Frequently Asked Questions

Contacts

Who should I contact for assistance during the application and admission process?

- To start a new application for one of our graduate programs, use the link at [http://gradadmissions.wayne.edu](http://gradadmissions.wayne.edu).
- For general information about anthropology graduate degrees, inquiries about your application, assistance on any administrative aspect of your application, as well as inquiries about our academic aspects of our program or your application and any other questions, contact our Graduate Director, Dr. Stephen Chrisomalis at chrisomalis@wayne.edu or 313-577-9922. *Dr. Chrisomalis is on sabbatical until January 2019, please contact Interim Graduate Director, Dr. Krysta Ryzewski at krysta.ryzewski@wayne.edu during the Fall semester.*
- You can find contact information for our departmental faculty members at [http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Anthropology/Directory](http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Anthropology/Directory). Our faculty welcome inquiries from prospective students.
- For questions concerning the online application or about Wayne State University in general, contact the Office of Graduate Admissions at gradadmissions@wayne.edu or 313-577-4723.

Our Programs

What are the areas of specialization of your program?

Our M.A. program provides students a solid foundation in cultural, linguistic, biological, and archaeological anthropology and it offers in-depth training in a number of specializations, including: historical archaeology, museum studies, business/organizational anthropology, medical anthropology, urban anthropology, paleo-diet, foodways, design, social entrepreneurship, and land-use studies. We are open to MA students with a variety of interests across all major areas of anthropology.

Our PhD. program also builds from the aforementioned strengths to provide extensive anthropological training, geared towards preparing students for careers both inside and outside of academia. In addition to the PhD in Anthropology, we offer two interdisciplinary degrees for students who are interested in combining anthropological training with Social Work (SWAN) or issues of Environmental Sustainability in urban settings (T-RUST). Since 2017 our PhD. students have had the opportunity to gain professional experience towards potential careers in non-academic settings as paid summer interns in the Wayne State Humanities Clinic.

At the PhD level, there is a much greater expectation that your interests will coincide with one or ideally multiple full-time faculty members who can serve as your advisors and doctoral committee. Our core areas of specialty at the doctoral level include medical anthropology, business/organizational anthropology, urban anthropology, historical archaeology, and cultural anthropology.

Both of our graduate programs are designed to provide intellectual breadth as well as specialization in relevant areas, locally and globally. Alumni of our graduate programs have been extremely successful applying their training to a wide variety of careers in: government, non-profits, academia, cultural resource management, public policy, city planning, law, health care, engineering, design, environmental management, publishing, social services, research and development, marketing, and business - to name
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just a few! Visit Wayne State Anthropology's You Tube channel to listen to our students talk about the benefits of their graduate training in our Department.

**What is your acceptance rate?**
Over the past three years our acceptance rate for the MA has been around 65% and our acceptance rate for the PhD has been around 30%.

**How many students do you accept per year?**
We do not have a minimum or maximum number of students accepted to either the MA or PhD programs. Over the past several years, including both MA and PhD students, our incoming classes have ranged between ten and fifteen students.

**How many students are in your programs?**
Over the past five years, our MA program has ranged in size from 30-40 students and our PhD program has ranged in size from 28-40 students. Graduate-level courses almost always have fewer than 20 students enrolled and often range from 5-9 students.

**What are your application deadlines?**
There is one deadline for admission to the PhD program. The deadline for PhD students is January 15, for students applying for Fall admission.

There are two deadlines for MA students is January 15, for students applying for Fall admission, and October 15, for students applying for Winter admission.

We do not admit graduate students to start in the Spring/Summer term.

**Can I pursue my studies part-time?**
We have many successful students who have pursued the MA or PhD degrees on less than a full-time basis. The MA is particularly well-suited to part-time study and many of our students take only one or two courses per term.

At the PhD level, we do want to emphasize that while it is feasible to take only two courses a term, the doctorate is not a casual degree and will, at all points, but especially during fieldwork and dissertation-writing, require intensive commitments of time and energy. Part-time PhD students who have been successful work closely with both their advisors and their employers to ensure that they can meet deadlines, balance work commitments (including reduced employment at critical periods) and ultimately, make a major intellectual contribution to the discipline of anthropology.

**How long will it take to finish my degree?**
The MA program is designed to be completed in two to two and a half academic years (four or five terms) for full-time students. For MA students who are taking the coursework (Plan C) stream, two years is normal; students doing an essay or thesis may take an extra term or two.

