01 | Introducing Geography

Part I – Introducing Geography

Geography 101
Physical Geography: Earth's Surface Landscapes
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Today

- Definition of physical geography
- "Spatial"

Physical Geography

- Geography literally “to write about the Earth”
- We are interested in the spatial relationships between things on the planet

“Spatial”

"of, pertaining to, relating to, occupying, existing in, occurring in, or caused by space"

Paraphrased from the Penguin Dictionary of Geography, 1993

“Spatial”

We are spatial actors

- We move (mobility)
- We understand direction, distance, etc.
- New technology changes this
  - Maps, GPS

Today

- Definition of physical geography
- “Spatial”
We value land based on spatial properties
- Coastal homes
- Scenic views
- Above the floodplain
“Spatial”

We **organize** our homes & offices according to **spatial patterns**
- Bedrooms vs. dining rooms

Spatial Analysis

- Exploring the patterns between geographic phenomena
  - **What is there?**
    - What plants do we find in the Amazon Jungle?
    - What type of rocks are at the top of Mt. Everest?

Spatial Analysis

- Why is it there?
  - Why does California have so many earthquakes?
  - Why do we find unique animals on islands?
  - Why does the Middle East have so much oil?

Spatial Analysis

- How does \( x \) influence \( y \)?
  - How does human activity change Earth’s climate?
  - Can we engineer a way to bring more water to the desert?

Spatial Analysis

*Physical geography uses **spatial analysis** to understand how the Earth works*
- We view the Earth as a set of processes
- We want to see the differences & similarities between places
Physical Geography

- Interested in how relationships between the Earth's natural systems exist over space or in a place.

Cultural Geography

- Interested in how relationships between the Earth's people exist over space or in a place.

Overlap?

Geographers

- Geographers are often environmentalists
- Geographers are explorers

"What attracted me about the torrid zone was no longer the promise of a wandering life full of adventures, but a desire to see with my own eyes a grand, wild nature rich in every conceivable natural product, and the prospect of collecting facts that might contribute to the progress of science."

-Alexander von Humboldt, Jaguars and Electric Eels, 1800
The origin & structure of the Earth
We will deal with a lot of geologic topics
But also biology, hydrology, meteorology, etc.

Next time
Science!
What it is & what it isn't