PART 1: FOR STUDENTS ONLY

When I (Salzman) was a freshman at Antioch College in Ohio, I took an introductory philosophy course. In preparing for each class, I usually read at least some of the assigned reading in the collection of selections from great philosophers. But when I got to class and the professor began talking about the assigned reading, I recognized nothing in what I had read from what he was saying. There seemed to be no overlap between what I understood from the text and what the professor was telling us it was about. I might as well have been reading Dilbert.

As you can imagine, this was a rather disconcerting experience. But in a way, it was inevitable. Why? Because I had no clue as to the frames of reference that philosophers used to situate their discussions. I did not know what philosophers thought were problems, how they intended to address them, or even what they thought would count as answers. In other words, I had no idea how to think philosophically.

When I (Rice) was an undergraduate up the road from Antioch College at Ohio State University, I took my first economics course and had an experience similar to my co-editor. What I read and what the instructor said, supposedly about the same material, were as different as night and day. The terminology was a kind of foreign language, but I could cope with that. What was frustrating and unnerving was the fact that I hadn’t a clue as to how to think economically. This
did improve during the term, but not until an hour before the final exam did it all become clear. At the time, I called it the “aha” syndrome, but I now know that only at the last minute was I beginning to think economically. If I had begun to think economically at the beginning instead of the end of the course, I am sure I would have been less frustrated and would have learned a good deal more. We hope this book will help you to avoid that kind of experience by learning how to think anthropologically early in your first anthropological adventure in the classroom.

Such frustrations occur in any new field that you study, whether physics, literature, history, or anthropology. When we begin to explore a new field, we enter our exploration at one time and place, a little like taking the first steps off a beach into a lake or sea. It is impossible for us to know all of the other points at which we might have stepped into the water, the overall shape of the water body, and how it affects the place into which we have stepped.

Your instructor, however knowledgeable and good at communicating, cannot talk about everything at once. He or she cannot tell you at the same time about specific ethnographic cases and about different kinds of societies, or about epistemological assumptions about how we learn things at the same time as about ethnographic fieldwork methods, or about general heuristic theories at the same time as about specific understandings of particular cultural patterns. He or she cannot tell you about Darwin’s and Mendel’s contributions to evolution at the same time he or she is discussing the details of *Australopithecus robustus*, much less the ecological context and why we think this population adapted to life on the savanna. You eventually need to know all of these things and how they influence one another, but you cannot learn all of it at once. Be patient; you will catch on.

Well, we have a bit more to offer than “be patient.” The short chapters in this collection are clear explanations of the underlying frameworks assumed and used by anthropologists. What does your instructor mean by “theory”? You will find some answers to this in Chapter 4. When your instructor talks about studying culture, what does she or he mean? Chapter 2 will give you some clues to this question. Why do anthropologists disagree, and how can you learn about anthropology when anthropologists can’t even agree among themselves? Chapter 7 discusses this issue. After you read these chapters, you will begin to think anthropologically. This will help you understand your instructor and the assigned readings better and will help you do better in the course.

The authors of each chapter are teaching anthropologists who, like your instructor, see students who are brand new to anthropology every term. Most teach introductory courses as well as advanced courses in their specialties. They all have their interests and biases and may not all agree that the theme of each chapter is the single most important aspect of anthropology. For example, some may be humanist anthropologists who believe descriptions of other cultures and attempts to find cultural meaning are the most important part of anthropology, whereas others may be scientists who attempt to explain particular aspects of what it is to be human. Some may feel ethics should be the focus of each topic, while
others may limit ethics to professional audiences. Some feel very strongly that the importance and fun of anthropology lie in the interrelatedness of its parts—the past and the present, culture and biology—whereas others are perfectly happy teaching and researching only one subfield. Some feel very strongly that if we anthropologists do not apply our knowledge, we are giving up an opportunity to help others, whereas some feel that our main obligation is increasing knowledge. And this profile fits anthropologists in general, not just the authors of these chapters. We all think anthropologically, however, and believe that this thinking is at the heart of what we do and what we teach. We want to share this experience with you while we impart some knowledge about what it is to be human.

We believe that this book will help you understand anthropology, but perhaps future editions can be even more useful. We would like to ask you to help us improve this book for future students by telling your instructor whether you found it helpful, which chapters were most useful, which ones were least useful, and what other subjects you wish had been covered. Working together, we can help other students to think anthropologically.

**PART 2: FOR INSTRUCTORS ONLY**

Anthropology, like individual cultures, is a complex, interrelated system of meaning with different levels of understanding and multiple alternative interpretations. Addressing any particular ethnographic fact, heuristic theory, mode of analysis, fieldwork methodology, or epistemological presumption implies reference to other facts, theories, modes, methodologies, and presumptions and leads one up and down to different levels of understanding and to other interpretations. The same is true of paleoanthropology, with its additional element of attempting to find and evaluate evidence in the past without being able to see events as they occur, revisit data for verification, or even talk with people.