The PhD program is designed to involve three years of coursework, one year of qualifying exams and preparing a prospectus, one to two years for fieldwork, and one to two years for writing up and defending the dissertation, for a total of between six and eight years. Because anthropology is a field discipline, language training, pre-fieldwork trips, and other unforeseen eventualities can lengthen that time. Of course, for either of these programs, students attending part-time will take longer than students attending full-time.
Will my anthropology MA from another institution be counted towards a Wayne State Ph.D.?
If there are specific graduate courses from another institution that substantially duplicate required courses in our program, you may (after beginning the program) request a course equivalency and have these count towards your degree. Similarly, electives from your previous program may or may not count towards your Ph.D. at Wayne State – this is something to be discussed with the Graduate Director after your arrival.

Are graduate courses offered online?
While some graduate courses are occasionally offered on an online basis, this is not a regular occurrence. We do not offer online graduate degrees currently.

Is it possible to earn a graduate degree taking only evening courses?
Many of our graduate courses are offered both during daytime and evening hours in alternating years. Because we are a medium-sized program, most of our graduate required courses are offered only once a year and so if you are unable to take daytime courses due to work commitments, this will probably lengthen your time to complete the degree.

What do your students do after graduating?
At the MA level, around 30% of our students go on to doctoral studies either at WSU or elsewhere, while others use their degrees to seek employment or promotion in a variety of health, business, and cultural professions. Our MA program has a strong applied focus with a variety of practicum and research opportunities.

At the PhD level, around half of our graduates find employment as researchers and teachers in academic environments, while many others are actively employed as applied scholars, as health professionals, consultants, or analysts.

Can I visit campus and talk to faculty and students?
Yes, absolutely! We strongly encourage prospective students to communicate with faculty whose interests complement their own, as soon as possible during the application process. You are welcome, while applying, to plan a visit to campus to meet with faculty, staff, and graduate students. Please also consider contacting our Anthropology Graduate Student Organization (AGSO; http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/Anthropology/AnthropologyGraduateStudentOrganization) who may be able to set up meetings or email contact with individual students who share your interests. We hold an annual recruitment event each winter for students admitted to the program for the coming fall.

What is it like to live in the Detroit area?
Some of our students live on or immediately near campus – Wayne State and the Midtown area in general are safe, heavily populated with students, and full of restaurants, cultural institutions, and shops. Information about on-campus housing can be found at http://housing.wayne.edu. Other students live further afield either in Detroit itself or in one of the many suburbs of the city. Many of our Canadian students live across the Detroit River in nearby Windsor, Ontario (15-20 minutes drive). The cost of living in metro Detroit is extremely reasonable and most major suburbs are 20-30 minutes driving commute from campus. Our current graduate students would be happy to advise new students about their housing options.

Choosing a Degree Program

Do I need a prior degree in anthropology to apply to your program?
Applicants to our MA program do not require a prior degree in anthropology. We do require students who have no prior anthropology coursework whatsoever to take an undergraduate introductory course (ANT
2100 or equivalent), either before admission or in the first semester of the program.

While we do not require that students come into our PhD program with a degree in anthropology, virtually all our PhD students in recent years have a demonstrated academic commitment to the discipline prior to admission. This could be an anthropology degree (either BA or MA), a degree in a closely related field, or a set of anthropology courses taken beyond your previous degrees. Because, in admitting you, we know that you will be here for six years or more, our reasonable expectation is that you have the preparation to be successful and the motivation to continue in anthropology. You should come into the program with a strong sense of the specific subfields, theories, and research topics of interest to you.

We strongly suggest that students without a strong background in anthropology apply to the MA rather than the PhD, in order to ensure that anthropology is the right discipline for them. If you are not sure which program you should be applying to, please contact our departmental Graduate Director.

**Do I need a prior MA (in any field) to apply to your PhD program?**

No, an MA is not necessary, either in anthropology or any other field, in order to be admitted. However, if you do not have a strong anthropology background in your undergraduate studies, you should either apply to our MA (with the plan to later apply to the PhD), or find a way to take several undergraduate courses in anthropology (at WSU or elsewhere) before applying to the PhD.

**I am returning to academic studies after many years working outside academia. Will this hurt my application?**

Our students, at both the MA and PhD levels, come from a variety of backgrounds including non-traditional students who are years from their last academic experience. This is not a problem at all. The key, if you are such an applicant, is to demonstrate your current engagement with the discipline of anthropology and your preparedness to do graduate-level coursework. Your letter of intent gives you the opportunity to explain how your experience may be relevant to your planned studies in anthropology. There are particular challenges faced by returning students – for instance, you may need to rekindle professional relationships with former professors so that you can get current letters of recommendation.

