

Module : Humanities and Social Sciences

Level : 1st year

Teacher: Dr. Nassima Amirouche

Lecture 6: Geography

Objectives:

- to learn how human, physical and environmental components of the world interact.
- To learn and understand how the world's basic physical systems work and affect our everyday life
- To learn about other cultures, where they live, and how their location and climate affects their lifestyle.
- To learn more about the geography of a different era and the role it played in people's lives, environments and ideas.

1. Etymology

The word 'geography' originates from two Greek words. The first is 'geo' which means 'the earth' and the second Greek word is "graph" which means 'to write'.

2. Origins of the Word Geography

The first recorded use of the word geography was by Eratosthenes, a Greek scholar who lived from 276–194 BC who is credited with creating the discipline of geography.

3. Definition

Geography is the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments. Geographers explore both the physical properties of Earth's surface and the human societies spread across it. They also examine how human culture interacts with the natural environment, and the way that locations and places can have an impact on people. Geography seeks to understand where things are found, why they are there, and how they develop and change over time.

4. A Brief History of Geography as a Field of Study

The Greeks are the first known culture to actively explore geography as a science and philosophy, with major contributors including Thales of Miletus, Herodotus, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, Aristotle, Dicaearchus of Messana, Strabo, and Ptolemy. Mapping by the Romans as they explored new lands added new techniques.

During the Middle Ages, Arabs such as Idrisi, Ibn Battuta, and Ibn Khaldun built on and maintained the Greek and Roman learnings. Following the journeys of Marco Polo, interest in geography spread throughout Europe.

During the Renaissance and into the 16th and 17th centuries the great voyages of exploration revived a desire for solid theoretical foundations and accurate detail. The

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Geographia Generalis by Bernhardus Varenius and Gerardus Mercator's world map are prime examples.

By the 18th century, geography had become recognized as a discrete discipline and became part of a typical university curriculum. Over the past two centuries the quantity of knowledge and the number of tools has exploded. There are strong links between geography and the sciences of geology and botany.

5. Major Branches of Geography

Geographers can also organized the study of geography as branches and sub-branches of geography.

Those that study geography are divided into two main branches: physical geography and human geography.

5.1 Physical geography

This branch focuses on Geography as an Earth science, making use of biology to understand global flora and fauna patterns, and mathematics and physics to understand the motion of the Earth and relationship with other bodies in the solar system.

Physical geography may look at: climate, continents, oceans, soil, rivers, mountains...etc

5.2 Human geography

The human, or political/cultural, branch of geography – also called anthropogeography focuses on the social science, non-physical aspects of the way the world is arranged.

It examines how humans adapt themselves to the land and to other people, and in macroscopic transformations they enact on the world. It can be divided into the following broad categories: economic geography, political geography (including geopolitics), social geography (including urban geography), environmentalism, cartography, and military geography.

Human geography may look at: population, countries of the world, agriculture, energy,...etc

6. How Geographers Work

Geographers use a number of methods and tools in their work. The simplest method is going out to a place to observe and gather information. This is called fieldwork. Geographers use photographs taken from the air to see things that they cannot see from the ground. They also depend on spacecraft called satellites to take photographs and collect information from

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far above Earth. Geographers use computers to help them make sense of the information they receive.

The main tool used by geographers is the map. People who make maps are called cartographers. Geographers use maps to display the information they have gathered. Topographic maps show natural land formations, such as the huge landmasses called continents. Geographers also use maps to show how people have divided the land. Political maps show the boundaries of countries and other divisions.

Why study Geography?

1. Space Vs. Place Awareness

Studying geography helps us to have an awareness of a place. All places and spaces have a history behind them, shaped by humans, earth, and climate. Studying geography gives a meaning and awareness to places and spaces. It also helps students with spatial awareness on the globe. Understanding direction and where things are in the world is still a vital skill, despite having easy access to this information online.

2. Learn The Course Of History

Geography puts history in context. It helps us see the why, when, and how of what happened in history. You'll learn history better by learning geography.

3. Navigation Skills

You can know whether you're headed north or south after studying geography. Studying geography can enhance your navigation skills, no matter where you are

4. Making Sense of Cultures

Studying geography will help you make sense of and appreciate different cultures around the globe. Learning about land, resource availability, and how that has shaped a culture to be the way it is today helps you understand the uniqueness of a culture.

5. Global Interdependence

Global interdependence is the idea that areas of the world are all interdependent on one another. Each country, continent, and region depends on another for resources and peace. Those countries depend on others, and so on — we are all connected and depending on one another in some form.