

PUTTING ANTHROPOLOGY INTO SCHOOLS**

by Colleen Popson and Ruth O. Selig



At a Montgomery County, MD high school, seniors in an AP biology class stage an 1890s debate focusing on Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, while in a Cheyenne, WY, 9th grade social studies class, students engage in a simulation of two "societies" unable to communicate because their communication styles appear so alien to one another. Back in Washington, D.C., at the National Zoo, 7th graders conduct observations of primate language, locomotion, and mother/infant behavior, while a teacher at the Gallaudet Model Secondary School for the Deaf describes his summer fieldwork experience studying Indian petroglyphs. Meanwhile, in Fairfax County, VA, students plan a dance-a-thon to raise money for a game reserve in Sierra Leone for endangered chimpanzees. The teachers involved do not know one another, but each is a graduate of either the NSF-funded or NEH-funded *Anthropology For Teachers Program*.

Because teachers in schools influence such large numbers of students, they constitute a constituency of great importance to the wider public understanding of anthropology. To anyone who has ever taught anthropology to middle- and high-school students, the discipline's impact on young people's intellectual and social development is undeniable. Because of anthropology's positive influence on student motivation and understanding of the modern world, some educators become committed to bringing anthropology to their classrooms and then further dedicate themselves to promoting the discipline's even wider dissemination. These educators join a long-standing effort to integrate anthropology into the K-12 school curriculum.

Today, junior high and high schools with a separate anthropology course appear to be primarily private or independent schools, charter/magnet schools, or public schools in wealthy school districts. The essential ingredient is almost always an energetic teacher with some anthropology training. Anthropology at Fairfax County, Virginia's Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ) provides an instructive case study. TJ opened in 1985; two years later the Social Studies department added a one-semester Anthropology elective, due to the strong advocacy of a single teacher, Dolores Steinhauer, a graduate of the 1978-1982 George Washington University/Smithsonian Institution Anthropology for Teachers program.

A year later TJ hired Carolyn Gecan, a history teacher with anthropology training, to teach the anthropology elective to 10-12th graders. Given complete freedom to develop her semester course – with textbooks, readings, films, field trips, guest speakers, lab activities – Gecan taught anthropology every semester for 23 years, often to 32 students in each of two or sometimes even three sections. For many years, a popular field archaeology unit culminated with a mock dig at an old sanitary landfill in Fairfax County. Students read classic ethnographies, studied human evolution, and conducted primatology zoo labs. Visiting forensic anthropologists brought in bones to



Amanda Hurowitz and *AnthroNotes* editor Carolyn Gecan examine artifacts at a Smithsonian Department of Anthropology teacher workshop.

teach Gecan's classes. A few years prior to her retirement in 2012, the school system hired Amanda Hurowitz to continue the course, although budget restrictions, state graduation requirements, and competing social studies electives reduced the number of enrolled students.

The record of anthropology in schools, like this TJ Case Study, illustrates teachers' earnest efforts, low visibility, limited resources, and scant assistance provided by most national anthropology associations. This story unfortunately also reflects the low value that professional anthropologists have placed on putting anthropology into schools.

Why should anthropology exist in pre-college classrooms? For those who believe in putting anthropology into schools, the answer is obvious: anthropology motivates and excites students while broadening their perspective; it helps young people deal with differences at home and understand international differences abroad. Increased awareness of the discipline encourages students to pursue the subject further in college, and such study undoubtedly would increase the public's understanding of anthropology. To put anthropology into schools, effort must be made to make anthropology a part of teacher preparation programs, certification requirements, and in-service training. To bring about such change, there must be continuous and sustained support at the national level on the part of the national anthropological associations.

A Smithsonian Case Study

For almost thirty-five years (1978-2012), several Smithsonian staff members mounted a continuous, concerted effort to promote the teaching of Anthropology in Schools. Initially encouraged by the National Science Foundation's "Pre-College Teacher Development Program," the Smithsonian initially undertook a major initiative in anthropology teacher training in cooperation with the Department of Anthropology at the George Washington University and later, with NEH funding, with the Anthropology Department at the University of Wyoming. Along with the publication, *AnthroNotes*, the two Smithsonian Anthropology for Teachers Programs continued to provide one model demonstrating how museum and university anthropologists can work together with teachers and schools to offer anthropology teacher training (Selig 1997). As a result of this effort, a small cadre of teachers began to take an anthropological approach to the teaching of social studies, science, literature and the arts.

