

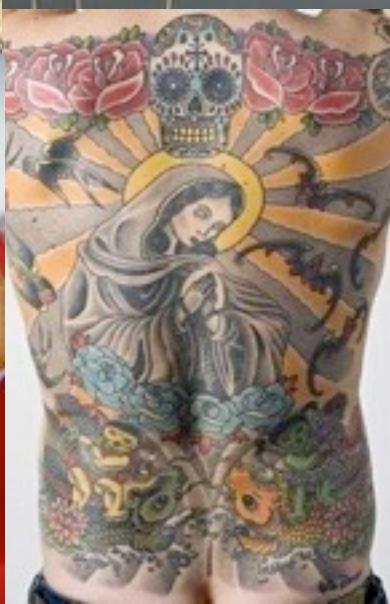
Cultural Geography

Introduction to Geography
Week 10

Lehman College GEH 101/GEH 501
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Definitions of Culture

- ▶ Cultivated behavior; learned and accumulated experience that is socially transmitted
- ▶ Systems of knowledge shared by group of people
- ▶ Communicated behaviors, beliefs, values, symbols
- ▶ Products of action, conditioning for future action



Cultural Determinism

- ▶ Culture determines human nature
- ▶ People are what they have been conditioned to be, over which they have no control
- ▶ Culture of poverty: Moynihan Report

"at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time."

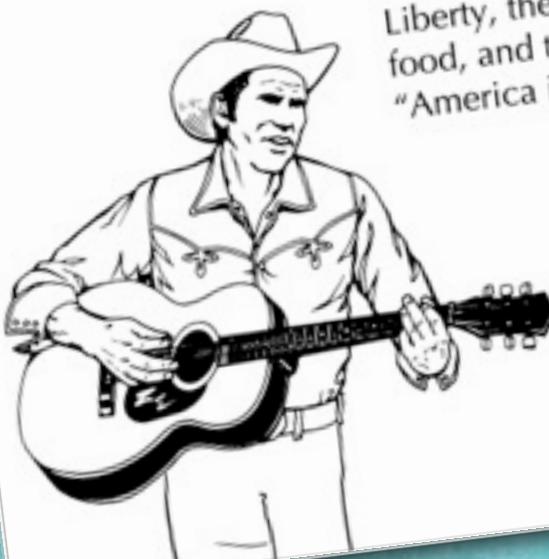


Cultural Relativism

- ▶ Different cultural groups think, act, feel, and know differently
- ▶ People's beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of the people's specific culture
- ▶ Culture is situated within historical context
- ▶ Rejects superiority and inferiority in favor of difference

Cultural Ethnocentrism

- ▶ Belief that one's own culture (or group identity based on cultural characteristics) is superior to others
- ▶ View other cultures in terms of one's own
- ▶ Nationalism/xenophobia
- ▶ Colonialism
- ▶ White supremacy



Thanks, y'all... This next song is about how much I love the French Statue of Liberty, the English language, German food, and the Spanish guitar. It's called "America is for Americans."

Break

- ▶ Sign in
- ▶ Term paper questions?
- ▶ Term paper due date...
- ▶ Outlines

Themes in Cultural Geography

▶ Culture as...

- ▶ Distribution of things
- ▶ Way of life
- ▶ Meaning
- ▶ Doing
- ▶ Power

Cultural Artifacts

- ▶ The material things that express culture
- ▶ All people produce cultural artifacts
 - ▶ Everyday items: furniture, clothes
 - ▶ Large structures: buildings, cities
- ▶ How to understand relationship between these artifacts and the values, livelihoods, beliefs, and identities of cultures that produce them?
- ▶ What can the pattern of material artifacts tell us about the social, economic and political dynamics of cultures?



Cultural Geographies are as much about the graffiti themselves as they are about the locations of the graffiti-marked buildings; as much about the idea of home as they are about the distribution of housing; and as much about the diversity within culture as they are about cultures per se. These geographies ask why and how, as much as where and when.

Culture as a Way of Life

- ▶ The values, beliefs, languages, meanings and practices that make up people's 'ways of life'
- ▶ Rural/Urban, Relaxed/Fast-paced
- ▶ Religious beliefs and traditions
- ▶ Expressions of identity
 - ▶ ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability, occupation, etc.
- ▶ Different ways of life structure the daily practices and individuals in different places



sweetgrass

the last ride of the american cowboy

Culture as Meaning

- ▶ How and why landscapes become embedded with individual and cultural meaning and in turn create new meanings
- ▶ Meaning:
 - ▶ individual emotions, experiences and memories
 - ▶ group values, attachments and ideals
- ▶ Whose meanings are given precedence in these interpretations?
 - ▶ Cultural hegemony and assimilation
- ▶ Meaning is connected to place; value ascribed to places



Interpreting ‘Ordinary’ landscapes – places that we often take for granted in our everyday life, like our homes and towns – requires in-depth, often intimate, knowledge of local history, cultural values and economic structures.



