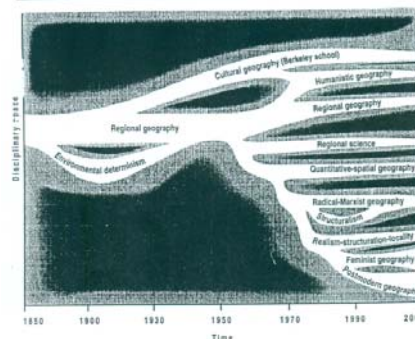


## Radicals, Marxists, Feminists, and assorted Post-modernists

From Richard Peet,  
*Modern Geographical Thought* (1998)



### What was radical about radical geography?

- **The content:** the poor and powerless; the characteristics of places thereof; development and underdevelopment; people of color; women; racism; causes of environmental degradation; colonialism and post-colonialism; the global spread of capitalism; injustice in all its forms; sexism; sexual orientation . . .
- **An approach that encouraged personal involvement and advocacy** (as opposed to neutral observation).
- **Use of Marxist perspectives** (particularly during the Cold War, when mere advocacy of Marxist perspectives suggested lack of patriotism).

### Factors in the rise of radical geography

- A growing distrust of authority, and especially government (due mainly to the Viet Nam war.)
- Rising awareness of social, economic and political inequalities and injustices that existed throughout the United States (including, in all likelihood, the very place where you lived).
- Awareness that these problems had geographical attributes and thus were amenable to geographical analysis.
- A sense that tackling these issues – and possibly finding solutions to them – was relevant and important, and reflected highly on the discipline of geography.

**Radical Geography** arose in the 1970s and 1980s in part as a reaction to perceived shortcomings of the positivist/quantitative approach. Specifically, while positivism was viewed as capable of characterizing many social problems, radicals believed the quantitative approach had little value as regards what they saw as the ultimate goal of human geography; namely, to offer useful alternatives and solutions to social problems. Radical geography is, therefore, mostly characterized by qualitative methodologies.

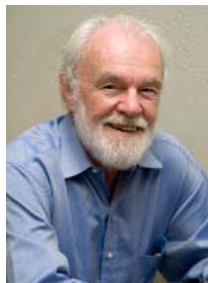
**Critical geography** is a branch of human geography that espouses a critical theory approach (an examination and critique) to the study of society. The basic goal is a better understanding of society, leading to formulation of strategies for its improvement. Generally, “critical geography” is a conceptual umbrella that may be applied to any study or theory within the field of geography that is founded on critique.

### William W. Bunge (1928 - )



- American-born human geographer who was in the forefront of both the quantitative revolution and radical geography
- Author of *Theoretical Geography*, a landmark in the literature of positivism.
- Became disillusioned and radicalized by U.S. conservative politics, racism and the Vietnam War.
- A founder of the Detroit Geographical Expedition, which sought to address social ills of urban America.
- Now “in exile” in Canada.

### David Harvey (1935 - )



- Distinguished human geographer affiliated with the CUNY Graduate Center.
- Originally an advocate of logical positivism and author of *Explanation in Geography* (1969), a landmark in that field.
- Later embraced radical geography, believing geography should not remain “objective” in the face of social injustice and social ills.
- He is probably the most famous (and equally prolific) proponent of the use of Marxist perspectives in geography.

**Marxist geography** is a form of critical geography that uses theory and philosophy derived from the writing of Karl Marx (1818-1883). It focuses on the role of capitalism in creating social inequalities and in encouraging people-environment relationships that act to the detriment of both. Like critical geography in general, its principal goal is the improvement of society.

### Structuralism

**Philosophy:** The world consists of innumerable places/settings where you find groups of humans who are differentiated from other groups by a common social context (structure) that molds their behavior.

**Epistemology:** Knowledge is obtained by identifying these setting-specific social groups (e.g., Columbian coffee farmers; Indonesian factory workers; gay men in Chelsea; Black women in Harlem; Nassau County commuters; long-term residents of gentrifying areas . . .), and the nature and extent of their unifying contexts.

**Paradigm:** Exploration of group contexts through a variety of means, principally observation and interview.

### J. Richard Peet



- Professor of Geography at Clark U.
- A founder of *Antipode*.
- With David Harvey and others, a pioneer in Marxist/critical perspectives on diverse aspects of human geography.
- Current research involves the geographies of power, globalization, economic policy, and development theory (among other things).

**Antipode**, A Radical Journal of Geography, was established in 1969 to publish articles on environmental and spatial topics written from radical viewpoints. Its Website describes the journal as publishing critical scholarship focusing on geographical issues and promoting geographical ways of understanding the world, with the ultimate goal being radical change.

“Antipode” means a direct or exact opposite. In geography it implies the opposite side of the world.