The Anthropology for Teachers Program, both in Washington, D.C. and in Laramie, Wyoming, offered a university course specifically designed for teachers. This course focused on a variety of monthly topics since each class included teachers representing a number of grade levels and subject matter teaching. The course carried university graduate level credits. The Anthropology for Teachers course was offered for four years in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Later it was offered to teachers representing every school in Laramie, Wyoming, and every junior high and high school in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Many of these teachers incorporated anthropology and museum resources into their curriculum for years afterwards.

During the Wyoming program, a linguist at the University of Wyoming wrote about the power of anthropology, to help both teachers and students understand their own cultures, in addition to the cultures of other societies:

The most important aspect of this teacher training program has been its making all of us aware and proud of the rich resources right here in our own community for understanding some of the most important anthropological and humanities questions ever posed: Where and when did humans first come to the New World? How do cultures change and adapt to varying environments over time and around the world? How has language shaped local cultures? We didn't need to go very far to learn about and to discuss these issues – teachers and scholars together.

Cultural anthropologists have often been seen as "cultural outsiders," both in their own culture and the cultures they study. This "outsider" role helps anthropologists bridge the worlds of anthropology, teachers and schools — enabling them to act as effective cultural brokers, moving from their discipline into the arena of schools, bringing the richness of each to the other.

Although funding eventually ceased for the teacher training programs, *AnthroNotes* continued, designed to carry out the same goals as the teacher training program: to give teachers a firm foundation in anthropology by offering up-to-date, research-based articles on major topics in the field; to provide teaching activities and exposure to community resources such as museums, zoos, and research

laboratories; and to create a network of teachers, and museum and university professionals committed to pre-collegiate anthropology. Today, through the internet, *AnthroNotes* reaches tens of thousands of teachers, anthropologists, and the general public.

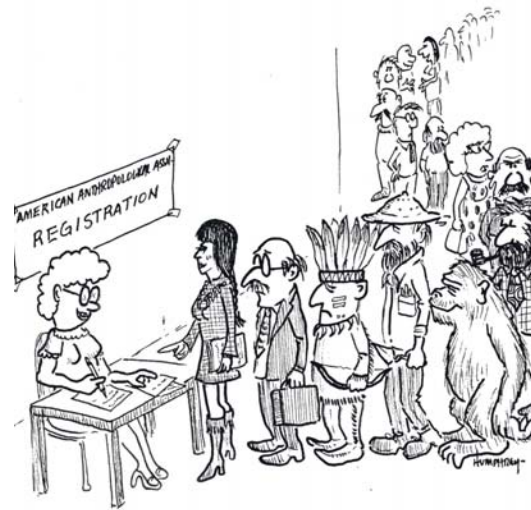
In 1998, The Smithsonian Press published a compendium of the best *AnthroNotes* articles in a single volume – designed for classroom use – titled *Anthropology Explored: The Best of Smithsonian AnthroNotes* (Selig and London, 1998), with a second, expanded edition published six years later (Selig, London and Kaupp 2004). The book, selected as a Natural History Book Club selection when first published, is divided into three sections devoted to Human Origins, Archaeology, and Culture, and, with its free online instructor's guide, serves as an introductory text for high school as well as college students.

In recent years, the Smithsonian Anthropology Outreach Office has organized local teacher workshops on anthropological subjects (American Indians, Archaeology, Forensic Anthropology), and the office has continued to be an important source of teaching material, much of it available online (<http://anthropology.si.edu/outreach/outrch1.html>). In addition, there are new museum programs reaching high school teachers such as the Human Origins Program (website: <http://humanorigins.si.edu/>) and that program's new NSF-funded effort to encourage the incorporation of human origins science into high school AP Biology classes.

