

Discipline of Anthropology Study Guidelines

Version 2 (15th January 2016)

Introduction: How to Use These Study Guidelines

Welcome to the Discipline of Anthropology Study Guidelines. We hope that these notes will provide you with the information you need to make the best of your studies in this fascinating discipline. Anthropologists study the diversity of people's lives in every society and culture of the world. Amidst this diversity of interests there is also the need for some clear rules for communication and debate. These guidelines provide you with one of the elements for this communication; the ability to read and write about the subject as clearly as you possibly can.

The courses you take in the Discipline of Anthropology will all provide their own particular guides to your studies. Therefore, these guidelines **should be read in conjunction with the information found in individual course outlines**. These general study guidelines are used by us all and provide skills that are widely transferable and useful beyond the confines of your anthropological studies.

Before proceeding, here's some brief information about the layout of the guidelines and advice on how best to use them. Each page is divided into two parts: on the left side of the page is the main body of the guide, containing all the essential information required to complete your anthropology studies effectively; on the right side is a 'margin' section that contains all the additional links that we think will supplement these guidelines, along with common 'Dos and Don'ts' to point you in the right direction. Used together, these guidelines and the additional links provide a complete study toolkit. This is a fascinating time to study anthropology and the discipline provides compelling information about the world we inhabit. We hope these guidelines help you to work to the best of your abilities.

Recommended Sources:

These are additional links that provide further, detailed information about elements of study.

Shaded Sections: These contain essential points of advice. For example:

DO read this entire document at least once.

DON'T throw it away!

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1. Analysing the Assignment

The discipline of Anthropology uses a number of ways to evaluate your level of success in its courses. These include essays, reports, oral presentations, and other types of assignment. Each of these assessment forms requires a different process and has specific expectations. It is important that you identify the requirements for each assessment form. Your particular course outline should give you an overview of the specific assessment requirements, especially in the case of more unusual assessment forms, such as research reports. If you are in doubt, seek clarification with your tutor or course coordinator.

1.1 Presentation and Submission of Assignments

Assignments should be word-processed, double-spaced and in a 12 point, legible font (i.e. Arial, Times New Roman). At the top of the first page of the assignment you should indicate the name of the course, the assessment task (i.e. Final essay), the name of your tutor and your own name. Submission requirements for each course can differ so it is important that you check your course guide carefully for instructions. Increasingly, many courses require online submission via MyUni and Turnitin.

1.2 Word Lengths

Students should not exceed or undercut their suggested word lengths by more than 10%. The word length should give a good indication of the level of detail required from the assignment topic (see Planning for Word Lengths). The word count should be a good indicator to you of whether you need to develop your ideas more thoroughly or if your argument may have 'wandered off topic' to include irrelevant information.

1.3 Essays

Essays are exercises in communication. Essay writing is a skill that you will be able to develop throughout your degree. You will be assessed on your understanding of the essay question, its relation to key concepts and debates presented in the course, its position within broader literature and your own critical analysis of the material. Your ability to demonstrate this knowledge (content) to your reader will depend on your essay writing skills (form). How you write is as important as what you write, or you may run the risk of miscommunication. Section 5 below deals with academic writing, which has many conventions that are

Recommended Sources:

University of Adelaide – Faculty of Arts – Essay writing module: <https://arts.adelaide.edu.au/current-students/support/academic-skills/essay-writing/>

Recommended Sources:

For assistance submitting your assignment electronically use the 'Submitting a Turnitin Assignment as a Student' tutorial: <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/myuni/student/tutorials/content/Turnitin-Submitting-a-Turnitin-Assignment-as-a-Student.html>

DON'T sell the question short. The word limit is how long we think an assignment needs to be in order to answer the question properly. You may not have answered the question adequately if the length is much less than this.

Recommended Sources:

University of Adelaide Academic Writing Guide
<http://libguides.adelaide.edu.au/c.php?g=165095&p=108420>
5
University of Adelaide Writing Centre:
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/>

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different to other types of writing. It is a formal style, but one that should not, necessarily be over complicated or employ 'difficult' words simply for effect.

Your essay will need to have a distinctly 'anthropological' quality about it. Considering that most of the marks for a course often derive from essays, it's worth taking full advantage of any opportunity you have to improve your essay writing skills. The University provides a number of resources that can assist you with essay writing. Of particular use for anthropology students are the 'Academic skills' tutorials provided by the Faculty of Arts: <http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/current-students/support/academic-skills/>

1.4 Reports

Writing a report is a different activity from writing an essay. Both require academic language and high standards of grammar, sentencing and argument. However, a report is usually composed of discreet sections (as shown in your course outline), which may not necessarily flow on from one another. Your report may also utilise bullet points, where applicable, as well as tables, graphs and other visual representations of information. If this is the case, you should number and title each table, graph, chart, etc. Where you have a large number of these, you may include a list of tables, list of graphs etc with a contents page. Appendices may be used in your reports to include additional information outside of the required word limit. If this is the case, your appendices must be cross referenced in the body of your report, numbered and titled. Your report should be professionally presented to the best of your ability and resources.

1.5 Oral Presentations

Like essays and reports, oral presentations develop skills that you will undoubtedly be required to use at some time in your professional or personal life. The form of your oral presentation will vary according to the specific course requirements in duration, content and so forth.

Oral Presentations give you the freedom to communicate with fewer constraints than written assignments. You have the freedom to choose the medium that most suits you so use your presentations as an opportunity to experiment with what works best.

