



# GEOS1002

INTRODUCTORY GEOGRAPHY

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Study Notes

# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>2 – 5</b>
<u>LECTURE 1</u> : INTRODUCTION: THINKING “GEOGRAPHICALLY” ABOUT OUR PLANET .....	2
<b>DROUGHT, WAR, AND THE “TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS”</b> .....	<b>6 – 18</b>
<u>LECTURE 2</u> : DROUGHT, WAR, AND THE “TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS” (PART 1) .....	6
<u>LECTURE 3</u> : DROUGHT, WAR, AND THE “TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS” (PART 2) .....	14
<b>MEGA-DELTAS</b> .....	<b>19 – 30</b>
<u>LECTURE 4</u> : MEGA-DELTAS (PART 1) .....	19
<u>LECTURE 5</u> : MEGA-DELTAS (PART 2) .....	26
<b>A GEOGRAPHY OF THE INTERNET</b> .....	<b>31 – 34, 56 – 58</b>
<u>LECTURE 6</u> : A GEOGRAPHY OF THE INTERNET (PART 1) .....	31
<u>LECTURE 7</u> : <b>LECTURE WAS CANCELLED</b> .....	
<u>LECTURE 12</u> : A GEOGRAPHY OF THE INTERNET (PART 2) .....	56
<b>HAITI EARTHQUAKE</b> .....	<b>35 – 44</b>
<u>LECTURE 8</u> : HAITI EARTHQUAKE (PART 1) .....	35
<u>LECTURE 9</u> : HAITI EARTHQUAKE (PART 2) .....	40
<b>BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION</b> .....	<b>45 – 55</b>
<u>LECTURE 10</u> : BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION (PART 1) .....	45
<u>LECTURE 11</u> : BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION (PART 2) .....	51
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>59 – 60</b>
<u>LECTURE 13</u> : CONCLUSION.....	59

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## Lecture One: What is Geography?

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### What is Geography?

- Physical and associative between the planet and *all* its parts
- Past, present and future dynamics of the Earth and all its parts
- Representations of physical and/or social phenomena in media/models (incl. maps)
- A synthetic, integrative science
- Thinking geographically: A mode of thinking that can be applied to many disciplines

### Core/Defining Concepts in Geography

- **Space:** Effectively location
  - o Fixed
  - o Euclidean
  - o Immutable
- **Place:** How humans understand and value the places they occupy
  - o Subjective
  - o Contested
  - o Fluid
- **Scale:** How the natural and human spheres are measured
  - o There are two scales:
    - Spatial (over space)
    - Temporal (over time)
  - o At any one point in space or time, there are multiple processes at work
- Demonstrate a familiarity with the core concepts of Geography while acknowledging the dynamic and situated nature of Geographical thought
- Characteristics of your space or place are determined by phenomena operating, over synchronously, at different scales
- Human/environment interaction
  - o Tangible and intangible
  - o Positive and negative feedbacks
  - o Unpredictability and non-linearity

### Things Have “Geographies”

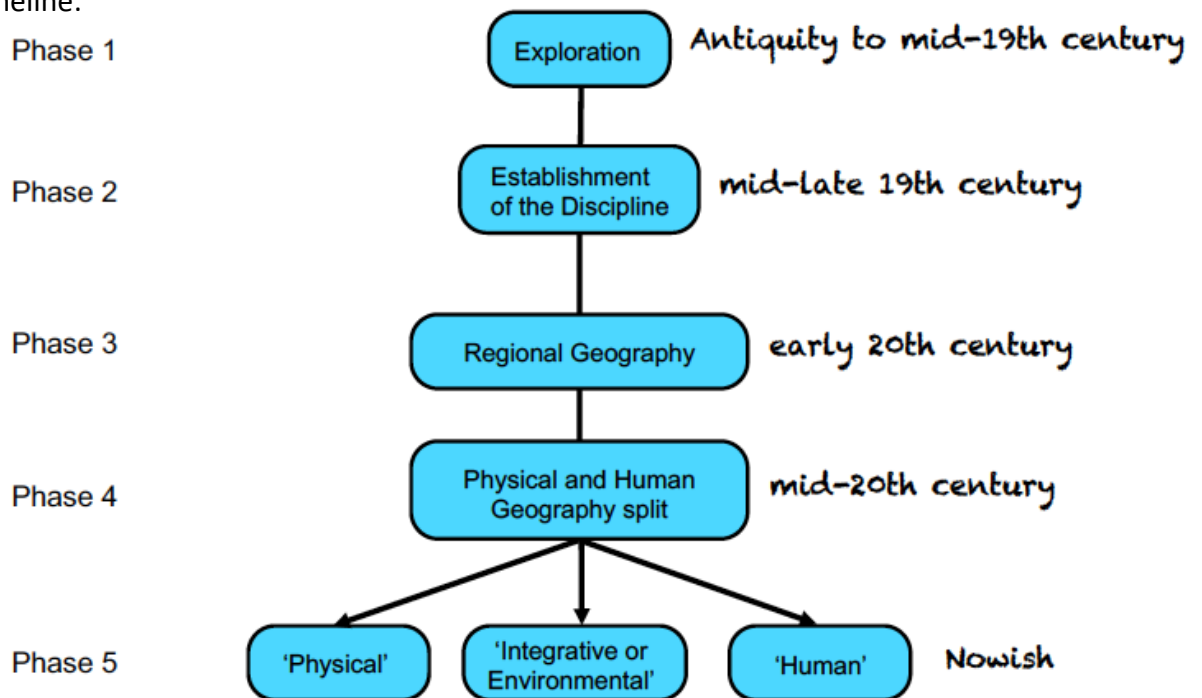
- Consider where each of the materials used in the “thing” were made and assembled
  - o The result of a global supply chain
- The geography of a pair of Lee Jeans:
  - o Cotton from Benin, **West Africa**
  - o Denim dyed in **Milan** using **German** indigo, stone washed using pumice from **Turkey**
  - o Thread for stitching made in **Northern Ireland**, dyed in **Spain**
  - o Brass rivets made from **Namibian** copper and **Australian** zinc
  - o Zipper made in **Japan**
  - o Stitched together in **Tunisia**, North Africa
  - o Now also assembled in special economic zones in Phnom Penh, **Cambodia**

## Space and Place Have Geographies

- Things do not exist in a vacuum – they exist in specific locations (spaces) shaped by physical, social and political phenomena (places)

## A History of Geography as an Academic Tradition

- Focus principally on the issues of physical or human, nature and culture, people or environment
  - o The basic question of unity [between the sub-disciplines of geography] revolve around this apparent dichotomy
- Geography is essentially part of the colonial mythology of exploration
- Timeline:



- Origins of “geographical” thought and action
  - o Goes back to antiquity
  - o Fundamental to the way we think as human beings
- Not really until the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when people started doing “natural philosophy”, exploration and imperialism
  - o Little distinction between the study of nature and the cultures that occupied it (von Humbolt’s exploration of the Americas being a good early example of the power of geography)
- Immanuel Kant
  - o Despite being a philosopher, he taught a subject called “physical geography”
  - o Considered geography to be a pragmatic “world knowledge”
    - Basis for all philosophy and for better moral lives
  - o Founding father of professional geography in universities
  - o His geography was quite different from the geography practiced today
    - Physical description of the Earth, exclusively over space with no concept of time
    - Geography synchronic, with no temporal dimension