**The Application**

**What are the key factors that will be used in evaluating my application?**

Our evaluation of applicants is holistic and takes account of multiple factors. Beyond a very minimum check of basic requirements – e.g. that you will have a four-year bachelor’s degree – all the decision-making takes place at the departmental level. Certainly we look at your academic record, particularly your recent grades in anthropology and social science coursework. If you have other accomplishments (conference presentations, major awards, publications, etc.), this is obviously to your advantage. GRE scores (for PhD applicants) are considered but are not predominant. Choosing a writing sample that is relevant to your interests and represents your best writing will play heavily into our consideration. Similarly, choosing reference letter-writers who can comment usefully on your academic abilities and who can strongly support you will matter.

But beyond all of these factors, the question of fit between your interests and what the department offers, and your ability to clearly outline those interests in your letter of intent, is absolutely critical, especially at
the Ph.D. level. One of the most important things you need to do is explain to us why you are applying to our program – why we you want to be part of our intellectual community as opposed to some other program, and why you are a particularly suitable candidate for our program.

**What should be in my letter of intent?**

Your letter of intent is the most important part of your application. It is your opportunity to tell us about your academic interests, and to establish the ‘fit’ between your plans and our program. Definitely do name particular faculty members with whom you might want to work, or at least the specific areas of anthropology relevant to your interests. Tell us about specific experiences or accomplishments that relate to your future plans. Where relevant, discuss potential research projects that you might wish to initiate (this is particularly relevant for PhD applicants). Your letter should make it crystal clear not only that you are well-qualified, but why our program in particular is the right one for you. Don't just tell us that it's been your dream to be an anthropologist for as long as you can remember – the more specific you can be, the better your chances.

Your letter of intent is also your opportunity to explain or clarify points that might not be clear in the rest of your application (because they are less customizable). For instance, if you have some low grades that require explanation, or if you took courses with significant anthropological content that were not labeled as anthropology courses, please let us know. If you have been out of academic life for a while, tell us what brings you back, and how your experiences fit in with your future plans.

**What kind of writing sample is appropriate?**

We want to see a sample of writing (usually 10 to 30 double-spaced pages, though longer is fine) that is representative of your best recent writing in anthropology or in a closely allied social science. We are looking for evidence of engagement with the issues that interest you in the discipline, critical thinking ability, and the ability to present arguments in clear scholarly prose. BA or MA theses or major research projects are perfectly acceptable. Ideally it should be something you have written in the past two years, although if you are returning to academia after an absence, then an older sample is fine.

**Who should I get to write my letters of recommendation?**

Your referees should be able to comment meaningfully on your academic potential and should be familiar with your previous academic work. Persons outside an academic setting are fine, as long as they are able to comment on your ability to do research, to teach, to write, or think critically. We strongly suggest that one and ideally more of your letter-writers should be professors, ideally in anthropology or a related social science. Full-time faculty are preferable over contract faculty or graduate student instructors. Individuals who can comment on your submitted writing sample, especially if involved in its initial preparation and evaluation, are ideal. It is perfectly acceptable to have one or more letter-writers from the Wayne State anthropology department, even if they are on the admissions committee.

**What transcripts do I need to have sent?**

You should send any and all transcripts that may be relevant to evaluating your application. This should include, at minimum, any transcripts of studies that led to a degree, but it may also include transcripts for institutions from which you took a few courses that are relevant to your application in some way (e.g., a field school, language training, or additional anthropology coursework).
Can you use unofficial transcripts in lieu of official transcripts?
You can upload unofficial transcripts directly into the online application system, and we can use these during our departmental evaluation process. However, for admission, the Graduate Admissions office requires copies of official transcripts to be sent directly to them at: Office of Graduate Admissions, Wayne State University, 5057 Woodward, Suite 6000, Detroit, MI 48202.

What GPA is required for admission?
Wayne State generally expects applicants to have an overall undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. Our department generally admits students at the MA level with a GPA of 3.2 or higher, and at the Ph.D. level, 3.5 or higher. Having said this, these are not rigid minimums. If your academic record in anthropology is far stronger than your performance in other disciplines, a lower overall GPA should not be a problem. Similarly, if your first year or two of your undergraduate degree does not represent your current ability, this is not an obstacle. However, if you have multiple B or C grades in upper-division anthropology or social science courses, your application will likely be unsuccessful.