DON'T simply write in the way that you speak. Speaking and writing are two very different ways of communicating. Remember that you will not be there in person to clarify the meaning of what you write, so your writing must be clear and focussed on what you're trying to explain.

Recommended Sources:

University of Adelaide – Academic Oral Presentation Skills:
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/english-for-uni/oral-presentation/>

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The key to a successful oral presentation lies in preparation. Make sure you start planning early so that you can consult with your tutor in advance about any questions or clarifications. Similarly, you will need to arrive early to check that the technology is working and have a back up with you in case it is not. The department has facilities for audiovisual recordings, drawing on whiteboards and PowerPoint presentations. In addition to this you might like to bring handouts for students or any other media you would like to use.

If you are not comfortable with public speaking, there are some strategies you can adopt to help you through your presentation:

- Briefly run through your presentation with your tutor beforehand for feedback
- Practice the presentation at home so that you are confident about your material
- Challenge yourself to speak up during each tutorial or workshop so that you are comfortable hearing your voice in that context
- Make friends with others in your tutorial or workshop so that they can support you
- Avoid reading out the whole presentation from papers. Avoiding eye contact with your colleagues will only make you more self-conscious
- Refer to handouts, overheads and other media to deflect attention from yourself and onto what you are talking about
- Remember that everyone in your group is in the same position and will be sympathetic to you – everyone wants you to do well.

2. Reading

To say that reading is the basis for all your studies at university seems rather obvious, but for this reason many students never reflect on whether they are reading appropriately. You should learn to use different styles and techniques of reading to suit the particular task at hand and the constraints of time that are working under. Most students need to learn to read more systematically and more effectively rather than just faster. The aim of reading a book or an article is not simply to amass more and more 'facts' on a topic, for facts by themselves never tell us the answer. You must learn to look for and clearly identify the author's argument.

DO remember that academic texts are not 'whodunits'! It doesn't matter if you turn to the last page first to see what the conclusion is; you won't spoil the plot! In fact, knowing where the author wants you to end up is a very helpful thing to know before you begin reading.

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You can practice this each week when you do your required readings. As you read, ask yourself what the author is trying to say. Only when you have a grip on the argument will you be able to go back over the 'facts' and see whether they really support what the author is saying. To read critically does not mean that you should pit your intelligence against that of the great thinkers of the world and come up with immediate criticisms of them. When you read you must try to formulate the writer's argument and assess that argument against material offered in support of it. Ask yourself what theoretical framework the writer is working within (structural Marxism, symbolic anthropology, French structuralism, for example). Watch for the assumptions that are never proven or never made explicit, and watch for gaps in the logic. It is only after you know what the argument is and why the writer is making it that you can begin to evaluate it against other arguments. And it is only after you have done this that you can begin to think in terms of your own view on the matter.

Several techniques can help you to achieve the kind of critical reading suggested above and, perhaps surprisingly, they don't all require you to read very slowly. Nevertheless, these are methodical techniques.

2.1 Scanning

First, there is scanning. Just as you wouldn't set out on a long car journey without consulting a map of the road ahead, it pays to have a general idea of what you're reading before starting. Scanning describes the way in which you can rapidly formulate a picture of what it is you're attempting to understand through an awareness of some key indicators, such as section headings, lists of references, and conclusions. Is there an abstract that tells you what the article is about? Does the conclusion neatly encapsulate the argument? If there are no sub-headings, can you read the first sentence of each paragraph to get a gist of the argument? You'll quickly 'get your eye in' and learn what signs within the text help you to scan through and grasp the overall argument of the author. As you become familiar with a wide range of anthropological literature you will even find that the author's references contain much information about the position they're 'coming from'.

2.2 Skimming

Skimming is the opposite of scanning, although it is another rapid reading technique. Instead of building up an overall picture of the text, you're reading through to find the essential points within the text, such as places

Recommended Sources:

University of Adelaide – Research and Critical Reading:
<http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/current-students/support/academic-skills/research-and-critical-reading/>

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where supporting evidence is introduced or the section with the main theoretical exposition. Your skim reading may also help you to find important words or phrases that require special attention or further research to properly define what they mean. In short, you're looking for the 'nuts and bolts' of the text that are often the things you must pay closest attention to when reading critically. Skim reading will also often help to identify the particularly important sections of the text (often only a small fraction of the whole) that require particular attention through focussed reading.

2.3 Focussed Reading

Focussed reading is what you will need to do when looking for substantive material for your assignments after you writing an assignment plan (see section 4.2 below). Make use of the index and the picture of the text built-up from scan and skim reading to assist you. Focussed reading is, of course, most similar to the typical image of 'serious' reading associated with academic work. But the point we're making here is that you should not really need to read the whole text with this level of meticulous detail. Doing so is not only time-consuming, but it is also counter productive. Although all texts will require some focussed reading, you should never focus read the whole text.

DO keep a complete reference for everything you read, especially when you might need to use the text in an assignment. Correct and complete referencing is required in all assignments and you can save yourself a lot of time in searching for these references if you keep them as you go along.