There is no ideal way to introduce anthropology to students. Wherever we start, we must fan out in all directions, reach up and down, make connections, and survey the landscape. Whatever we start with, we must end up someplace else. If we begin with the very general, we must proceed to the particular; if we begin with the particular, we must advance to the general. We can start with individual ethnographies but will eventually get to a discussion of religion, economy, and kinship; we can begin with religion and politics but end with hunters and cultivators. We can discuss Old World and New World pyramids in terms of architectural similarities but end up discussing differences of function; we can begin comparing primate femurs and end up with a discussion of different locomotor patterns and why hominid bipedalism evolved.

So wherever we begin, whatever we begin to teach our students about anthropology, there are 23 or 230 other places we are not teaching about that are implied in what we are saying or that are necessary to conceptualize it. Of course, we cannot speak about everything at once. We must start at one point and proceed around the great circle of anthropology. And our students must learn about one
thing at a time, initially oblivious to its connections with all of the rest. This is inevitable and cannot be avoided.

However, to paraphrase John Dewey, this anthropological reality is not a problem because there is no solution to it. But this challenge is the raison d’être for *Thinking Anthropologically*. This readily available supplementary text provides overviews of major spheres in anthropology. In easy-to-read prose aimed at introductory-level students, this collection of essays offers accounts of the general frameworks that underlie anthropology.

Although this book is primarily aimed at students in basic, introductory, four-field anthropology classes—of any size—it can be used in any introductory level course in *cultural anthropology*, archaeology, biological anthropology, or a combination of archaeology (prehistory) and *bioanthropology*, the anthropology of our past. For the most part, the chapters affect any field: for example, ethics is important in cultural, archaeological, linguistic, or biological anthropology; there are patterns in all cultures, languages, tools, and fossils; theory is valuable to any subfield; and most anthropologists are scientists and construct their fieldwork to test hypotheses.

Although you can obviously assign chapters in consecutive order, each chapter stands alone, and you can mix them up or even ignore one or two. While we feel it is best to assign this book early in the term to get students thinking anthropologically from the beginning, say two chapters each session before launching into the “day’s material,” you can think of your own best use of the materials and modify your plan the next time if it seems warranted.

Chapter 2: “What Anthropologists Look For: Patterns.” What are anthropologists looking for, and what counts as anthropological knowledge?

Chapter 3: “Thinking Holistically.” What are the different subdivisions of anthropology, and how do their interrelationships contribute to anthropological knowledge and thinking?

Chapter 4: “Thinking Theoretically.” What is theory, and what part does it play in anthropology?

Chapter 5: “Using Science to Think Anthropologically.” What is science, and how can it be used in anthropology?

Chapter 6: “Thinking About Change: Biological Evolution, Culture Change, and the Importance of Scale.” How can we think about and understand change?

Chapter 7: “Why Do Anthropological Experts Disagree?” Why do anthropologists disagree about evidence and interpretations?

Chapter 8: “Thinking and Acting Ethically in Anthropology.” What does ethics have to do with anthropology, and why should we be concerned about ethics anyhow?

Chapter 9: “Applying Anthropological Knowledge.” How is anthropological knowledge used in the real world?
Chapter 10: “Making Ideas Researchable.” How do anthropologists define concepts and ideas in order to begin to think about researching them?

Chapter 11: “Thinking Anthropologically About ‘Race’: Human Variation, Culture Construction, and Dispelling Myths.” How has the concept of “race” changed from basically biological to cultural in concept, and what are the implications of “cultural races”?

Chapter 12: “Thinking with Gender.” What has feminist anthropology done to change anthropology and how we think anthropologically?

Chapter 13: “Fieldwork: Collecting Information.” How do anthropologists in various subfields collect information about what it is to be human?

Chapter 14: “How to Take Anthropology Tests.” How can students take anthropology tests and do well?

The discussions in Thinking Anthropologically provide an overview of anthropological thinking, helping students follow the material you are covering in your teaching and the substantive content in the main text or case studies that you use. Thinking Anthropologically relieves the introductory instructor of the need to cover these background frameworks while attempting to impart knowledge in the classroom. It gives students a ready reference in the areas that are likely to puzzle them.

Although instructors can assign individual chapters or the entire primer, as needed, we envision Thinking Anthropologically as a basic student aid in introductory courses. If your students learn to think anthropologically early on, they will better understand you and the major text you use, they will do better in the course, and they will appreciate anthropology more. We suggest assigning the book for the first week or two of class.

Finally, we ask you not only to assign this volume to your students but also to help us improve it. Which chapters were the most useful and which the least useful? Were there problems with individual chapters? Which other topics would you and your students like covered in a new edition? Please let us know. You can find both Philip Carl Salzman and Patricia Rice and our e-mail addresses in the American Anthropological Association Guide, available through www.aaanet.org. We would like to hear what you think.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. You enrolled in this course before you read this book. Can you suggest one or two subjects you expected to learn about in this class? Write a paragraph about how you expect your thinking to change.

2. Like the co-editors of this book, Salzman with philosophy and Rice with economics, can you think of a college course you have taken where your interest and knowledge of that class would have increased if you had learned how to “think” the subject early on? In what ways would it have improved?