The Five Themes of Geography and related terms

1. **Location – (*Position*** on Earth’s surface) how the geographical ***situation*** of people and things affects what happens and why

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| Ways to indicate location (position): | |
| Term | Meaning / Examples |
| Maps | Best way to show location and demonstrate insights gained through spatial analysis |
| Place-name (toponym) | A name given to a portion of the Earth’s surface (“Tokyo, the Alps, the Pacific Ocean”). |
| Site | Physical characteristics of a place; climate, water sources, topography, soil, vegetation, latitude, and elevation . (e.g. Defensive site) |
| Absolute location | Latitude and longitude (parallels and meridians), mathematical measurements mainly useful in determining exact distances and direction (maps). |
| Relative location | location of a place relative to other places (situation), valuable way to indicate location for two reasons:   1. Finding an unfamiliar place - by comparing its location with a familiar one (Tokyo is East of Osaka) 2. Centrality, understanding its importance (Chicago is a hub / core of sea & air transportation, and is close to four other states. |
| Distribution | The arrangement of something across Earth’s surface   1. Density – frequency with which something occurs in an area.  *Arithmetic density* – total number of objects (people) in an area.  *Physiologic density* – number of people per unit area of agriculturally productive (arable) land. 2. Concentration – extent of a feature’s spread over an area.  *Clustered* – relatively close.  *Dispersed* – relatively far apart. |
| Pattern | The arrangement of objects in a space (e.g. scattered or concentrated)  The pattern of new HIV infection is concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa |

[**Human/Environmental Interactions**](http://teacherweb.ftl.pinecrest.edu/snyderd/APHG/Unit%201/5%20Themes.htm#2)

Human beings interact their environment in many different ways. The climate and the physical characteristics strongly influence human-environmental interaction. The characteristics of a region determine how humans get food and what food humans eat. Human beings fish, farm, hunt and grow food in many different ways. Humans use land for these activities, which has an impact on other living things. The environment also affects where humans live. Humans travel using the environment, too. How we live and use the environment depends on where we live. We build a lot of things on land. Humans have many land uses. What we do and build also has a big impact on the habitat (living space) other living things.

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| Cultural landscape | Includes all human-induced changes on Earth. |
| Cultural ecology | The physical environment influences the development of different cultural traits. Things like people's religion, warfare, etiquette, clothing styles are all shaped by the physical environment inhabited by the people. (*The Yukata worn in summer because it is cool*) |
| Environmental Determinism | A belief that the physical environment causes social development.  This suggests that climate is a critical factor in how humans behave and has been criticized as being far too generalized and even racist. Critics have pointed out the Mayan and Mesoamerican civilizations developed in tropical climates.  To think of it in a very crude way the conditions of the environment determine what cultures are capable of achieving. How would an Environmental determinist explain the distribution of LDC’s and MDC’s in the world |
| Environmental possibilism | This is the counter to environmental determinism. It is the belief that while environment can limit certain actions of a people, it cannot wholly predestine their development.  It basically argues that the choices of a society are determined by its member’s requirements and the technology available to them. |
| Environmental Modification | Positive and negative environmental alterations. E.g – building dams to prevent flooding. |

**Place – think of place as an area of bounded space of some human importance.**

It is a description of what makes that place different to others. If I was trying to tell you about the bedrooms in a house, and I wanted to explain to you exactly which one I meant, I could say, "the one with two beds and one window". If the other rooms had only one bed each, or two windows, then you could easily tell which room I meant.

This is divided into 2 parts: Physical Differences and Human Differences.

Human differences, or characteristics, are things that have changed due to people, such as roads and buildings, how people live and their traditions / culture.

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| Term | Meaning / Examples |
| Culture | People’s lifestyles, values, beliefs, and customs   1. What people care about: language, religion, ethnicity. 2. Cultural institutions: political institutions (a country’s laws and rights), religions 3. Culture region – the area within which a particular culture system dominates (dress, building styles, language, appearances,…) 4. Culture trait – a single attribute of culture. (E.g. in Hindu culture the cow is sacred) |

Physical differences, or *characteristics*, include things that occur naturally, such as mountains, rivers, type of soil.

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| Physical Processes | Environmental processes, which explain the distribution of human activities |
| Vegetation | The plant life in a particular place |
| Climate | Long-term average weather condition at a particular location. |
| Soil | The material that forms Earth’s surface, in the thin interface between the air and the rocks.  Erosion and the depletion of nutrients are two basic problems concerning the destruction of the soil. |
| Landforms | Earth’s surface features (geomorphology), limited population near poles and at high altitudes |

**Movement – movement of people, information, goods and migration**

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| Culture Hearths | Sources of civilization from which an idea, innovation, or ideology originates (e.g. Mesopotamia = farming.) |
| Cultural diffusion | The spread of an innovation, or ideology from its source area to another culture  a)  Expansion diffusion – an innovation, or ideology develops in a source area and remains strong there while also spreading outward. (e.g. Spread of Islam from its hearth Mecca, S.Arabia and into other parts of the Middle East, Asia and Europe)   1. Contagious diffusion – nearly all adjacent individuals are affected (e.g. the spread of disease from one town to a neighboring town ) 2. Hierarchical diffusion – the main channel of diffusion to some who are susceptible to adopting what is being diffused (e.g. the use of fax machines in offices during the 1980s, or social networking sites among young people) OR (*if a farmer developed an amazing new tool for farming we would expect it to diffuse among farmers not businessmen*). 3. Stimulus diffusion – spread of an basic idea stimulates a new idea / innovation (e.g. the hamburger has spread to India where the cow is sacred and so retailers started selling burgers made out of vegetable products) |
| Relocation diffusion | The spread of an innovation, or ideology through physical movement of individuals.   1. Migrant diffusion is a type of diffusion when something is prevalent in its hearth (origin) for a brief period, but then dies in its hearth by the time it spreads outward to other areas. For example, the spread of the flu is migrant diffusion because by the time it spreads away from its hearth, most of the people in its hearth are generally already immune to it. 2. Acculturation – when a culture is substantially changed through interaction with another culture. 3. Transculturation – a near equal exchange between two or more cultures. |
| Forces that work against diffusion: | 1. Time-distance decay – the longer and farther it has to go, the less likely it will get there. 2. Cultural barriers – prevailing attitudes or taboos. E.g. religious prohibitions against alcohol prevent its spread to some areas |

**Region – regions are a type of place**

When you are planning a hiking trip to the Rockies, or a beach vacation to the Caribbean you are talking about regions

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| Term | Meaning / Example |
| Every region has |  |
| An area: | This is a defined spatial extent. Basically we know roughly where the region begins and ends. Sometimes we know exactly the size and shape of a region (formal region). |
| A location: | All regions lie somewhere on Earth’s surface |
| Other Characteristics | Cultural (language, religion), economic (agriculture, industry), physical (climate, vegetation) |

There are three types of regions

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| Formal  (a.k.a. uniform, consistent region) | To be a formal region it must have some kind of visible and measurable homogeneity. This could be by physical criteria or by cultural traits (e.g. Mt. Fuji, Sahara Desert, the Alps, the area of Europe that predominantly speaks French, i.e. a French speaking region. |
| Functional | Is the product of interactions, and movement of various kinds, usually characterized by a core and surrounding area (e.g. Functional regions are organized around a focal point, that include areas that are linked to them through communication patterns, transportation routes, or even television broadcasts |
| Vernacular– (a.k.a. perceptual), | These are primarily in the minds of people (e.g. Sunbelt) see map p.26. Perceptual regions reflect human feelings and attitudes about areas, they are based more on opinions than facts, e.g. “the dangerous part of town” |

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