Currently, the *AnthroNotes* editors are planning to re-purpose their publication for the digital age. Using technology to scan, convert, upload, package, tag, and recombine materials, *AnthroNotes* will become even more accessible, usable, relevant, and connected for teachers and the general public. By “bundling” the best and most useful *AnthroNotes* articles, teaching activities, and videos under “topics” of wide public interest (i.e. Human Origins; Africa; Evolution; Asia; Race; Growing Up in Other Cultures; Archaeology; Language, etc.), these materials will have even greater relevance to classroom curriculum and teachers around the globe.

The AAA

The story of the American Anthropological Association (AAA)'s involvement with K-12 education has been one of intermittent involvement with a few exemplary efforts by the Association as well as by a few dozen AAA members. In the 1960s and 1970s, professional anthropologists and



the AAA first became involved in curriculum development and teacher training programs for schools (Rice 1986). The successful launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik (October 1957), Cold War rivalry, social ferment, and increased concern over science teaching in schools all led to increased federal funding for education through the NSF in the 1960s.

The AAA took advantage of this new opportunity and produced an anthropology-based high-school curriculum, *Patterns in Human History*. Many elementary schools also taught the anthropology-based *Man: A Course of Study* and the University of Georgia's *Anthropology Curriculum Project* (Higgins 1993; Rice 1993; Dow 1991). These early initiatives apparently had some impact, reflected in three surveys of pre-college anthropology courses conducted by Thomas Dynneson in 1971, 1978, and 1985, revealing a small but increasing presence of anthropology in schools (Dynneson and Coleman 1986). During the 1970s and 1980s, NSF funded a major social science teacher training initiative in anthropology focused pre-college teacher training programs. In a 1986 review of 17 such programs, Patricia J. Higgins documented the increased emphasis on anthropology in pre-college classrooms that resulted from this federal funding (Higgins 1986).

AAA Task Force/Commission

In 1988 several AAA members created a Task Force on Teaching Anthropology sponsored by the AAA, with the Board's mandate 'to promote the teaching of anthropology from elementary school through college' (Higgins 1993; Erickson 2000; Selig 2001). The Task Force organized symposia at the annual AAA meeting that helped define

the core concepts of anthropology and identified effective ways of teaching them. This effort resulted in a major publication focusing on teaching anthropology at all levels, including K-12 students (Kottak et al. 1997).

In 1990, the American Anthropological Association's Task Force on Precollege Education, under the leadership of anthropologist Paul Erickson, undertook a survey to assess the presence of anthropology in the pre-college curriculum, in teacher training, and in teacher certification (Erickson 1992; Selig 1997). The survey revealed that 19 of the 50 U.S. schools of education that responded had a required course in anthropology for teachers in training, although seven of these required it only for those training to teach anthropology. In 20 schools of education, anthropology could be taken as an elective. Of the 30 U.S. state certification agencies responding to the survey, 13 said anthropology was required for some types of teacher certification.

Thus, in 1990, there were clear indications of anthropology's growing inclusion in teacher education and in state certification of teachers (Higgins 1993). Almost a decade later, in 1997, Eric Haanstad compiled a state-by-state assessment of high school social studies curriculum on behalf of the AAA (Haanstad 1997; Selig 2000). Haanstad found that 15 states approved the offering of anthropology electives or had stated anthropology goals or requirements. Momentum continued from 1999 to 2002, as the AAA President appointed seven members to a three-year Commission on Anthropology in Schools, which undertook several initiatives to encourage anthropology teaching in schools. Unfortunately, little substantive progress has been reported in the twelve years since, with a short-lived Anthropology Education Committee (AEC) now discontinued.

Archaeology

Professional archaeologists in the U.S. have provided strong institutional support for public education, primarily because of historical mandates related to combating looting and increasing public awareness of issues surrounding the repatriation of human remains. The public education efforts of the Society for Historical Archeology (SHA) and the Public Education Committee (PEC) of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) have produced the most visible results in teacher programs, conference presentations, and classroom visibility (Smith and McManamon 1991).

Over many years, these organizations have conducted numerous teacher workshops, hired paid staff, and coordinated the work of active volunteer subcommittees. They also sustained a presence at some of the professional meetings of K-12 teachers (Smardz and Smith 2000).

