

Introduction to Human Geography

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Key concepts, themes, and tools for understanding the spatial patterns of human activity.

1. What Is Human Geography?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The branch of geography that studies the spatial organization of societies, cultures, economies, and interactions with the environment.
Core Question	<i>Where</i> do people live, <i>why</i> are they there, and <i>how</i> do they shape and are shaped by places?
Contrast with Physical Geography	Focuses on human-made (cultural, economic, political) phenomena rather than natural processes (climate, landforms).
Sub-disciplines	- Cultural Geography - Economic Geography - Political Geography - Urban & Rural Geography - Population (Demographic) Geography - Social Geography - Historical Geography

2. Fundamental Concepts

Concept	Meaning	Example
Space	The abstract, quantitative dimension where phenomena occur.	Distance between two cities measured in kilometers.
Place	A location imbued with meaning, identity, and experience.	“Times Square” as a cultural and commercial hub.
Region	An area where one or more characteristics are relatively homogeneous.	The “Midwest” of the United States (agricultural economy, climate).
Scale	The level of analysis (local, regional, national, global).	Studying migration patterns at a city vs. worldwide level.

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Concept	Meaning	Example
Landscape	The visible imprint of human activity on the Earth's surface.	Terraced rice fields in Southeast Asia.
Territory	Space claimed or controlled by a political or social entity.	National borders, indigenous land claims.
Diffusion	The spread of ideas, innovations, or cultural traits.	Adoption of smartphones across the globe.
Globalization	Increasing interdependence of places through flows of goods, people, information, and capital.	Multinational supply chains linking factories in Vietnam to retailers in the U.S.

3. Major Themes in Human Geography

1. Population & Migration

- **Demographic transition:** shift from high birth/death rates to low birth/death rates.
- **Push?pull factors:** economic opportunities, conflict, climate, family ties.
- **Migration types:** internal (rural?to?urban), international, forced (refugees), circular.

2. Cultural Landscape

- Language, religion, ethnicity, and material culture shape places.
- **Cultural diffusion:** hierarchical, contagious, relocation, and stimulus diffusion.

3. Economic Activity

- **Location theories:** von Thünen's model (agricultural), Weber's industrial location, central place theory (Christaller).
- **Global production networks:** offshore manufacturing, service outsourcing.

4. Political Organization

- **State formation,** borders, and geopolitics.
- **Territorial disputes** (e.g., South China Sea) and supranational entities (EU, AU).

5. Urbanization & City Systems

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- **Urban hierarchy:** villages ? towns ? cities ? megacities.
- **Urban models:** Concentric zone, Sector, Multiple nuclei, Urban realms.
- Issues: housing, segregation, gentrification, smart cities.

6. Human?Environment Interaction

- **Cultural ecology:** adaptation of societies to environmental