Further details about Social Anthropology at Cambridge may be found at: www.socanth.cam.ac.uk/
+44 (0)1223 334599

Sophie Durrans (Third-year undergraduate)
What attracted me to Social Anthropology at Cambridge was the breadth of the subject. One moment I would be reading classical anthropological studies concerning Melanesia, while the next I was debating contemporary issues about new reproductive technologies. During my second year, I co-edited Imponderabilia, a student-led anthropology journal offering a space for students to develop ideas outside of supervisions and lectures. In preparation for my final-year dissertation I undertook ethnographic fieldwork on ‘fantasy coffins’ in Ghana, which was an unforgettable experience. I have found that supervisors often go out of their way to help, encouraging students to think anthropologically and developing new ideas in the process. This is what I feel is most rewarding about studying Social Anthropology at Cambridge.

Sophie Outhwaite (Third-year undergraduate)
Whenever I talk about what I’m doing in lectures or supervisions with people who don’t study anthropology, they often wonder aloud: ‘that’s anthropology?!’ This week I’ve covered post-Soviet architecture in Brazil, argued about whether Hinduism is invented, and researched for my dissertation the ways in which the internet serves as a crucial tool of self-surveillance for those on a diet. Anthropology has moved on from trekking out to the far-flung wilderness to detail the lives of exotic others, but its essence has stayed the same; anthropology is fundamentally about people. And learning how to see people as they see themselves. And what could be more interesting than that?

David Ginsborg (Second-year undergraduate)
Social Anthropology is a subject that takes people seriously. What is both challenging and noble about this discipline is that it is concerned with understanding people, not with telling them what to do. As an anthropologist, you will be reading about, and eventually asking about, how people think about their lives and live out the dilemmas of their cultural, social and political beings – but always on their own terms. This means, however, that you will also find new terms with which to define yourself, and will come to think a lot about who you are and where you come from. Studying anthropology is a deeply moving and exciting experience.

Key Facts:
- There are no specific subject requirements to study HSPS or to study Social Anthropology within it.
- You do not need to have studied Social Anthropology before.
- The standard offer is A*AA at A level.
- All Cambridge Colleges except Peterhouse admit students to study HSPS and Social Anthropology within it.
- Social Anthropology can be combined in Years 2 and 3 as a joint track with the other major subjects in HSPS, that is with Sociology, Politics, Archaeology, or Biological Anthropology.

Further details about the Human, Social, and Political Sciences Tripos (HSPS) may be found at: www.hsps.cam.ac.uk/.
Studying Social Anthropology at Cambridge

Social Anthropology addresses the big questions of 'what it is to be human' by studying the amazingly diverse ways in which peoples in all parts of the world make a living, organise themselves, make families and communities, and think about the world around them and how to live a good life. So topics studied include love and intimacy in online worlds, the surging importance of religion in many countries, how globalisation affects factory workers in India, how communities in the Arctic understand climate change, and experiences of citizenship and democracy in African cities.

Social Anthropology has been taught in Cambridge since 1900 and the University has been home to many of the most distinguished anthropologists in the history of the discipline. Today it is one of the foremost anthropological institutions in the world, with a diverse and flourishing community of researchers and teachers and undergraduate and post-graduate students, and it is a centre of excellence at every level.

Regularly at the top of the tables in assessments of research and in the published rankings of teaching departments, the teaching resources in Social Anthropology are unparalleled: a large and diverse community of teaching officers and post-doctoral researchers, the Haddon Library, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Social Anthropology's own unique collection of ethnographic films.

First Year
Students interested in Social Anthropology will take a core introductory paper on:
- Social Anthropology: The Comparative Perspective.

Students take a further three papers from a list including:
- Sociology
- Politics
- International Relations
- Psychology
- Anthropology
- Biological Anthropology

This wide range of subject choices enables everyone to try some new and unfamiliar approaches to the study of human social and political life. A real strength of this course is its flexibility. It works well for students who think they will be interested in one or several of its subject options. Equally, however, students who already have a strong interest in Social Anthropology can tailor the course to their interests from the start.

Second Year
Students take the following three papers:
- Kinship and Economic Anthropology
- The Anthropology of Politics and Religion
- Theory, Methods, and Enquiry in Social Anthropology

Plus an optional paper.

Core papers in Social Anthropology give a solid grounding in the fundamental subject areas of the discipline: political and economic anthropology, the cross-cultural study of kinship, marriage, gender, and sexuality, and the anthropology of religion, myth, and ritual, as well as the study of anthropological theory and methods.

It is also possible to take a joint track in Social Anthropology and Sociology, Social Anthropology and Politics, Social Anthropology and Archaeology, or Social Anthropology and Biological Anthropology, in each of which two papers are taken in each subject. For more information on these options please visit our website.

Third Year
Students take three core papers in Advanced Social Anthropology:
- Thought, Belief, and Ethics
- Political Economy and Social Transformation
- An Ethnographic Area (such as: Latin America, South Asia, Africa, or Europe)

The three core papers in Advanced Social Anthropology get students directly involved with the most pressing debates and issues in the discipline today. They put anthropological studies into direct dialogue with the latest research in fields as diverse as cognitive science, economics, moral and political philosophy, and social theory. Each student also chooses a region of the world (e.g., Latin America, the Pacific, Inner Asia) to study in all its ethnographic complexity and historical depth.

Details of the course

You may also choose an Optional paper, or can opt to write a dissertation, which can be based on your own ethnographic fieldwork. Optional papers in Years 2 and 3 include the anthropology of city life, gender and sexuality, colonialism, law, science, development, medicine and health, and film and the arts. Alternatively students can opt to take optional papers from other subjects, such as Sociology, Politics, Archaeology and Biological Anthropology.

If students have chosen a joint track, they take two papers in Social Anthropology and two papers in the joint subject (Sociology, Politics, Archaeology or Biological Anthropology), or replace one of these papers with a dissertation.

Teaching
You will be taught by people who are at the forefront of the subject, through a combination of lectures, seminars, and supervisions. For supervisions, students write an essay on a topic that is then discussed in a very small group, usually of two or three students and a supervisor. Additionally, if you choose to do a dissertation in Social Anthropology, you receive one-on-one supervision for this in your final year. Supervisions allow students to test their arguments, explore their doubts, and discuss the ideas that emerge from lectures and from their reading. The supervision system ensures that students receive regular feedback about their written work: an invaluable preparation for a future career in virtually any field. Students generally write between one and two essays a week during Term.

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