My grades are below your standard, but I believe I have the potential to succeed in your program – what do I do?
If your academic transcripts, for whatever reason, do not reflect your current ability levels, you may wish to justify your performance in your letter of intent. However, in many cases, it is probably in your best interest to take additional undergraduate coursework in anthropology (i.e., as a non-degree student) before applying. If you can demonstrate a recent record of success in undergraduate work, this may counteract a prior poor academic history.

Do you have minimum GRE scores for admission to the PhD program?
As of 2018, we no longer require the GRE for admission to our PhD program. Applicants who wish to submit their GRE scores for consideration are welcome to do so, but this is not required. The admissions committee takes a variety of factors in making admissions decisions.

Do you accept unofficial (self-reported) GRE scores?
You may self-report GRE scores if your official scores have not yet been processed or have not yet arrived at Wayne State. To do so, attach an electronic copy of the scores that ETS sends to you. You should expect to take the GRE at least a month in advance of the application deadline so that you will have your scores by the time you apply. However, for admission to the PhD program, official GRE scores sent directly from ETS are required. These will be automatically matched with your application by the Graduate Admissions office. Wayne State’s institution code is 1898.

What additional materials are needed for international applicants?
We welcome applications from international students. Depending on your nationality and the language of instruction of your previous work, the requirements will differ, and will be handled by the office of Graduate Admissions throughout the application process. TOEFL or IELTS English-language test scores are required for students who do not have a degree from an English-language institution (see http://admissions.wayne.edu/english-proficiency.php). Once admitted, you will work with WSU’S Office of International Students and Scholars (http://www.oiss.wayne.edu) who will help you negotiate policies and procedures for international students.
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Admission Decisions

When should I expect to receive a decision regarding my application for admission?
We aim to make offers of admission four to six weeks after the application deadline – i.e., early to mid-November for Winter admission (MA only), mid-to-late February for Fall admission (MA and PhD). When you receive a decision you will get two emailed notifications: one generic letter from the university’s Graduate Admissions office, and a more substantive letter directly from the department.

I already have an MA from the department. Am I automatically admitted to the PhD program?
No. All applicants are required to go through the online application process for the PhD program, regardless of whether they previously earned an MA from the department. The only difference is that, as a continuing graduate student, you do not have to pay the application fee.

If I am not admitted to the program, can I appeal that decision?
No, there are no appeals, and the decision of the department is final.

Is there a waiting list for students who are not initially admitted to the program?
We admit all the MA students to whom we intend to make admission offers at one time, and there is no wait list or delayed admission. We do operate a waitlist at the PhD level so that we can ensure that all our admitted doctoral students receive adequate funding.

If I am not admitted to the program, can I reapply for a subsequent term?
Yes, you are welcome to reapply. However, if your new application is substantially identical to the first, then the result will almost surely be identical, in which case you would be wise to inquire by email to find out if there are specific factors that are in need of improvement for your re-application.

How do advisors get assigned to students?
We assign advisors to incoming students on an interim basis based on their stated areas of research interest as well as the availability of particular faculty. You may specify particular faculty members in your letter of intent, but we cannot always accommodate student requests (for instance, one faculty member may have a heavy advising load already). Once you are in the department for a while, you are free to seek out the advising that is most appropriate for your research interests.

Funding

Are PhD students automatically funded?
We ensure that all PhD students have funding appropriate to their circumstances for at least three years of their program, with the possibility of funding for additional years. For students attending full-time and not having outside employment, this will be a combination of fellowships, teaching assistantships, and research assistantships (all of which pay tuition, plus a stipend, plus benefits). For students who plan to work full-time during their studies, available funding normally involves in-state resident tuition support in the form of the Graduate Professional Scholarship. We also expect our doctoral students to apply for relevant external fellowships for their research and scholarship.
Do I need to apply separately for funding?
Applicants to our PhD program are automatically considered for internal departmental funding opportunities when we consider student funding applications in January. You do not need to apply separately for these opportunities. Other programs, such as the university-wide Graduate Professional Scholarships competition, or external fellowship opportunities, do require separate applications.

Do you have funding for incoming MA students?
Incoming MA students are eligible to apply for the Graduate Professional Scholarship (GPS), which pays in-state resident tuition for ten credit hours per semester for both the Fall and Winter semesters. This is a competitive, university-wide scholarship that requires a separate application from you once you are admitted. There are some additional pools of partial tuition support available for MA students, which do not require a separate application from you.

Where can I find out about financial aid?
Financial aid other than scholarships and fellowships is handled outside the department, by the Office of Student Financial Aid (http://finaid.wayne.edu/).