2.4 Understanding

In lectures and while reading, keep notes of words you do not understand. You must ask for them to be explained, or look them up in a social sciences dictionary or glossary. It is most important to do this as you read. Do you understand the jargon or technical terms used in the text? If not, find out! What, for example, is the difference between semiology and semiotics? What do people mean when they talk about 'interpretive sociology' or 'virilocal residence'? If you are uncertain about the basic words being used, you must stop and find out, otherwise everything that follows will be incomprehensible. However, do not go to the ordinary dictionaries for your definitions, as they are unsatisfactory. The 'everyday' meaning of words often changes when used in the context of a specific academic discipline, theory, sub-field or even according to a particular author. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary's* definition of 'religion' or 'myth', for example, is not appropriate for use in anthropological

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analysis, so make sure you consult a more appropriate source of information such as the following: Seymour-Smith, C. 1986. *Dictionary of Anthropology*. Boston: G.K. Hall.

3. Note Taking

3.1 Why Write Notes?

It's important that you take notes during lectures, tutorials and workshops. A personal note taking style is something that you will develop throughout your degree. You will need to find a balance between listening to lectures/presentations/workshops and recording information from them. This requires you to select what information you choose to record. You may prioritise the recording of concepts you have difficulty with, terms you don't understand (to look up later), questions that you want to ask later, information relating to your particular assessments, or simply subjects that particularly interest you. Writing notes is an important mnemonic device (an aid to memory), because not only can you refer to them later, but the simple act of writing also helps to implant the information into your mind. Furthermore, the fact that you are recording information in your own words will help you to think through and understand what you are writing about.

When you are at lectures, tutorials or workshop you have the chance to hear the key terms, debates and broad concepts of the course that should inform your assignments. Take note of these key terms and how they are used. This will help you to understand their relevance to your particular assignments or questions and enable to contextualise them within the discipline of anthropology as a whole. Correct use of these terms, concepts and debates in your assignments will demonstrate a good level of comprehension of the essential elements of the course to your reader.

4. Assignment Structure

Good assignment structure is essential for maintaining clarity and strength in your argument. The particular structure you use will depend on the phrasing of the essay or assignment task. Careful consideration of the

DON'T read without a notepad by your side. You will need to jot down a basic plan of the text and particular points in the text that need further thought whenever you read. When you're reading many dozens or even hundreds of pages a week, it helps to have some record of where you found the important information.

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wording of assignment questions will give you a solid base from which to design your assignment. The most common key words in assignment questions are explained below.

4.1 Analysing Questions

Having worked through the material contained in the course reader and additional readings, the next thing to do is look at the precise wording of the question to work out exactly what you are being asked to do in your essay. Underline what you think are the **keywords**: these are vital phrases or words that will decide the treatment, the content, the style and the structure of your essay. Too many people just grab hold of the general topic, instead of the specific question. Apart from words relating to the **content** or topic, there are words that direct you in terms of what you must do with that content and these are called **process** words. The following is a list of the process or instructional words used most frequently in essays:

- **Compare** - look for similarities and differences and perhaps reach a conclusion about which is preferable.
- **Contrast** - set in opposition in order to bring out differences.
- **Criticise** - give your judgement about the merit of theories and opinions, or about the truth of facts; back your judgement by a discussion of evidence or of the reasoning involved. .
- **Define** - set down the precise meaning of a word or phrase; in some cases it may be necessary or desirable to examine different possible or often-used definitions.
- **Describe** - give a detailed or graphic account.
- **Discuss** - investigate or examine by argument; sift and debate; give reasons for and against.
- **Evaluate** - make an appraisal of the worth of something.
- **Explain** - make plain; interpret and account for; give reasons.
- **Illustrate** - use a figure or diagram to explain or clarify, or make clear by the use of concrete examples.
- **Interpret** - expound the meaning of; make clear and explicit, usually giving your judgement also.

You must then decide what the relevant content is: What are the most important elements? What are the limits of the topic? What are assumptions that lie behind the question and what are the implications that arise from it?

DO analyse the question before you do any further work on your assignment. You should, after all, have some idea of what you're trying to do before you assemble the ideas and evidence required to complete the task. Talk to your tutor at the earliest opportunity if you have any problems with the question.

DO revise your understanding of the question at regular intervals during the course of your work. Your understanding of the question may change as your knowledge increases.

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You must select the books and articles that you will need when researching and writing your essay, and you must make sure that these are relevant if you are not to waste considerable time and/or write a bad essay. By analysing the question you will give yourself a fair chance of selecting the relevant material as the basis of writing a good essay. (Adapted from Cole, S. and Woodward, K., 1986. *Returning To Study*. Buckingham: Open University Press)

A large number of problems in assignments stem from misunderstanding of the question. This means that students are facing a big challenge that may be difficult to overcome before they even start to write.

4.2 Assignment Planning

An assignment plan is an essential writing tool. First, make sure you have analysed the assignment question and requirements. Do you understand them? Check the anthropological definition of any words you are unsure of or seek clarification of the assignment task from your colleagues and tutor. The question or task requirements should have an implicit structure within their wording. Think about what it is that the designer of the question/assignment wants you to discuss. Your clues should come from the main concepts of the course and the anthropological debates that it engages with.

You may want to sketch out a plan of how you envisage your assignment will look before you even begin detailed research. This is a great way to test out an argument. You might list subheadings only or you could bullet point some more specific details. Alternatively, your essay plan might be a list of the questions that each of your sections will answer. Another useful technique is to brainstorm and create a *concept map* that includes as many different ideas and how they are linked as possible. After you have finished your plan, check it against the essay question. Does your plan answer the question with a logical sequence of ideas? Are there any irrelevant sections? If in doubt, you may like to take your plan to your tutor to check that you are on the right track.

