World Geography Unit 4, Lesson 1

Regions of the United States
Class Outline

- Northeast
- South
- Midwest & Great Plains
- Rocky Mountains/Basin States, including Southwest
- Pacific Coast
Topics discussed for each Region

- Physical Geography
- Historical Geography
- Population Geography
- Economic Geography
- Cultural Geography
The Northeast

- Northeast

- The Northeast can be subdivided into two smaller regions: 1) New England, and 2) Mid-Atlantic States.
Physical Geography of Northeast

- Northern Appalachian mountains run through most of the northeastern states, causing little farmland, except in valley areas.

- Coastal plain is narrow, with an area between the mountains and coast called the fall line.

- Deep bays exist, allowing for port towns.

- Jagged, rocky coastline in northern areas.
Climate and Vegetation of Northeast: Humid Continental

- **No Dry Season**- this area receives precipitation throughout the year.

- **Cold, snowy winters** and **hot** summers.

- Moderate growing season that decreases as you go north.

- Vegetation is mixed forests with deciduous and coniferous trees.
The Northeast has the longest history of European settlement.

Historically, the Northeast has been the gateway to immigrants.

Established itself as the financial and manufacturing hub early in the industrial revolution.
Population Geography of the Northeast

- Population is concentrated in the Megalopolis that runs from Boston to Washington (AKA Boswash).

- This is the most densely populated region in the United States.
Economic Geography of the Northeast

- The New England states have a long history of maritime industry, although forestry exists inland with little farming.

- The Mid-Atlantic states dominate the financial sector of the U.S., advertising, manufacturing.

- This region is the home to most major corporations in the United States.
Land Use in the Northeast

- Dairy Farming (think Vermont…)
- Farming
- Timber
- Maritime Activity
- Some mining

Note: As you go north, the growing season shortens, which limits farming. In part of the Northeast, timber is a primary economic activity.
Northeast is the heart of the manufacturing core, but lately has been termed the RUST BELT. This extends into the Midwest.

Why do you think it’s called the Rust belt? Where have industries relocated? Why?
South of New England, the Mid-Atlantic states enjoy warmer weather and a longer growing season.

The economy has more farming activity and has less maritime activity, although major shipping waterways are present.

Major cities are located on these major waterways: New York is on the Hudson R., Philly is on the Delaware, and Baltimore is located on Chesapeake Bay.
More on the Mid-Atlantic States

- This area is a transition zone between the Northeast (New England in particular) and the South, especially the states of Virginia and W. Virginia.

- Heritage is also centered on colonial times and the American Revolution, although less so than in New England.

- Home to Washington D.C., the political center of the U.S.
The South

- States included: North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana

- Transition States: Virginia, W. Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas
Variations on the South

- **Deep South** consists of the six founding members of the Confederacy: S. Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana

- **Appalachia Region**: Virginia, W. Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and parts of N. Carolina, Georgia and Alabama

- **Cajun South**: Louisiana and East Texas

- **Gulf Coast States**: Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas
Notes about Transition States

- Southern Louisiana is influenced by French, Caribbean, Latin American history.

- Texas is divided into the South, Great Plains and Southwest regions.

- Oklahoma is also included in the Great Plains region for two reasons: Climate and “Indian territory”.
Physical Geography of the South

- Dominated by a wide coastal plain, meandering river basins

- What is the most prominent river basin in this region?

- Where is its delta?
Climate and Vegetation of the South

- **Humid subtropical**, with hot, humid summers and long growing season. Winters are mild, seldom with snow. There is no dry season.

- **Vegetation**: Mixed forests. The South is known for plants such as live oaks, magnolia trees, flowering dogwoods.
Historical Geography of the South

- The South was settled as an agricultural region, with slavery and cash crops as its driving force. The climate and physical landscape were well-suited for an agricultural society.

- Historically, the South was settled by many different cultures, although the Anglo Protestant plantation farmers were the dominant group.

- Other cultures included: Spanish, Caribbean, Creole, Cajun
Population Geography of the South

- The South’s population is evenly distributed, except increase in density around urban centers.

- Examples: Atlanta, New Orleans, Mobile, Miami
Economic Geography of the South

- Historically based on agriculture, with tobacco and cotton being the first cash crops.

- Although agriculture has dominated the economy, service industry, manufacturing, and high tech industries are also located in the South.

- Fishing is a common activity in Gulf Coast States.

- Tourism along the Gulf Coast, especially Florida.

- Oil Industry is located in the Gulf and in cities like Houston and Beaumont, close to continental shelf drilling.
Cultural Geography of the South

- Deep South
- Appalachians
- Gulf Coast region
- Florida
- Cajun South and East Texas
Music of the South

- The South is the origin of all types of music:
  - Rhythm and Blues
  - Jazz
  - Bluegrass
  - Appalachian Folk Music
  - Gospel
  - Country music
  - Rock n Roll (Elvis/Memphis)
Midwest

- Included States: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa

- Transition States: Pennsylvania, Missouri
Physical Geography of Midwest

- Flat landscape, with river basins.
- Distinctive Great Lakes, which provide for shipping.
Climate of the Midwest: Humid Continental

- No Dry Season - this area receives precipitation throughout the year.

- Cold, snowy winters and hot summers.

- Moderate growing season that decreases as you go north.

