

First year

Lecture 2:

Anthropology

I. Anthropology:

1- Definition of Anthropology:

The term anthropology is a combination of two words derived from the Greek language: anthropos meaning man or human being and logus meaning study or science.

Anthropology is thus, the study or science of man or humanity. Anthropology is a broad scientific discipline dedicated to the comparative study of human beings as a group, from its first appearance on the earth to its present stage of development. It is a science that tells us about the various aspects of the life of man, which is both physical and cultural, from the time of his origin till the present day. It embraces a vast field of study, which views man from different angles. Anthropology is probably the most comprehensive of the sciences dealing with man and his works.

2- The Scope/ Questions of Anthropology :

The scope of anthropology is very vast. It covers all the aspects of human ways of life, culture and their social relationships. Anthropology is interested in some of the following questions and issues about human beings. - where did human species come from (i.e. what are the origins of mankind?) -was man created in the image and likeness of God? Or was just the product of millions of years of the natural evolutionary process? - In what ways does man differ from other animal species? -How did human beings arrive at the present stage of biological, intellectual, and cultural development?

3- Characteristics of Anthropology :

-There are three characteristics of anthropology:

* It is a broad scope:

A good way to emphasize this broad scope is to say that anthropologists are interested in all human beings (i.e. living or dead, primitive or civilized). so they are interested in different aspects of human including their skin, color, family lives, marriages, personality types, languages....

* It is unique through its approaches:

Anthropology is holistic means studying one aspect of people's ways of life by relating it to other complex related aspects of life.

Anthropology is comparative means it studies certain aspects of the culture of people by comparing it across societies and different time i.e. the present with the past, the modern with the traditional and so on.

*** Emphasis on insiders' view:**

Anthropologists focus on how people understand their world. It is about their point of view about their behaviours, culture, society and the entire world around them.

II. The history of Anthropology :

It has its root in the work and ideas of ancient Greek, Roman, social thinkers and Hebrew philosophers. These people were interested in the nature, origin, destiny morality and ethics of people and their relationships. Yet, anthropology as a separate academic discipline was born during the 19th century (mid 1800).

At the beginning, anthropologists concentrated on applying « the theory of evolution ». This theory states that human beings are not the product of special creation but they are parts of natural evolutionary process. Evolutionists argue that man was originated from lower animals (i.e. mammals like Gorillas, chimpanzees. On the other hand, creationists believe that human beings are the product of special creation i.e. they are created in the image and likeness of God.

However, at the end of the 19 th century anthropologists focus on human differences and characteristics of human beings instead of their evolutionary development. They believe that the cultures of the indigenous people in America, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Europe should be studied before these cultures were corrupted and changed by contact with the modern world.

III .The Sub-field of Anthropology:

Anthropologist generally divide anthropology into four branches:

Archaeology:

It examines our past ways of life through the analysis and interpretation of the physical remains that people left behind i.e. animal bones, Tools, written records, and oral traditions.

Physical Anthropology or Biological Anthropology:

It deals with the evolution of the human body, mind and behavior in comparison with behavior and anatomy of other species.

Cultural Anthropology (social Anthropology):

This branch is concerned with the social and cultural dimensions of human beings. It explores the diversity of existing human ways of life, how they work, how they change, and how they interrelate in the modern world.

Linguistic Anthropology :

Linguistic anthropology examines the structure and diversity of language in addition to, how language shapes communication, forms social identity and relationships between people.

Linguistic anthropology seeks to understand human language, written and non-written, verbal and non- verbal.

IV. The importance of Anthropology :

* Anthropology teaches human how to look outside of themselves and realize that what we think and what we believe are not the only ways to think and believe.

* Anthropology is the only science that comparing things across different cultures and different times.

* It shows people their perspectives and points of view about the world, which they have experienced.

* When people look at the other people's experiences, perspectives, and understandings, their knowledge becomes greater.

* It aims to understand ourselves in relation to the understanding of others. (Both in the past and present).

References:

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology>

-Stanly .N, Wrapp. M, and Davis. T. Why is the study of anthropology to today's world?. Pearson. Retrieved from : https://uh.edu/class/ccs/_docs/AnthroScholarship_Winners2011.