DO plan your assignments before you start to write. A well planned assignment will almost write itself if you've already done the hard thinking during the planning stage

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4.3 Planning for Set Word Lengths

Once you are happy with your assignment plan, you can divide the total word count amongst the sections that you have identified. As a guide, allow 10 – 15% for the introduction and 10% for the conclusion. Divide the remainder evenly amongst the remaining sections in the body of the essay. You might need to take into account the fact that some sections are more important than others, but make sure that your essay overall is balanced in its word count. For example, in a compare and contrast type of essay you will need to allot roughly the same number of words to 'compare' as you do to 'contrast'.

After allotting your word quota for each section, you will be surprised at how much easier the task appears. Instead of one long assignment to write, you have very 'do-able' sections of an essay. This also has the benefit of helping you to know when you have written enough about a topic and forces you to be succinct or prioritise.

In terms of number of references, you will be able to look at your plan and see that, for example, you will need 2 or 3 references for each for topic covered by your assignment. This will help you to hone your search for resources, as you will know exactly what it is that you are looking for. You will only need to look for references that fit your plan, rather than gathering and reading a whole pile of books that later seem irrelevant. This saves you time spent gathering wasted resources and improves the structure and strength of argument in your assignment. The result is that it will be you controlling the direction of your essay and its argument instead of being a slave to some interesting quotations and building an essay around them (which inevitably won't answer the essay/assignment question that you have been given). In other words, **planning will help you gain a strong sense of authorship over your assignments.**

4.4 Writing the Introduction of Your Assignment

The introduction is a prospective map of your assignment. You need to indicate clearly to the reader what you are going to do. Your introduction should reveal what your essay is about to the reader, what you are going to discuss, how are you going to discuss it, what examples you will use to illustrate your argument, and what is the overall aim of your essay. All you need to do is look at what is in the essay body and re-tell that in a prospective sense. Put simply:

DON'T think that you can easily alter the argument and structure of your assignment once you have started to write the complete version. The planning stage is the time to make fundamental changes if things don't appear to be working or if you notice a potential problem with the word limit.

DON'T think you save yourself time by rushing into the task at hand. Forward planning is always a surer way to success.

DO think about your reader. They must have a clear idea of what they are going to encounter in a text when they begin to. Give a clear account of what you understand the assignment to be about and how you intend to approach it. Let your reader know where you intend to take them in the pages that follow.

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make sure that your introduction indicates all the concepts, arguments, terms and examples that the reader will be reacquainted with in the body of your essay.

The introduction to your essay does not need to be repetitive. If you are uncomfortable using the first person, you can use “this essay” or “this assignment”. If you don’t tell your reader what you are doing, they might form their own opinions and misunderstand your essay. If the reader has to work hard to figure out what you are doing they may be confused at the start. Take control of your essay and be explicit about what you are doing so that you demonstrate your control of its direction and structure. The introduction should start broad and narrow down its focus. It concentrates your information. For example, start with a statement about anthropology in general – then media anthropology – then the anthropology of music – then study of rap music – then your own case study or example. You could visualise this structure it like an upside down triangle or funnel; you move from the general to the particular.

Put all of the key terms you will be using into the introduction. Make sure that these key terms are defined and actually used throughout the remainder of the assignment. Many writers find it easier to write an introduction after writing the body of their essay so that they can ‘see’ exactly what it is that needs introducing. This also ensures that the introduction reflects exactly what is (and isn’t) in the body of the essay. Some writers feel that writing the introduction first helps tie them to a structure and keep them on task. Others combine both approaches by re-writing the introduction after the essay has been completed! The strategy will depend on your personal experiences of how focussed you are when you write.

4.5 Writing the Main Body of Your Assignment

In general, try to move from:

- Theory
- Your explanation of the theory
- (Ethnographic) example
- Explanation of how example supports/contradicts the theory

DON'T mention something in the introduction that is not discussed in the essay and don't go into detailed, lengthy analysis and citing/quoting in the intro. The introduction is the ‘user’s manual’ for the essay. It should only reflect what is in the body of the essay.

DO remember that there is no rule that says the first thing you should write is the first thing the reader reads. Introductions can often be written last.

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- Summary of the meaning of this in relation to the essay question
- Leading statement to the next section or conclusion, which recounts the whole process

Depending on the essay question, you might go through this process only once in the essay, it may characterise each section of your essay, or it may resemble the entire structure of the essay. This is something that you will need to decide after analysing the assignment question and considering the task.

4.6 Maintaining an Argument Throughout Your Assignment

Your argument of is the thread that directly ties everything to the answer you're providing to the question. Take, for example, this question: 'Does fan activity subvert or reinforce the production of celebrity? Discuss using ethnographic evidence drawn from at least two different social contexts'. The argument of your essay would revolve around the relationship between fans and stars, in terms of celebrity To keep the argument strong throughout your essay you will need to include key statements or 'signposting' statements to shape your argument. These statements would appear in the introduction and conclusion as well as at the end of each of your sections/paragraphs. In this example, the signposting could read something along the lines of the following: 'the ways in which fans write their own fantasy novels and insert themselves into the plot together with fictional characters is an example of how fan activity can subvert the production of celebrity. I shall now discuss this use of fan fiction in relation to studies of Star Trek fans carried out by...[etc.]'.

