style without sacrificing rigor and depth. Through careful editing in the writing courses we show them how to revise their writing quickly and efficiently. We ask them to think self-consciously about their research problems and writing and to strive for improvement that satisfies them as well as their faculty. In addition to strengthening their rhetorical and writing skills per se, we want them to develop abilities to record and report data, to define and summarize, to acquire knowledge about themselves and the world around them, to develop attitudes toward learning and knowing, to develop confidence in their abilities to find and correct their own mistakes, and to encourage a lifetime of exploration and discovery.

**Goals:**

Upon completing requirements for a major in anthropology, the student will be able to:

- (1) Summarize in their own words literature that they have read.
- (2) Synthesize information from a number of sources, evaluate evidence, form an opinion, or generate hypotheses for further inquiry.
- (3) Understand and use appropriately the basic concepts and vocabulary of the discipline.
- (4) Write accurate reports on observations and laboratory analysis.
- (5) Present data in graphical or statistical form.
- (6) Evaluate various theoretical perspectives.
- (7) Document sources appropriately.

- (8) Assess the validity and accuracy of arguments in popular media and professional work.

**Objectives:**

- (A) Each anthropology major will engage in a variety of writing experiences including, but not limited to, abstracts, journal writing, lab reports and field notes, reaction and discovery papers, review articles, position essays, and standard research papers. The primary courses supporting these experiences are Ant 230 Principles of Archaeology; Ant 280 Biological Anthropology; Ant 344 Language and Culture, Ant 310 Research Methods, and one from the Ant 370 series. Additionally, all of our 300- and 400- level electives include written assignments; these are returned with comments relating to content and quality of writing. Students are encouraged to meet with their instructor to discuss deficiencies and how they may be eliminated.
- (B) Advanced writing and more mature modes of expression earned as a result of prior writing experiences are expected in Ant 410 Issues in Anthropology: History, Theory and Methods, in which a major research paper is required. Students are required to develop a coherent abstract of their research problem early in the course, which is then read and evaluated with special attention to writing problems and returned to the student for rewriting as part of the final project. A penultimate draft of the complete paper is due in time for the instructor to edit and return it to the student with comments for rewriting and final submission. A record is kept of each edit and persistent mistakes are penalized. Each rewrite thus represents a carefully measured opportunity to earn a higher grade.

