

# What Makes Us Human

## UNH anthropology major finds his niche

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During the fall semester of his sophomore year, Riley Kenney '19 took an [anthropology](#) course. At the time, he was a hospital management major and didn't know then that UNH's Anth 411 was going to change that. His moment of reckoning came with the first slide the professor showed the class.

"It was a large picture of Indiana Jones with a caption that said anthropology has nothing to do with the movie. It was a great way to introduce the course," Kenney says.

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And a great way to alter any preconceived notions students like Kenney might have had. Anthropology has been called the study of what makes us human. And like humans, there are many aspects. Exploring tombs vis-à-vis Indiana Jones is an example of archaeology anthropology, the study of people through their past. Cultural anthropology contemplates the values and norms of societies around the world. Biological anthropology explores evolution and human development. Kenney, who is minoring in business administration, is concentrating on applied anthropology, which relies on method and theory to help analyze and solve practical problems. He references Genevieve Bell, an anthropologist from Australia known for her work connecting culture and technological development.

“I want to help companies figure out how to best reach their audience using the knowledge of the culture in their focus area,” Kenney says. One example he gives is when a business wants to market a product to a small town and to a large city, and how the analysis involved with applied anthropology can assist in understanding the differences in those audiences even if what they’re buying is the same. “It comes down to the study of people, it’s just on different levels,” the Warner, New Hampshire, resident says. “Thirty years ago, the kind of work I’m interested in was more low-key. Now, marketers are tuned in to knowing what people think, what they want, what influences the decisions they make.”

When Kenney was in high school, he loved history. But he was looking for something practical to major in when he got to college and he didn’t want to come in undeclared. He knew he was interested in business and thought hospital management would be a good fit. Then he found out that he could apply what he liked about business to anthropology.

A member of the Anthropology Club and past member of the Socratic Society, Kenney has taken advantage of internship opportunities at UNH. In the summer 2018, he interned through the [Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise](#) with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, which awards more than \$40 million in grants and scholarships annually. Kenney worked in the area of scholarships, helping to evaluate outcomes. During the fall semester, through Social Innovation’s [Semester in the City](#), Kenney interned with the Strategies for Youth organization in Boston.

Leading up to commencement, Kenney has been exploring market research positions and hopes to work in the area of market and data research, possibly for a nonprofit. In the meantime, he has another internship lined up for the summer, this one with Volunteer NH, a nonprofit organization that promotes the tradition of service in the Granite State.

“I’m trying to gain as much experience in as many areas as I can,” Kenney says. “My goal is to work for a marketing company and do the research that gives them insight into how people make decisions. That’s my dream job.”

*Find out where a degree in anthropology can take you.*

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