The effect upon the reader of hearing the essay question rephrased in this way throughout your essay assures them that you have answered the essay question and that your discussions have been relevant to the essay question. The effect upon the writer is that you are forced to constantly assess if and how your selected information either supports or challenges the essay question. In turn, this will improve your authorship, structure and argument.

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4.7 Writing the Conclusion

Think of the conclusion as an extra section attached to the end of the essay after you have finished your analysis or argument. It is the retrospective map of what you have just done and mirrors the introduction (for example, “in this essay I began by looking at...”) Remind the reader how you took them from the first point right through to the last and why? What were the logical thoughts that linked one topic/theme to another? What did you prove? Did your example either prove/disprove or support/challenge the theory that you started with? Why was this significant?

Where your introduction narrowed down in focus, your conclusion will blossom out. Its final statement will relate your specific argument to wider debates within your course and anthropology. For example, working out from Eminem, to rap music, to the anthropology of music, to media anthropology, and finally to anthropological theories in general.

Don't leave your best stuff for the conclusion where you can't expand on it in sufficient detail! Likewise, don't be afraid to show your own opinion until it is too late to go into it in detail. If you have a valid argument, opinion or example that puts what a published author has said into doubt, then go right ahead and let the reader know about this before you reach the conclusion.

Don't contradict your whole argument in the conclusion either. Don't argue that *Pop Stars* is as worthy of intellectual enquiry as Beethoven and then say how much you would rather use a Pop Stars video to prop up the leg of a wobbly table! The conclusion will be the freshest things in the marker's mind when they finish reading so it should reflect the quality you had in the 'body' of the essay. Try to end the essay with *your* conclusion, in *your* words (rather than with a quotation or citation) and think of the most interesting contribution that you can make to the topic.

4.8 Editing

It's an excellent idea to proof read out loud to your self to check for flow, grammar and syntax. You will need to keep an objective opinion about what you have written. This is best achieved after a break from writing when you are less

DO you need to write the conclusion last? Not necessarily! If you're having trouble planning your assignment this could be because you don't have a clear idea of where you're heading in your answer. Have a go at writing the conclusion first. The final version of the concluding section of your assignment will probably change, but having a 'preliminary conclusion' to guide your thoughts can give you the confidence and direction you needed to organise your thoughts.

DO think carefully about your conclusion. It's the last thing the reader sees and the thing that will stick in their mind as a result.

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attached to what you have produced, and is a good reason to finish your work at least a day before the due date. The polish that a well-edited essay adds to the overall assessment of your essay will be well worth the organisational effort required.

Make sure that what you are writing is the logical argument for an answer to that *particular* question. This assumes, of course, that you have studied the essay question before you began writing to analyse what it is that you have been instructed to do. Point out any significant relationships to the essay question whenever they arise (i.e. where they are most relevant), rather than waiting until the conclusion. Spell it out! This is called signposting, as it 'signposts' to the reader that you are answering the essay question and that your essay is effectively structured.

Be critical of what you have written. If it does not challenge, support, enhance or otherwise relate to your argument then it will only weaken your argument. Even if you have invested extra time to word a section perfectly only to later feel that it is 'off topic', you would be better to delete it than let it detract from your ability to answer the essay question. Take out any waffle!

Check that the essay is balanced. Have you spent approximately the same number of words on your argument for as well as against? Have you compared theory A in as much detail as theory B? Does one section have many more references than the other?

Don't lose sight of the bigger picture. Can you relate your essay question to the wider debate of the particular course (not your other courses in other Faculties or Schools)? Your essay topic may be a 'window' on a bigger debate about identity, gender, agency, performance, culture or anthropology in general. Ensure that you indicate to your reader that this is the case.

USE THE FOLLOWING CHECKLISTS TO TICK OFF EACH OF THE BULLET POINTS AS YOU EDIT YOUR ASSIGNMENTS.

Recommended Sources:

The University of Adelaide – Key Grammar Issues in Arts Assignments:

<http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/current-students/support/academic-skills/grammar/>

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Basic Introduction Checklist:

- Does the introduction begin at a general anthropological level and build up to the specific issues you will address?
- Does the introduction reveal everything the essay will cover, how, with what examples and in what order?
- Does the introduction reveal the overall aim of the essay?
- If someone was to read the introduction only, would they have a sense of everything the essay will do, or would the body of the essay surprise them?
- Does the introduction utilise the key terms and concepts that the body of the essay defines and discusses at further detail?

Basic Main Body Checklist:

- Can you summarise each paragraph of your assignment with one word? If not, perhaps you need to isolate the themes and discuss them in separate sections of your assignment.
- Does each paragraph answer an implied question? (For example, what is anthropology? what is its aim? what are its research methods?)
- Are all of the segments of your assignment relevant to the assignment question? Is their relevance made obvious in the wording of the segment with the use of signposting and key statements (see 4.6 Assignment Planning – ‘Maintaining an Argument Throughout Your Essay’)
- Does each section end with a summary that relates its significance back to the essay question?
- Does this summary re-work or reformulate a key phrase from the essay question? (see section 4.6)
- Have you included course-specific terms, concepts, debate and ideas?
- Is there a relationship between the first and last sentence of each paragraph?
- Does the beginning of each paragraph/section flow on from end of the previous one?
- Does the end of each paragraph/section lead on to the beginning of the next?
- Does each paragraph/section end with your own words or a citation (see 7.4 ‘Citations’)?
- Have you explained the quotes used in order to demonstrate your understanding of them?