**Postmodernism** is an intellectual movement characterized by skepticism of positivist methodologies and grand theorizing in general – seeking in their place openness to a range of forces in social enquiry and political empowerment.

**Feminist geography** is a branch of human geography that focuses on the theories, goals, methods and critiques of feminism, one definition of which is “the collective effort to establish and enact equal rights and opportunities for woman.” Most geographers view this area of study as part of the larger realms of critical humanist geography and/or postmodern geography, as opposed to being a specific sub-discipline.

Susan Hanson

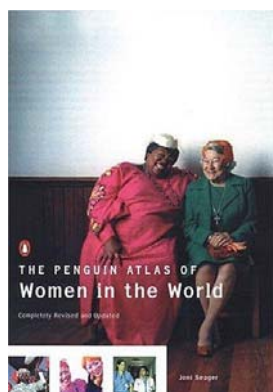


- Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, Clark University
- A Past-President of the Association of American Geographers
- Prolific scholar
- Helped establish feminist geography within the mainstream of the discipline, particularly in regard to links with urban, economic and transportation geography.

### Women Presidents of A.A.G.

(founded 1904)

- 1921 – Ellen C. Semple
- 1984 – Risa I. Palm
- 1990 – Susan E. Hanson
- 1995 – Judy M. Olson
- 1997 – Patricia Gober
- 2000 – Susan L. Cutter
- 2001 – Janice J. Monk
- 2004 – Victoria A. Lawson
- 2006 – Kavita K. Pandit
- 2009 – Carol P. Harden
- Current – Audrey L. Kobayashi

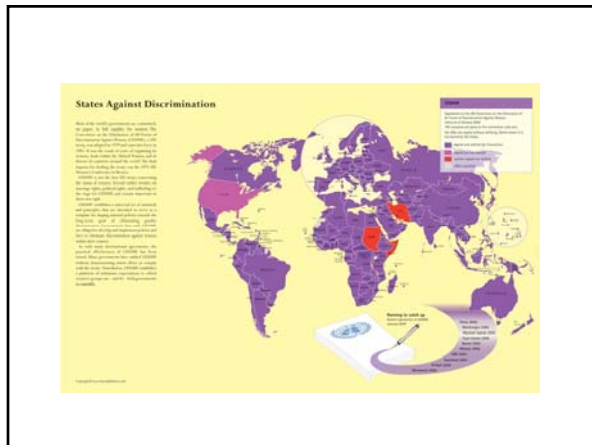
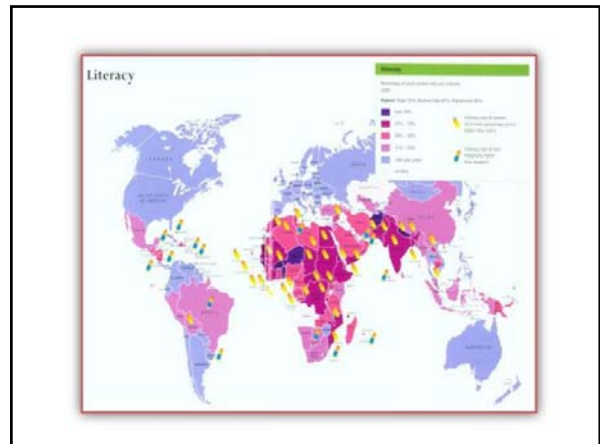
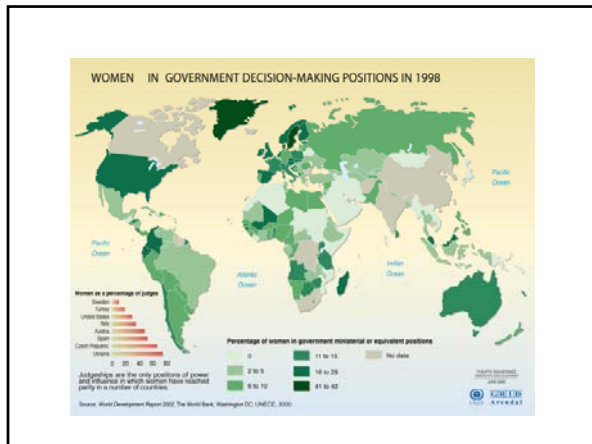


### Joni Seager

Author of *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*



Formerly Professor and Chairperson, Department of Geography, Hunter College



**Queer Geography** (along with associated terms like queer theory, Gay Space and Gay Geography) is a relatively new branch of human geography generally that focuses on spatial aspects of the LGBT community and the sexualizing of space. seen as an intellectual outgrowth of critical and feminist geography.

Suffice to say, use of “queer” in Queer Geography is controversial.