- ▶ Symbolic landscapes – places that are imbued with special meaning beyond the everyday
 - ▶ civic pride, national identity and global circulation
 - ▶ urban and national political agendas, constructions of local and national identity, and the global market of image circulation

Culture as Doing

- ▶ Living of everyday life
- ▶ Performing, learning, resisting, moving
- ▶ Culture affects actions and actions affect culture
- ▶ Places shape cultures and cultures shape places
- ▶ **What does this mean geographically?**

Culture as Power

- ▶ How artifacts get made, how they get from one place to another, and who benefits from all this trading and placing
- ▶ Power to do things
- ▶ Power relations organized around politics, gender, lifestyle, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, etc.
- ▶ Sites of oppression and resistance, the different scales through which power relations operate and how space is manipulated by the powerful and the weak

Components of Culture

- ▶ Culture **trait** - Single distinguishing feature of a culture
- ▶ Culture **complex** - Group of culture traits that are functionally interrelated
- ▶ Culture **system** - Shared, identifying traits uniting two or more culture complexes
- ▶ Culture **region** - Portion of the earth's surface in which common cultural characteristics prevail
- ▶ Culture **realm** - Collective of culture regions sharing related culture systems

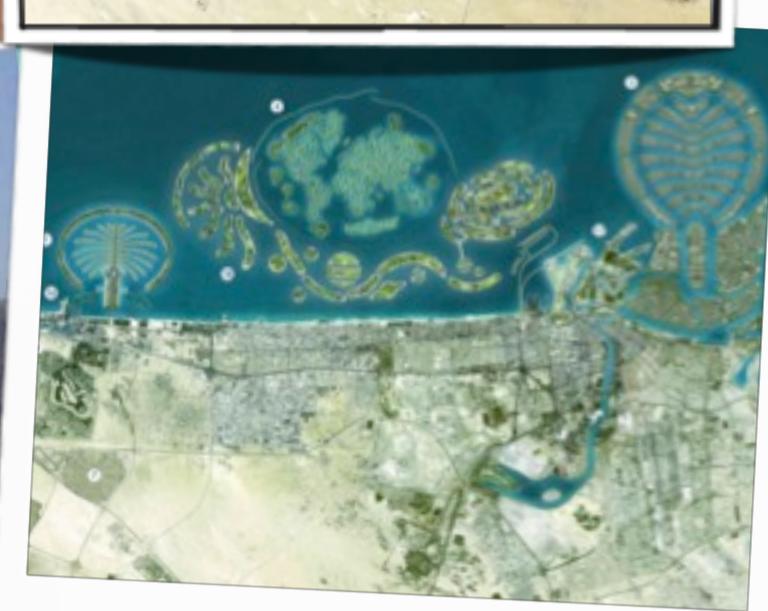
Human-Environment Interactions

- ▶ **Cultural ecology:** Study of the relationship between a culture group and the natural environment it occupies
- ▶ Human Impacts
 - ▶ **Cultural landscape:** The earth's surface as modified by human action
 - ▶ Relationship between technological advancement and impact on the environment

Dubai 1991



Dubai 2005



Human-Environment Interactions and Ideology

- ▶ **Historical Materialism (Marx):** technological change drives historical progress
 - ▶ technology increases human control over the environment
 - ▶ technology drives society's economic system
 - ▶ economic system determines political and social life
 - ▶ technology has the *potential* to be revolutionary if it can undo uneven economic and social systems by improving material conditions (overall wealth)

Human-Environment Interactions and Ideology

- ▶ **Environmental Determinism:** belief that the physical environment explains human cultures and behaviors
- ▶ **Possibilism:** physical environment neither suggests nor determines what people will attempt, but it may limit what people can profitably achieve
 - ▶ Choices and constraints are as much cultural, economic, political, and social as they are technological; e.g. growing crops in a greenhouse versus importing them

Cultural Change

- ▶ Technological, Sociological, Ideological Subsystems
 - ▶ Change through Innovation
 - ▶ Change through Spatial diffusion
 - ▶ Change through Acculturation

Structure of Feeling

- » How are places structured through cultural practices?
 - » Role of Language
 - » Role of Religion
 - » Role of Ethnicity
 - » Role of Gender
- In terms of...
- » Distribution of things
 - » Way of life
 - » Meaning
 - » Doing
 - » Power