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Basic Conclusion Checklist:

- Have you summarised the ground covered in the body of the essay, according to the order of your sections and/or paragraphs?
- Do you move from specific detail to broader course and anthropological issues (mirroring your introduction)?
- Does your conclusion engage with the original essay question?
- Have you ended your essay with your conclusion, in your own words?
- What positive or negative impression does your essay make upon the reader?

5. Language

5.1 Written Academic Language

A complete guide to writing is beyond the scope of these guidelines and you should go to the recommended resources for further information. In this section we confine ourselves to offering some basic points to remember when writing academically in the discipline of anthropology:

- Introduce, Define and Explain key terms before you use them. Don't take them for granted. Always use an anthropological dictionary or glossary where possible. Common words like 'culture', 'genealogy', 'capital' and 'structure' have particular meanings when used in anthropology or by certain theorists.
- Avoid absolutes like 'always', 'never', 'best', 'worst' – unless it is an undisputable fact. This is not just because you are setting yourself up to be challenged, but because a more anthropological angle would be to look at the cultural reasons behind why something is perceived as being 'better' or 'worse'.
- Avoid value judgements like 'A is more difficult/intellectual/valid/cultural/better/worse than B' because it's your job as an anthropologist to identify and challenge such judgemental opinions. One cultural act may be different from another, but does this imply any difference in quality? Anthropologists are interested in the various and often contradictory ways in which things are socially understood and are given meaning in different ways not in your own subjective opinion of them.

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- Learn to recognise your own assumptions and their questionability. For example 'Britney Spears' lyrics are less intellectual than REM'. Or likewise, '*Dateline* is obviously better than *Neighbours*'. This might seem to be the case because of popular cultural opinion, but one cultural thing is not innately or intrinsically better than another. Always substantiate your own opinions by framing them in terms of theory (either supporting or challenging theories). Don't launch into your own personal crusade without departing from a theoretically grounded position – otherwise you can't demonstrate how significant your opinion or example is, it loses its impact and makes you look unthoughtful and your essay un-academic.
- Be explicit – don't imply that something is significant or leave something unsaid hoping that the reader will catch on. Spell it out or run the risk of being misunderstood.
- Unless you were asked to do a book review – don't do one!
- Don't refer to 'reading 1' or 'lecture 2' or 'tutorial 3' or the order in which an author discussed certain points in their article unless the essay question specifically asked you to!
- Your essay should demonstrate your wider reading (beyond the readings provided). Don't draw attention to the fact that you only read 1 or 2 things from the reader! This will never be enough material to make a valid argument in your assignment.
- Unless otherwise stated, your assignments should be independent of 'the course' or 'the course reader' or 'the lectures'. The essay should make sense to someone who wouldn't have a clue what your 'first reading' was about or what you spoke about in class.
- The longer your sentences are and the more points you try to pack into them, the less significant they become. In other words, they will lose their point and their emphasis. Use proof reading to help you if you have a problem with this. Try to make only one substantive point per sentence.
- Be distinctively anthropological. If you are writing an anthropological essay, try to use an anthropological tone. Focus on the people (viewers, consumers, watchers, readers, meaning makers) rather than on objects/things/phenomena themselves. Prioritise people and give them voices by using an anthropological tone. If you have not done 1st year anthropology, familiarise yourself with basic concepts used in the discipline, such as culture, ethnography, agency, participant-observation and ethnocentrism (see 10.8 below 'First Time Anthropology Students'). Use an anthropological dictionary or glossary to look up any unfamiliar terms (see 2.4 "Understanding").

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- Pay attention to the key words and concepts covered throughout the course. These will help you to orient and contextualise your essay topic (see 3.1 “Why write notes?”)
- Avoid using etc. or e.g. in an essay. Use ‘and so on’, and ‘for example’ or ‘in other words’.

5.2 Sexism and Language

It is University policy that all teaching materials and written work be prepared in non-sexist language. It is important that students grapple with this aspect of acceptable academic writing. One of the main ways that the humanities and social sciences have enshrined gender stereotypes has been through using the masculine as the universal gender. This is found in the use of words like mankind, and in textbook titles like ‘man and society’ or ‘man in the natural world’. There was, until recent years, the widespread practice of writing ethnographies that claimed to be a comprehensive description of a society but in fact dealt only with men’s lives and with men’s views of women and domestic life.

You will often have to overcome the sexist languages and perspective of the texts you use as well as attending to your own language use. Watch out that you are not saying ‘he’ when you really mean ‘he or she’ (which is sometimes more economically written s/he or (s)he) and make sure you are not using words in which the female form is demeaning. Sometimes you will be able to find acceptable substitutes for sexist words, at other times you will need a simple rephrasing of a sentence or idea. For example, the word ‘actor’ for all those who act can be used instead of the gender specific term ‘actress’.

It is really quite easy to write non-sexist English. It may require a little thought on our part. It is important to learn how to do it, and the University requires us to do so.

6. Non-Essay Presentations: Posters, PowerPoint, Websites and Video

You may be asked to submit an assignment using a medium other than a traditional essay for some subjects within the Discipline of Anthropology. These media may include posters, PowerPoint presentations, websites or videos, to name only the most obvious. Although these will require the use of skills that are specifically related to the chosen medium, *it is*

DON'T think that the careful consideration of language and its use is only due to a concern with ‘political correctness’. Anthropologists must always be acutely aware of the social and cultural contexts within which they work. Using language in an inappropriate way may be seriously misleading.

