

Introduction to Geography Vocabulary (listed in the order they are discussed in the lecture)

geography

- "describing" or "writing about" the earth; interested in how and why things vary across distance

cultural or human geography

- Study of how and why humans are doing what they do where they are doing it
- Includes the study of culture, language, religion, economics, political systems, population settlements (why they settled where they did), and so forth

physical geography

- Study of how and why natural landforms and events are, or happen, where they are found
- Includes the study of the weather, climate, biomes, soils, landforms, and so forth

absolute location

- a specific location that can be identified using a location system like longitude / latitude or street numbering systems

relative location

- location of is given in relationship to something else (e.g. "Bell Road is one mile south of PVCC" or "Flagstaff is two hours north of Phoenix")

formal region

- identified by imposed borders or boundaries, such as countries, states, counties, and cities

functional region

- a region defined by its connection to a central point; metropolitan areas are usually functional regions (e.g. "Phoenix" is the functional region, with people traveling to/from the central part of the city to access the airport, buses, light rail, their job, sporting events, etc.)

vernacular region

- a region, or area, that is understood or implied by common use of the people, for example "Desert Southwest" or "Tornado Alley".

hemisphere

- half of the planet, usually divided northern / southern and eastern / western; The United States is part of the northern and western hemispheres

science and the scientific method

- everything must have an explanation
- explanations are called theories
- everything is theory (valid only until a better explanation/theory comes along)

latitude

- Also known as **parallels**. Lines that run parallel to the equator, measured as angles from the equator; latitude lines can only have values between 0° and 90° and must be designated as either north or south of the equator

equator

- Line that runs around the middle of the earth; the 0° latitude line

longitude

- Also known as **meridians**. Lines that run from pole to pole, measured angles from the pole; longitude lines can only have values from 0° - 180° and must be designated as either east or west of the Prime Meridian

Prime Meridian

- 0° longitude line that runs through Greenwich, England; all longitude line angles are measured from the pole using this as the starting point

time zones

- 24 total on the earth, one for each hour of the day; related to longitude (each time zone = 15° of longitude); crossing a time zone line requires a change in your clock of one hour earlier or later (depending on which direction you are travelling)

International Dateline

- 180° longitude line, running through the Pacific Ocean; the internationally agreed upon location where every day on earth "begins"; crossing this line requires a date change (not hour) -- one day ahead when travelling east-to-west (e.g. from the U.S. to Japan), and one day backward when travelling west-to-east

map

- A 2-dimensional representation of our 3-dimensional earth

GIS (Geographic Information Systems)

- Computer map making and data integration software

GPS (Global Positioning System)

- Satellite-based location system; extremely accurate location and navigation

topography

- The shape of the land, that is, is it flat or mountainous, rocky or smooth, deep canyons, etc.

climate

- The long-term average of the daily weather for a given place

climate controls

- Six (6) factors which determine what type of climate any given location will have

climate control: latitude

- The closer you are to the equator, the warmer your climate will be; closer to the poles will make your climate colder

climate control: altitude

- The higher the elevation of your location, the cooler your climate will be

climate control: land/water relationship

- Locations along the ocean coast will have temperatures that are neither as hot nor as cold as places located well away from the coast

climate control: ocean currents

- Places located next to cold ocean currents tend to be cooler, less humid, and less rainy, while places next to warm ocean currents are the opposite

climate controls: topography and global winds

- Places located in or next to mountain ranges where winds blow off the oceans (windward) will very wet, while locations on the inland side (leeward) of that same mountain range will be much drier. (The Hawaiian Islands all have a wet side and a dry side.)

geomorphology

- The study of landforms and the processes that create them.