Of all anthropology's subfields, archaeology has the most popular recognition. Students relate most easily to archaeology, which fits more comfortably with existing social studies classes such as American history, world history, and geography. A flourishing program of teacher training, begun under the auspices of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management – 'Project Archaeology' – has long brought archaeology to elementary and middle school teachers. Currently based at the University of Montana, Project Archaeology continues to offer innovative teacher workshops throughout the country and online (<http://projectarchaeology.org>).

Psychology and Sociology

It is instructive to compare anthropology's limited success in putting anthropology into US high schools as an AP elective to the successful story of psychology and sociology. Partly this reflects the difference in the size and available resources of the national organizations. The American Psychological Association (APA) has 137,000 members today compared to the AAA's 11,000. But the American Sociological Association (ASA) includes only 14,000 members and has strongly supported K-12 education for many decades, and, in particular, an Advanced Placement (AP) course in sociology.

In the case of psychology, over 30 years ago the APA focused manpower and funding on making psychology a substantial presence in American high schools. Today, almost a third of high school graduates take psychology. By 2005, approximately 31 percent of graduating high-school students (about 800,000) had taken a psychology course — according to the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study (2005). By 2009, over 133,000 students took the Psychology AP examination, compared to 4,000 in 1992 when the exam was first offered. Today the APA offers a panoply of support to teachers, including affiliated membership, teaching resources, an electronic network of K-12 teachers, publications, and several dedicated staff in the national headquarters.



Archaeology can be used to teach geology, anatomy, paleontology, social studies, STEM, art, and creative writing.

Likewise, the ASA mounted a strong effort to have Sociology formally recognized as a high school elective with an AP exam. Currently, the ASA High School Initiative is building a grassroots network of high school sociology teachers who can join the ASA as individual affiliates. The ASA hopes this new network will help their advocacy with the College Board to establish an AP course and test in sociology. Additionally, the ASA supports an active teachers' listserv, a newsletter for teachers, a Teaching Resources Center, and high school teaching workshops held during the annual ASA meeting.

The Larger Educational Context

National and Local Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (ncss.org) and each state-by-state counterpart is concerned with four disciplines – history, geography, economics, and civics (citizen participation in government). National and local state standards have been published with some involvement by the corresponding scholarly associations. Social Studies is a required subject for all pre-university students for the first eight or nine years, so there is both motive and opportunity for standards to be implemented. Some of these so-

cial studies standards reflect anthropological content (see www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands). However, none of anthropology's five fields is included in any state's social studies requirements. Consequently, there is no impetus on the part of teachers, school districts, parents, students, or relevant professional associations to produce uniformly shared standards for anthropology.

IB/AP Programs

Recent data from the administrative offices of the worldwide International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) suggest that, at least in some of the IB schools located in the U.S., interest in anthropology has grown in recent years. In 2012, 193 of 777 IB Diploma schools offered Social and Cultural Anthropology. Some 475 capstone essays in the subject were submitted to the IBO in 2012. These data are encouraging. As has been seen for psychology and sociology, the development of IB and Advanced Placement (AP) courses often helps lay a foundation for the creation and spread of elective classes in high-school subjects (Selig 2001). Wherever the IB course is offered, one can assume that teachers are trained in the subject and that curriculum and teaching materials are available.

21st Century Partnership

Global Awareness is a critical theme woven into core subjects. According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, an advocacy organization working closely with the U.S. Department of Education, as well as departments of education at the state and local level, achieving Global Awareness implies:

- Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues;
- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts;
- Understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009).

To those involved in the push to make anthropology a more visible part of K-12 education in the U.S., this statement represents an exciting opportunity. It provides a convenient shorthand and structure within which to justify teaching anthropological content, methods, and concepts.

Some organizations that are focused on increasing global awareness in K-12 include the *Asia Society* and its Partnership for Global Learning (<http://asiasociety.org/education/partnership-global-learning>), as well as *Primary Source*, which connects educators to people and cultures around the world through professional development and resources.

