Basic Themes of Geography

The over-arching goal is to understand how people interact with their environment in places.

Human - Environment Interaction

ECOLOGY
ECONOMICS
CRIMINOLOGY
EPIDEMIOLOGY
CLIMATOLOGY
GEOLOGY
ARCHAEOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY
ANTHR0POLOGY
SOCIOLOGY
AGRONOMY
ZOOLOGY

Investigators from many disciplines look at human-environment interactions.

The "entrance-ticket" to a geographic inquiry is a focus on the theme of location.

Location

where things are

relative to a global frame (latitude/longitude)

relative to specific features (distance/direction)

The idea of location has two aspects.

Conditions

(place, feature, site)

climate
landform
population
land use
industry
government
art, music
religion
etc.

Connections

(movement, link, situation)

tectonic plates
rivers, wind
plants, animals
trade, money
commuters
migrants
messages
ideas, laws
etc.

Geographers use spatial thinking to study conditions and connections.

What groups of places have similar conditions?

What groups of places have similar connections?

Spatial Reasoning

ways to organize knowledge about conditions and connections and to suggest hypotheses for further inquiry

FORMAL REGION

FUNCTIONAL REGION

SPATIAL TRANSITION

How do things change as you go from one place to another?

SPATIAL AURA

What influence does a place have on its neighbors? (and vice versa!)

SPATIAL PATTERN

Are things arranged in a non-random way?

SPATIAL HIERARCHY

How does this place fit inside of larger areas?

SPATIAL ASSOCIATION

Do particular things tend to occur together in the same places?

SPATIAL COMPARISON

How are these places similar or different?

SPATIAL ANALOGY

Are there places in similar positions on other continents, cities, watersheds, etc.

Links with science - what processes "cause" conditions, patterns, associations, etc.?

Links with ethics, aesthetics, etc. Do I like it? Is it efficient? Is it fair?

Links with history - how do conditions, connections, patterns, associations, etc. change through time?

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