• Unit 1: Basic Concepts

The Cultural Landscape:

An Introduction to Human Geography

• Defining Geography

• Word coined by Eratosthenes
  – Geo = Earth
  – Graphia = writing
  – Geography thus means “earth writing”

• Contemporary Geography

• Geographers ask where and why
  – Location and distribution are important terms

• Geographers are concerned with the tension between globalization and local diversity

• A division: physical geography and human geography

• Geography’s Vocabulary

• Place

• Region

• Scale

• Space

• Connections

• Maps

• Two purposes
  – As reference tools
    • To find locations, to find one’s way
  – As communications tools
    • To show the distribution of human and physical features

• Early Map Making

• Maps: Scale

• Types of map scale
  – Ratio or fraction
  – Written
  – Graphic

• Projection
- Distortion
  - Shape
  - Distance
  - Relative size
  - Direction
- U.S. Land Ordinance of 1785
- Township and range system
  - Township = 6 sq. miles on each side
    - North–south lines = principal meridians
    - East–west lines = base lines
  - Range
  - Sections
- Township and Range System
- Contemporary Tools
  - Geographic Information Science (GIScience)
    - Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
    - Remote sensing
    - Geographic information systems (GIS)
- A Mash-up
- Place: Unique Location of a Feature
- Location
  - Place names
    - Toponym
  - Site
  - Situation
  - Mathematical location
- Place: Mathematical Location
- Location of any place can be described precisely by meridians and parallels
  - Meridians (lines of longitude)
    - Prime meridian
  - Parallels (lines of latitude)
    - The equator
• The Cultural Landscape
• A unique combination of social relationships and physical processes
• Each region = a distinctive landscape
• People = the most important agents of change to Earth’s surface
• Types of Regions
  • Formal (uniform) regions
    – Example: Montana
  • Functional (nodal) regions
    – Example: the circulation area of a newspaper
  • Vernacular (cultural) regions
    – Example: the American South
• Culture
• Origin from the Latin *cultus*, meaning “to care for”
• Two aspects:
  – What people care about
    • Beliefs, values, and customs
  – What people take care of
    • Earning a living; obtaining food, clothing, and shelter
• Cultural Ecology
• The geographic study of human–environment relationships
• Two perspectives:
  – Environmental determinism
  – Possibilism
    • Modern geographers generally reject environmental determinism in favor of possibilism
• Physical Processes
• Climate
• Vegetation
• Soil
• Landforms
  – These four processes are important for understanding human activities
• Modifying the Environment
• Examples
– The Netherlands
  • Polders
– The Florida Everglades
• Scale
• Globalization
  – Economic globalization
    • Transnational corporations
  – Cultural globalization
    • A global culture?
• Space: Distribution of Features
• Distribution—three features
  – Density
    • Arithmetic
    • Physiological
    • Agricultural
  – Concentration
  – Pattern
• Space–Time Compression
• Spatial Interaction
• Transportation networks
• Electronic communications and the “death” of geography?
• Distance decay
• Diffusion
• The process by which a characteristic spreads across space and over time
• Hearth = source area for innovations
• Two types of diffusion
  – Relocation
  – Expansion
    • Three types: hierarchical, contagious, stimulus
• Relocation Diffusion: Example
• Diffusion and Hearths
• Course-wide concepts to know
What is a “Hearth”?
- A hearth is an area/place where something originates
  - Ideas
  - Plant/animal domestication
- The hearth in a home, in front of the fireplace, is at the “heart” of the home
  - People cooked by it, ate by it, read by it, talked by it.

Where are some major hearths?
- Southwest Asia
- South Asia
- Meso-America
- Nile River
- East Asia

What is Diffusion?
- Diffusion is the spreading out of those ideas from the hearth

What types of Diffusion are there?
- There are two basic types
  - Relocation diffusion
  - Expansion diffusion (which also has sub-categories)
    - Contagious Diffusion
    - Hierarchical Diffusion (and reverse hierarchical diffusion)
    - Stimulus Diffusion
- Things can and often do diffuse in multiple ways
  - Relocation Diffusion
- Diffusion of an idea through the physical movement (relocation) of a person or group
- When people move, they bring their culture with them
- The classic example is Christianity, languages, food preferences, plants/animals due to the Columbian Exchange
- Some diseases are as widespread as they are due to relocation diffusion: AIDS (via an airline attendant*); the Black Plague (carried by the fleas of rats from Asia to Europe via ships); diseases brought by Europeans to the New World
  - (Note: relocation diffusion helps explain some of the “where” of diseases, not the “why”; reasons for contracting a disease varies, such as colds, flus, tuberculosis, malaria, Ebola, etc.)

Expansion Diffusion
- The spread of a feature from one place to another in a snowballing process.
• Can be contagious, hierarchical (and reverse hierarchical), or stimulus
• Contagious Diffusion
  • The rapid, widespread expansion diffusion of a feature or trend throughout a population.
  • Many diseases obviously spread this way, but so do things on TV, the internet, etc.
  • Spreads very rapidly, usually very widespread.
• Hierarchical Diffusion
  • A “hierarchy” is a structure from a node of authority to subordinates, such as the military, the structure of many businesses, some churches, etc.
  • Hierarchical diffusion is the spread of an idea from persons or nodes of authority or power to other persons or places.
  • Classic examples are directives from the military/government, fashion designs, architectural styles, hip-hop/rap, new treatment directives for diseases
  • Not usually as fast to spread as contagious diffusion
• Reverse Hierarchical Diffusion
  • Similar to hierarchical, but obviously in reverse direction
  • Wal-Mart is the classic example: a chain that started out in small rural towns and has since spread to larger cities
• Stimulus Diffusion
  • Stimulus diffusion is the spread of an underlying principle, even though a specific characteristic is rejected.
  • Some things are spread, others are not...or it is modified in some way
  • Classic examples are the spread of McDonalds to India, but them not serving beef; the use of icons on the desktop of a Windows-based PC (borrowed from Apple); ads on the internet instead of billboards on the side of the road; “country rap music” (which is actually also an example of acculturation, another topic for another day!)