WHAT IS GEOGRAPHY?

Memorizing places and physical features?

Making maps?
Geography

• “To write about the earth”
• The world in spatial terms
• The study of **places** and **regions**
• Studies the **location** and **distribution** of features on the earth’s surface
• Studies **human activity**, the **natural environment**, and the between the two relationship
• Answers **where?** and **why?**
Branches of Geography

**Physical:** studies where and why natural forces occur as they do; ex. Climates, landforms, vegetation.

**Human:** studies where and why human activities are located where they are; ex. religions, businesses, cities.
• A: Warm, humid
• B: Dry
• C: Humid temperate
• D: Humid cold
• E: Cold polar
• H: Highland
World Distribution of Religions

World religions by continent.
New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina

Most of the area of New Orleans flooded after Hurricane Katrina was majority African American. Physical and political geography intersect in analyzing the impacts of the natural disaster.
Maps: Tool of Geography

• **Map**: tool for storing reference material and for communicating geographic information

• Modern *cartography* (the art and science of map-making)
  – Images from space craft
  – Geographic information systems (GIS)
  – Maps of intangible features
Fig. 1-5: A geographic information system (GIS) stores information about a location in several layers. Each layer represents a different category of information.
Google Map

Chicago pizza restaurants
Mental map

On a blank piece of paper, draw a map of your favorite childhood landscape.

• Draw and label your home, places you encountered regularly as you went about your life, your friend’s home, your school, etc.

• Let your mind recall the objects, and experiences that were important to you.

Don’t worry about creating a work of art – just make a map that reflects your experiences as you remember them.
• Landscape Observation

• Description of the earth’s surface and consideration of the environment.

• Spatial Analysis (the study of how people, objects or ideas are or are not related to one another across space)

• The use of different scales of analysis (spatial feature of your childhood at a detailed local scale)

• Cartography: the making of maps
Languages of a map

Scale
Distance
Direction
Legend or symbols
Projection
Names (Title) (Caption)
Scale and Scope

• Small scale:
  – Large area
  – General view
  – Little detail

• Large scale:
  – Small area
  – Much detail

Which is better? Depends on map’s purpose.
Globes are made into maps because they are bulky and not easy to carry.

Moving a 3D Globe to a 2D piece of paper cannot be done without distortion.

Cartographers: map-makers

Projections
Cartographers distort the earth in their projections.
Absolute LOCATION

Geographic Grid

Absolute Location
Wilmington’s excellent situation has helped it grow and prosper. Wilmington is situated along the major highway of I95 and is situated between Baltimore and Philadelphia. Its situation between two major cities has increased Wilmington’s trade.

Wilmington’s site is next to the Delaware River. The Delaware River gives easy access to Philadelphia, to the C&D Canal, and to the Atlantic. This makes Wilmington’s situation excellent for transporting goods made in Wilmington to other locations and for importing goods to distribute to other places.
Geographical Classification

The World

Regions

Realms
World Geographic Realms

- Realms are
  - based on *spatial criteria*
  - the *largest geographic units* into which the world can be divided
  - based on both *physical* (natural) and *human* (cultural) features
Regions

- Areas of the earth’s surface marked by certain properties
- Based on criteria we establish
- Criteria (indicators) can be:
  - Human (cultural) properties
  - Physical (natural) characteristics
  - or both
- Regions are smaller and more detailed than realms
- All Regions have an area, boundaries, location
What are some of the problems in defining regions?
Transition Zones

- Where geographic realms meet, **transition zones**, not sharp boundaries, mark their contact.
- These zones are areas of **spatial change** where peripheries of two adjacent realms or regions join.
- Zones are marked by a **gradual shift** (rather than a sharp break) in the characteristics that distinguish neighboring realms.

Example:

- Transition Zone between North Africa and Southwest Asia.
Formal Regions

- Marked by a certain degree of homogeneity in one or more phenomena
- Also called *uniform* regions or *homogeneous* regions

**Examples:**
- Corn Belt
- Megalopolis
Presidential Election, 2004

Results by State

[Map showing results by state with red for Bush and blue for Kerry]
The seven countries of Central America form a **formal region** because the borders of Central America are clearly between Mexico and South America.

The “Bible Belt” is a **perceptual region** because it has no clear borders, but is defined by areas **perceived** to be very Christian and conservative.

Economic areas such as wheat production areas are defined in terms of **functional regions** where the boundaries of the region are zonal and not straight lines. The region mapped here represents wheat production.
A region marked less by its sameness than its *dynamic internal structure*

- A spatial system focused on a central core
- A region formed by a set of places and their functional integration
- Also called a *nodal region*

*Example:* Los Angeles Metropolitan Area
Hinterland

• Literally means *country behind*

• A term that applies to the service area “behind” (often surrounding) an urban center

• An urban center is the focus of goods and services produced in the hinterland, and is the hinterland’s dominant focal point and market as well