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important to remember that many of the things you normally do when researching and writing an essay are still important. In fact, given that you will have fewer words available to you in these media it is vital that each word or image used provides the biggest possible contribution to the message you're trying to convey. The only way this can happen is if your background research has been comprehensive and rigorous. The use of alternative presentation media does require a change in how you convey your ideas, but it emphatically does not mean that you can take shortcuts when preparing your ideas and analysis. And it is ideas and clarity of analysis that are at the core of the successful completion of these types of presentation.

As with essay writing, if the analysis of the subject you're presenting is strong and you are confident in your understanding, it becomes much easier to imagine how your chosen medium can work to convey these ideas to your audience. So the first points to emphasise here are that *you must do as much background research as necessary to understand and be confident in your analysis of the assigned topic and you must place the medium chosen at the service of your ideas.* No amount of beautiful imagery or PowerPoint trickery can disguise a weak analysis.

One advantage of completing a traditional essay assignment is that you have a simple and well-rehearsed model of presentation to guide your work. Much of this study guide concentrates on ensuring that you understand the overall qualities and individual elements of this essay model. Such advantages are less apparent with other media, but they do have some significant advantages over traditional essays. They encourage the combined use of graphics and imagery, sounds or music, and often move us away from the strictly linear and chronological presentation of ideas. If essays provide a relatively one-dimensional flow within an argument, posters, websites and other media allow for more multidimensional analyses. Again, this is only a *potential* of these media; the successful execution of such a multi-dimensional presentation depends upon your understanding of the topic, a clear idea about your argument and your ability to translate this argument into a presentation that makes effective use of the different possibilities of the medium you have chosen or been assigned to use.

If the ability to develop a good understanding of the topic and line of argument broadly depends upon skills that are familiar to you from previous essay writing assignments, what additional things do you need to consider when using media such as posters, PowerPoint, websites or video?

DON'T underestimate how long it will take you to prepare your presentation or assignment. It will probably take you as much time as a normal essay assignment, possibly longer depending on the amount of work required to finish the assignment to the standard of presentation required.

DO seek clarification from your tutor if there are any aspects of the 'non-traditional' assignment that you are at all unsure of, especially the evaluation criteria used to assess and grade your work.

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These are a few things that you should bear in mind when designing your presentation:

1. Balance and symmetry
2. Pace of the presentation
3. Ratio of text to image
4. Links between elements of the presentation
5. Types of image or other content used
6. Choice and use of materials used
7. Sensory elements included
8. Types of media included within the presentation.
9. Types of interaction required by viewer
10. Range of people and places referred to in ethnographic content
11. Anthropological ideas and theories included
12. Features that you want to stand out
13. Questions the presentation provoked
14. Technical limitations of the available hardware or software

Finally, remember that while these are broad principles that can help you with the production of your poster, website, blog etc. your work should always be governed by the marking criteria and instructions that you have been given for your specific course/assignment.

7. Feedback

7.1 Written Feedback on Your Assignment

The feedback that you receive on your assignments is vital to improving your writing and research skills. Always read the comments provided by your tutor and try to keep an open mind. If you would like to discuss any particular problems that you are having with your assignments, you can make an appointment with your tutor who can explain the issue to you in more

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detail and refer you to helpful resources.

7.2 Assessment: What Grades Mean

It is very important that you read the marking criteria for all of your assignments. Remember that different marking criteria will be used in different anthropology courses, and even within the same course. Depending on the nature of the assignment, the marker will be looking for different qualities. The marking criteria provides a clear description of the expectations of your marker and is an essential resource that you should use when completing your work. While marking criteria and assignment formats do differ, it is helpful to have a broad understanding of the grading system and what an assignment of this calibre looks like in anthropology. Below are some generalised examples of assignments that fall into the pass, credit, distinction and high distinction category. Again, remember that you must consult the tailored marking criteria for each of your individual assignments:

PASS

The **pass** assignment is the ‘everything I know about...’ kind of writing. The student has **read** about the essay topic, but does not answer the question. Information given may be interesting and correct but without a focus on the question; this information will be irrelevant. The pass essay may read like more of a book review. There may be no conclusions drawn, except perhaps the standard “more research is needed in this area”, which is not a conclusion that demonstrates that you have engaged critically with the course material. The structure of the pass essay is loose, if not missing altogether, as there is no argument to give it a structure. If quotes are used, they may be left standing on their own and are often used to end whole paragraphs. The essay may even be mostly composed of quotations. The reader of this essay is left wondering what it was about and the only thing that might explain this is the essay question itself. There is no sign of proof reading or spell checking.

Criticisms – unstructured; too much irrelevant material; off topic; not related to the course as a whole (i.e. has used readings from another vaguely related course or subject); no use of the key concepts or terms that the course has been built around; overuse of internet material; uncritical use of material.

DON'T just look at your grade. The mark only gives you a brief ‘sketch’ of how well you did. Your tutor’s feedback on the assignment will indicate exactly why you got the mark that you did. They will also indicate what problems you encountered and how to avoid them in the future.

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CREDIT

The **credit** essay shows the student has **understood** the course material because they have chosen the bits and pieces of information from readings that are relevant to the question and provide an answer. The student has been able to select quotations from a variety of resources (from more than just the course reader) that actually address the essay question. The student will not leave quotations hanging around to talk for themselves. They follow a quotation with an explanation of it in their own words, demonstrating that they have engaged with the concept. The credit essay uses key concepts and terms related to the course. The conclusions of the credit essay engage with the essay question; take a stand in relation to it and flow from the body of the essay.

