Writing in Anthropology

This resource provides a brief introduction to writing in the field of **Anthropology** through the lens of threshold concepts. It includes:

1. A brief overview of disciplinary writing characteristics valued in Anthropology
2. Examples of what makes "good writing" in Anthropology

What does Anthropology value in writing?

The field of Anthropology values **empiricism, holism, comparative analysis, the study of bio-cultural change, relativism,** and **anti-ethnocentrism**.

Writers are credible when they use **empirical evidence to examine claims; place findings in relevant scholarly or research contexts; accurately cite appropriate sources**; and successfully use **disciplinary conventions and genres**.

The field's **citation practices** embody these values, and you can see that in examples of how anthropologists **frame research problems; recognize important work** in the field; **position their original work** within established dialogues; and **mark secondary sources and primary sources** (including research participants).

Effective writers:

- identify the research problem
- contextualize the problem in relevant scholarship
- articulate an original contribution to the problem
- illustrate the contribution with data
- explain the significance of the contribution to the discipline and/or public knowledge
- identify future research directions

Thus, those who expect to write as a major in this department should understand that writing is not simply the act of putting words to paper. Writing is a **multi-stage, iterative process** that considers **audiences, genres, data, and purpose**.

What does "good writing" actually look like in Anthropology?

The article attached with this guide (annotated-sample/index.html) provides examples of what "good writing" actually looks like in Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology, specifically, including:

- the use of ethnographic vignettes as empirical evidence
- citation practices
- organization of argument
- use of empirical evidence throughout the article
- strategic and effective use of transitions and subheadings
- treatment of primary texts