**Benedict, Ruth (1887-1948)**

Known as America’s first woman anthropologist, Ruth Fulton Benedict was a cultural relativist and folklorist. She studied anthropology under Franz Boas (1858-1942) at Columbia University, received her PhD in 1923 and thereafter joined the faculty. Margaret Mead (1901-1978) was her student and protégé and the two maintained a lifelong friendship. Among Benedict’s contributions to the field of anthropology was her publication *Patterns of Culture* (1934), in which she directed anthropology toward a comparative analysis of culture, through which we learn about a given culture by contextualizing it with others without making moral judgments. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) employed distance anthropology to understand Japanese culture during World War II, popularizing the distinction between ‘guilt cultures’ and ‘shame cultures’. Benedict was also among several leading cultural anthropologists recruited by the American government to conduct war related research, resulting in a pamphlet ‘The Race of Mankind’ (1943), which presented a scientific case against racism and encouraged nations to resist Axis fascism. Throughout Benedict’s pioneering research she endeavored to demonstrate that cultures were ‘personalities writ large’ in which every society develops a few select characteristics that subsequently influence their aesthetics, values and practices. In 1947 she was elected president of the American Anthropological Association and fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was also a prominent member of the American Folklore Society during her career.

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**List of works**

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