Criticisms - they have been able to structure their essay around material that has enough relevance to the essay question to suggest a valid conclusion, but gone no further than this minimum requirement.

DISTINCTION

The **distinction** assignment demonstrates a level of critical **analysis** of course material. The student uses quotations that back up their own argument rather than basing their argument around interesting quotations from other authors. Quotations will be used very selectively and the student will prefer to paraphrase these as well as concepts or theories. To demonstrate analysis, the student will then comment on the quote, concept or idea through critical analysis – pointing out its shortcomings, oversights, ethnocentricities or assumptions. The conclusion makes a critical comment not only on the essay question at hand, but will refer to wider issues in the ethnographic area to the theoretical area and within anthropology at large. This shows that students can contextualise course material into a ‘bigger picture’. The distinction essay will introduce a concept, define it in the students’ own terms and then illustrate it using ethnographic examples. The student has claimed authorship and control of the essay and the reader is aware of this through overt statements relating the significance of each paragraph/section back to the essay question. Paragraphs flow on from one another with logical links.

Criticisms – excellent essay but lacks originality; examples are not of the student’s own original thought.

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HIGH DISTINCTION

The **high distinction** stands out because of its ***original thought*** and engagement. The student has used original or local examples (perhaps from recent news items) or presented an alternative theory/application/approach/concept. The high distinction essay must be well written; correctly referenced and based on more than the core readings. Hardly a word is wasted. The analysis of existing theories/concepts/terms etc is thoughtful, insightful and original. The reader does not have to wonder where the essay is going or why because this is clearly stated through signposting in the introduction, body and conclusion.

Criticisms – there probably won't be many or even any!

7.3 Consulting with Your Tutor

It is important that you consult with your tutor regarding any problems that are affecting your ability to complete the course successfully. Try to ask questions during workshops or tutorials when the answer may benefit not only yourself, but your colleagues also. If you have personal information that you need to divulge to your tutor, you can make an appointment to talk with them confidentially. The most important point to remember is to approach your tutor as soon as possible. Many staff members are working on more than one project and tutors are often employed on a part-time basis.

Your tutor will either have a nominated consultation time each week during which they are available for one-on-one assistance or you may be able to arrange other times. Check with your tutor or use My Uni to look up your tutor's consultation times. It is your responsibility to contact your tutor for personalised assistance. Please be patient when waiting for replies and take into account the means in which you have made contact with your tutor. If you have an urgent matter which requires attention it is best to make personal contact with your tutor through visiting or telephone rather than email. If you visit your tutor and they are not there, leave a message for them at the School of Social Sciences office, or a note on their door. An alternative is to seek assistance from another course tutor or the course coordinator.

DO remember that not all tutors work under full-time contracts. Check the availability of the tutor who is marking your work in advance. They may not be available to see you at the last minute.

DON'T worry if you have an urgent enquiry regarding your assignment but your tutor is unavailable for consultation. Other tutors or lecturers teaching your course may be able to help you. Arrange to talk with them instead.

8. First Time Anthropology Students

If you have never done anthropology before, it will be helpful for you to familiarise yourself with the basic aims, concerns, methodologies, practices and debates of anthropology. A very brief summary of social anthropology is provided here for your benefit, with further reading suggested to the right.

It may help you think about the fact that although *Homo sapiens* is one species, it is possible to identify many social groups and sub-groups within it. Social anthropology is interested in the similarities and differences amongst and across groups. Social anthropologists accord these differences to culture. The term culture is not used in the sense of 'high' or 'low' culture. Rather, it is used broadly to refer to the values, beliefs, morals, arts, institutions, systems, media, customs, practices and so forth, which characterise a society. Although some anthropologists specialise in rituals, performances and events, anthropology is interested in the taken for granted assumptions of mundane every day life, thus rendering these practices highly revealing about 'ourselves' as well as 'others'. The methodology privileged by anthropology is **qualitative**. This does not exclude quantitative data, but seeks to explain, contextualise or give meaning to statistical data.

Fieldwork is seen by many as the definitive methodology of social anthropology. It entails an anthropologist immersing him/herself within a society (a field site, that is either 'away' or 'at home') for an extended period of time (usually one year minimum) to carry out **participant-observation**. The aim of fieldwork is to come to understand a society on its own terms and to write an **ethnography** (document describing the society in detail in general or specifically) that explains these terms to another society. Another benefit of immersing oneself in another culture is to avoid **ethnocentrism**, which is the projection of one culturally specific mode of understanding onto a different culture. Anthropology has recently become highly critical (**reflexive**) about itself and the role of the ethnographer in the construction of ethnographies.

To reflect an anthropological standpoint in your assignments, you should try to recognise, problematise and transcend assumptions, judgements, presumptions, speculations, stereotypes and generalisations.

Recommended Sources:

The University of Adelaide Anthropology Library Guide:

<http://libguides.adelaide.edu.au/anthropology>

A useful online resource is the Palomar College 'Anthropology Tutorial' site. This award-winning site contains a complete set of tutorials on the basic framework of social and cultural anthropology (along with a tutorial on the related discipline of physical anthropology). You can test your knowledge and understanding at the end of each tutorial with a quick multiple-choice quiz! Find it at <http://anthro.palomar.edu/tutorials/>