Human Geography

The physical environment (natural landscape) sets the stage for human use which results in the cultural landscape.

The cultural landscape is the focus of Human Geography (once called “anthropogeography”).

Human Geography includes all the spatial, non-physical environment aspects of people living on the earth.

Principal Themes in US&C Human Geography and Landscape Development

1. A long and ongoing Native American legacy (includes the peoples lumped under the terms “Indian” and “Eskimo”.
2. A human imprint from European colonization.
3. A long and ongoing history of immigration.
4. Significant regional differences in age, ethnicity, culture, religion, politics and well-being of its population with resultant visual landscapes.
5. Industrialization as a concentrator of people.
6. Urbanization (and suburbanization) of the population as people “modernize” and focus less on the land.

Natural Hazards

Natural hazards are natural processes that adversely affect people.

North America has the greatest variety of natural hazards of any continent.

They span all the realms: geologic, atmospheric and oceanic processes.

People need to deal to them. Be aware. Be prepared. React appropriately.

Eight Principal Themes in the Human Geography of the U.S. and Canada

7. Significant internal population shifts over time as:
   - Rural to Urban
   - East to West
   - Rural South to Urban North
   - North to South (“Rust Belt” to “Sun Belt”)
   - Emptying of the US Great Plains
   - Movement to the Western provinces of Canada
8. Dealing with natural hazards, both the natural processes and the impact from human actions.
Dry Western States

U.S. Drought Monitor

February 17, 2015

Estimated that 95% of California is now in drought.

DROUGHT MONITOR WEBSITE: http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/

60 Years of Drought

The drought landscape varies over the years by region.

- Green areas become brown.
- Water levels drop in lakes, rivers and aquifers.
- Without irrigation agricultural land turns into a dust bowl.
- Forest and grassland fires become more frequent.

Frozen Seasonal Landscape: Great Lakes in Winter

Great Lakes freeze each winter. February 2014 was the first time since winter of 1984/85 that the lakes were over 85% frozen.

Peopling of North America: Land Bridge from Asia

During the last Ice Age mean sea level was c. 450 ft. lower than it is today. The continental shelf under the Bering Sea was exposed dry land (Beringia).

- Oral histories and dated artifacts indicate people from Asia migrated to North America c. 11,000 - 40,000 years ago.
- Native peoples then moved south from Alaska through ice-free mountain corridors into present-day coterminous USA.

Read electronic handout on Homepage from the "Introduction" to the Atlas of Indian Nations (National Geographic, Society, 2014).

Settlement Scenario

- With global warming, they followed the animal herds into what is now Canada.
- Tribes interacted with the physical environment and developed unique cultural traits influenced by the habitat where they lived.
- Reached the northernmost areas 4,000-5,000 yrs ago.
- Global warming = increased food supplies = population growth.

By the time of the arrival of the European explorers in the 1500s, Native Americans had a presence in most of North America.

Native American Areas

Physiographic regions

Major tribes within the regions.

The human response to the physical elements gives each region a unique cultural appearance.
Native Groups of Alaska and Hawaii

Alaska was the first area settled (land bridge from Asia). Hawaii was the last area on Earth to be inhabited. (Ocean-going technology needed).

Native Americans and Global Cooling

- Global cooling in the 1400s ("Mini Ice Age") reduced agricultural production and animal habitat.
- Northern areas experienced food shortages.
- Some northeastern tribes became more aggressive in protecting their land from each other and seeking new food sources.
- The coincidental arrival of Europeans was viewed as a threat.

The Native American Legacy on the Landscape

- Domesticated plants and animals.
- Developed agricultural methods.
- Built earthen works and ritual mounds.
- Constructed palisade-ringed villages.
- Constructed adobe apartment house-like structures.
- Altered landscapes by cutting down trees in forests for fields and trails.
- Built ocean-going canoes.
- Invented fish traps for use in lagoons and inlets.
- Used and managed fire to clear the land and to drive game into hunting areas.
- Developed systems of governance.

Native Americans

The first inhabitants were hunters and gatherers who later became sedentary agriculturalists.

Native American-European Interaction

Their first interaction was for trade.

Legacy of European Interaction

- Tribal interaction varied with the goals of the new arrivals
  - Dutch (trading partners)
  - French (explorers/missionaries/traders)
  - English (settlers, empire-builders)
  - Spanish (treasure seekers/missionaries)
  - Russians (traders)
  - Americans after independence (eminent domain)
- European diseases ravaged the tribes (no immunity)
- Intermarriage (especially in the east) reduced tribal identities.
**Native Americans Today**

- A diverse contemporary population numbering over 4 million.
- Numerous semi-autonomous reservations that vary greatly in size.
- Evidence of their cultural expression throughout the U.S. and Canada – designs, patterns, the arts.
- **Toponyms** (place names) throughout the continent
  - Canarsie
  - Massapequa
  - Michigan
  - Chicago
  - Huron
  - Nantucket
  - Saskatchewan
  - Winnipeg
  - Delaware
  - Yukon

**Spatial Expression of Culture**

- Great Serpent Mound, Ohio, a prehistoric earthwork
- Hopi
- Inuit
- Taos Pueblo
- Sioux

**Traditional Native American Dwellings**

Style of the dwellings reflected both the local physical environment and activity of the people.

**Northeast: Iroquois**

- Tapping a maple tree for sap
- Three Sisters: beans, corn, and squash
- Iroquois village

**Plains**

- Grass house above.
- Sod house below.
- Teepees (left) are "traveling" houses.

**Southwest**

- Mesa Verde NP cliff dwellings
Arctic vs. Everglades

Polynesian ocean-going dugout canoe (above) Eastern woodland birch bark canoe

Inuit seal-skin kayak

Water Transportation

U.S. Indian Reservations

About 550 tribes that are recognized by the U.S. government. There are 310 reservations.

All reservation land accounts for about 2.3% of the US and varies greatly in size.

Twelve are larger than the State of Rhode Island.

The Navajo Nation is the largest - the size of West Virginia.

“Tribal sovereignty” applies to reservations. Laws on tribal lands may differ from surrounding areas.

Many reservations have a unique appearance that is a blend of native culture, modernization and poverty.

U.S. Concentrations of Native Americans

Canada’s First Nations

Canada’s First Nations

The FIRST NATIONS consist of about 630 tribes.

Historically, relations with the Canadian government have been generally good.

Many live in Indian Reserves on land given to them.

In 1999 Canada created NUNAVUT, an Inuit-governed territory, by dividing the Northwest Territories into two areas.

Concentrations of Native Americans in Canada

• The 2006 National Census of Canada counted over 1.2 million native people.

• Inuit groups accounted for c.500,000 people.

• North American Indian tribes totaled c.700,000 people.
NEXT LECTURE

European Exploration and Colonization