Chapter 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

Figure 1-2

© 2011 Pearson Education, Inc.
Maps: Scale

• Types of map scale (small scale = large map; large scale = small map)
  – Ratio or fraction (1:10,000; 1/10,000)
  – Written (1 inch = 10,000 miles)
  – Graphic (bar graph)

• Projection
  – Distortion
    • Shape
    • Distance
    • Relative size
    • Direction
U.S. Land Ordinance of 1785

- **Township and range system** (Section 32, T23N, R1E)
  - Township = 6 sq. miles on each side
    - North–south lines = principal meridians
    - East–west lines = base lines
    - T23N (Township 23 North)
  - Range (corresponds to its location east/west of a principal meridian)
    - Ex: R1E
  - Sections (townships are divided into 36 sections, each 1 square mile)
Township and Range System

Figure 1-5
© 2011 Pearson Education, Inc.
Contemporary Tools

- Geographic Information Science (GIScience)
  - Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
  - Remote sensing
  - Geographic information systems (GIS) – computer system of layered maps
GPS vs. Remote Sensing

GPS:
- The SYSTEM that determines the precise location or position of something on Earth
- U.S. military placed these in orbit
- Tracking stations monitor the satellites
- Receivers communicate with these

Remote Sensing:
- The acquisition of data about the Earth’s surface from a satellites or long-distance methods
- These satellites scan the earth’s surface and provide digital maps for reference
- Maps are grid-like
A Mash-up (practice of overlaying data from one source on top of maps)
Place: Unique Location of a Feature

• Location
  – Place names
    • Toponym
  – Site (characteristics of a place)
  – Situation (relative location)
  – Mathematical location (absolute location)
Place: Mathematical Location

• Earth divided into 360 degrees longitude and 180 degrees latitude

• Location of any place can be described precisely by meridians and parallels
  – Meridians (lines of longitude)
    • Prime meridian = 0 degrees longitude) and runs through Greenwich, England
    • 15 degrees apart = time zones
    • Prime Mer = Greenwich Mean Time
    • International Date Line = 180 degrees longitude
  – Parallels (lines of latitude)
    • The equator = 0 degrees Lat.
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 (everyone in the area shares a distinctive characteristic such as language, economic activity such as crops, or climate)
  - Ex: Montana, North American “wheat belt,” voting districts, county, etc.

- **Functional** (nodal) regions (area organized around a node/focal point; region is tied to this point by transportation, economic, communication systems)
  - Ex: the circulation area of a newspaper, tv station viewing area, cell phone area

- **Vernacular** (cultural- Zelinsky) regions (perceptual region that exists as a part of cultural identity)
  - Example: the American South, “east side,” etc.
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** (environment causes human behavior)
  - **Possibilism** (environment may influence but not cause human behavior)

  - 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- total number of objects in an area; used to compare the distribution of populations
    • Physiological-the number of persons per unit of area suitable for agriculture
    • Agricultural- the number of farmers per unit area of farmland
  – Concentration- the SPREAD of something over an area (clustered vs. dispersed)
  – Pattern – geometric arrangement of objects in space (crop patterns, grid patterns)
Space–Time Compression
(the reduction in time it takes for something to reach another place)

Figure 1-29
Spatial Interaction
(then- physical movement- vs. now-internet)

- Transportation networks
- Electronic communications and the “death” of geography?
- Distance decay (interact with people closer to you and less as you move away)
- Internet, texting!
Diffusion

• The process by which a characteristic spreads across space and over time

• **Hearth** = source area for innovations

• **Two types of diffusion:**
  - **Relocation** (spread of an idea through physical movement); ex: immigration, spread of AIDS, currency, language.
  - **Expansion** (spread of a feature in a snowballing process from a central hearth or node)
    • Three types: **hierarchical, contagious, stimulus**
hierarchical, contagious, stimulus diffusion

- **Hierarchical**: spread of an idea from persons or nodes of authority or power to other persons or places. Ex: political leaders spreading idea, idea moving from rich/poor areas (hip hop); EMAIL...

- **Contagious**: rapid, widespread diffusion throughout the population. Doesn’t care about hierarchy or physical movement of people. Ex: medicine for prevention of AIDS; anything on the internet (meetings, rallies, flash mobs).

- **Stimulus**: spread of an underlying principle, even though a specific characteristic is rejected. Ex: computer technology continues (Mac) despite low sales.
Relocation Diffusion: spread of Euro

Figure 1-31
Types of maps!

- **Mercator**
  - Show parallels as straight lines (good for navigation)
  - **Bad for distortion** (especially at the poles)

- **Robinson**
  - Tried to fix problems of Mercator by having lines bend at poles (but still distorts at poles)
  - Tries to fix distortions by making not perfect adjustments in shape, size, distance, and direction
  - **Looks more visually appealing and most used in textbooks!**
Peters Projection

• Controversial
• Focuses on keeping land masses equal in area (to more accurately depict the large size of Africa & South America)
• Distorts shape

• All MAPS:
• Distort because they are flat projections of something that is round!
Key terms to know…

- **Clustered** = **agglomerated** = **centralized** (people or things are close together)
- **Dispersed** = **scattered** (people or things are spread out)
- **Patterns** = how things or people are organized (lack of a pattern = **random distribution**)
The End.

Up next: Population