Technology/ Informal Education

The education landscape is rapidly changing nationally because of technology-fueled globalization. Educators recognize that students will need different skills from those traditionally taught in the K-12 classroom. Rather than trying to encourage entire school districts or education departments to adopt new courses and standards in anthropology, advocates might, instead, leverage existing opportunities, including new technologies, with a view to introducing as many educators and students as possible to anthropological concepts and methods.

For classroom teachers, a simple Google search for K-12 anthropology resources will return pages of sites, some outdated or of questionable value, some with broken links, but others useful, providing ideas for lesson plans in anthropology, and more commonly, archaeology. Still, although teachers looking for inspiration can find among these resources ways to actively incorporate such lessons into their other courses, there is no single place for teachers with an interest in anthropology to get vetted examples of anthropology curricula clearly aligned to the standards they have been asked to teach. The quality of online resources is mixed, and without a process of verification, outdated and even misleading information can be used from resources found online, particularly in physical anthropology and archaeology where theories, interpretations, and approaches frequently change.

Nonetheless, the rise of online education, as well as homeschooling, provides new avenues and new demands for producing precollege education materials in less traditional subjects. For example, K¹² (www.k12.com), a company that produces online curriculum that can be used at home or in the classroom, has a unit on anthropology. In addition, some online schools and curriculum offerings include anthropology as an elective course, and we can expect to see more of these as more teaching moves online.

New emphases have also emerged with regard to Informal Education. The recent National Academy of Sciences study, “Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places and Pursuits,” as well as the National Science Foundation Informal Science Education grant program, highlight the potential of informal education, emphasizing after-school programs, exhibits, and online learning experiences that teach anthropology to a general audience.

One informal education example comes from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City where every year, the After School Program (ASP) offers courses to New York City high school students interested in the sciences. The courses include anthropology, along with astrophysics, earth science, genetics, biodiversity, and more. As the museum’s website explains, the courses include hall visits, lab and collections tours, talks and lectures by scientists and hands-on activities. Each course is six weeks long and meets once or twice a week after school. The Museum has also initiated internships for high school students, an approach embraced by many museums nationwide, including Smithsonian museums. In fact, museum programs offer one of the best opportunities for bringing anthropology to a broad audience of students.

With the explosion of the digital age and the increasing role of technology, the Internet, games, and free and available resources also may be changing the playing field. The future may well see much less emphasis on textbooks and more experimentation within the curriculum, particularly in charter and magnet schools, and in after-school programs.

Conclusion

The story of anthropology in U.S. schools begins in the early days of anthropology as a profession, with a few anthropologists such as Edgar Lee Hewett advocating the teaching of anthropology in schools. Hewett in 1904 wrote in the *American Anthropologist* that anthropology “should enrich the course of study of every public school in the land” (Hewett 1904). Later leaders such as Margaret Mead continued this tradition, but most anthropologists disparaged the value of “popular anthropology.” Whereas other social sciences – sociology, psychology, and economics—had an “applied” aspect and emphasized the public understanding of their subject, anthropologists remained skeptical of those like Mead who popularized the field.

Although national funding led the AAA to support curriculum development and teacher training in the 1960s, this interest was short-lived. Efforts by anthropology national organizations were relatively limited compared to continuing, committed efforts by other social science organizations. For the most part, anthropologists value research above all else; there is little incentive to support efforts to integrate anthropology into school curriculum. However, increasingly graduate anthropology and archaeology programs include applied courses and even requirements encouraging public engagement, including involvement in school programs.

Looking back through time, it is clear that individual advocates rather than institutional efforts helped put anthropology into some schools. Individuals — with their good intentions, strong commitments, and well-developed curriculum materials — advanced the infusion of anthropological questions, perspectives, and knowledge in school classrooms and, indeed, around dinner tables in homes worldwide. We hope these individual efforts will continue, while at the same time we recognize that only larger-scale institutional efforts, including at museums, can bring anthropology to a wider audience, here and abroad.

******This paper is partly based on several earlier papers by Selig (1997, 2000, 2001) that were used to help prepare the 2010 article “Grassroots Dedication and Opportunism: The Pre-University Anthropology Education Movement in the United States” by Colleen Popson and Guven Witteveen, *Anthropology in Action*, 17, 2&3:34-43. Berghahn Books and the Association for Anthropology in Action.

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