- Vegetation is mixed forests with deciduous and coniferous trees.
Historical Geography of the Midwest

- The Mid-west was considered the “Western Frontier”, hence the name.
- Historically known as the breadbasket of the U.S., as this is also an agricultural region.
- Also known as a manufacturing, blue-collar hub of the U.S.
The Midwest as a Cultural Crossroads

- Immigrant groups:
  - Scots Presbyterians settled in Pennsylvania.
  - Dutch Amish and Quakers settled in Ohio and Indiana.
  - German Lutherans settled in Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois and Eastern Missouri.
  - Swedes and Norwegians settled in Wisconsin and Minnesota.
  - Polish, Hungarians, German Catholics, and Jews settled in Midwestern cities.
Population

- Large cities include Chicago and Detroit
- The region is evenly distributed.
- Population is dense along the Great Lakes.
Economic Geography

- **Dairy Farming** in Wisconsin and Minnesota
- **Fruit Orchards** in Michigan
- **Corn** in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa
- **Manufacturing** in urban cities along Great Lakes, like Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago (Steel Towns).
Breadbasket of the USA

- Corn is most notably grown, but soybeans, wheat, and fruits orchards are also commonly found throughout the Midwest.

- Dairy products are famous in which state in the Midwest?
Cultural Geography

- Home to various immigrant groups, which causes ethnic, racial, and religious diversity in the cities.

- Cuisine reflects the cultural and physical diversity: Chicago style pizza, Polish bakeries, Wisconsin cheese, and Michigan’s apple cider mills and fruit orchards.
Great Plains Region

- Strip of States through the center of the country
- Includes: Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota
- Transition States: Oklahoma, Panhandle of Texas, Eastern Colorado, Wyoming and Montana
Physical Geography of the Great Plains

- The Great Plains are also called the High Plains, as the elevation increases gradually as you go west.
- Generally flat with some rolling hills
- Major River Basins: Red R., Arkansas River, Platte River, and the Missouri River
Climate of the Great Plains

- Generally the Great Plains is Steppe climate (Grasslands). Some of the eastern areas have Humid Continental climate.

- This area receives little rainfall (less than 18 in. a year on average).

- Cold winters, especially in the northern areas.
Historical Geography of the Great Plains

- Before Americans settled the frontier, the Great Plains was home to several indigenous cultures, most notably the Sioux, the Cheyenne, and the Arapaho.

- During the 19th century, the Great Plains became the staging point of war between the native people and the American settlers.
More on Historical Geography

- The Great Plains was also used for cattle grazing and cattle drives.
- Many of the cities in this area were founded as railroad hubs for cattle.
Homestead Act of 1862

- This act provided each settler with 160 acres of land, as long as he cultivated the land.

- This caused a rush of settlers to the Great Plains region in the 1800s.

- Ironically, the Great Plains has lost a third of its population since 1920. Kansas has 6,000 ghost towns.
Population of the Great Plains

Two words: Rural and declining
Economic Activity

- Wheat – another important crop (the Dakotas)
  - spring wheat major crop in the north
  - winter wheat (Kansas)
  - Associated with wheat are sorghums, barley, and livestock production

- Cattle are also a primary economic activity in the Great Plains.
Ogallala (High Plains) Aquifer

- Because there is little rainfall, farmers use the aquifers to irrigate crops. The Ogallala is one of the largest in the U.S., but it is being depleted at a high rate.

- The Aquifer runs from the Texas Panhandle to Nebraska. Almost the entire state of Nebraska lies on top of the Aquifer.
Mountain and Basin States

- States included: New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona
- Transitions: Colorado, Wyoming and Montana are also Great Plains States.
- Southwest: Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Southern Utah/Nevada
Physical Geography

- Characterized by the steep and jagged Rocky Mountain Range, foothills of the Rockies, High Deserts and Intermountain Basins

- Diverse physical region, including landforms and climates
Climates

- Highland climate is found throughout the Rockies.

- Desert and Steppe are found in the Southwest and Basin area.

- In general, the area is arid. Farming is done with irrigation.
Historical Geography

- Mining towns
- Outlaws (Wild West)
- Cattle/Sheep Grazing
- Reservation Lands
- Las Vegas and Reno - Gambling towns
- National Park Service
Population Geography

- Not densely populated

- Major urban centers include: Denver, Salt Lake City, Phoenix
Economic Activity

- Grazing
- Mining
- Tourism
- Lumber
Cultural Heritage of the West

- Old Mining ghost towns exemplify the culture of the mountain states. When mining diminished, tourism took over.

- Mountain towns are known for their transient population, seasonal employment, and influx of tourists.

- Likewise, the Basin states are home to the largest number of National Parks.
Pacific Coast States

- California, Oregon and Washington

- Alaska and Hawaii will be covered separately.
Physical Geography of West Coast

- Mountain Ranges (Sierra Nevada and the Cascades) and Rocky coastlines due to Subduction forces.

- Fertile valleys (San Joaquin) and forests in northern areas that receive more rainfall.

- Physical hazard exist across the region due to tectonic forces.
Southern California

- The continual presence of natural hazards, including fire, flood, earthquakes, and intense drought, has done little to reduce the growth of this area.

- San Andreas Fault

- Los Angeles is the 2nd largest city in the U.S.
Climates of the West Coast

- Mediterranean in Southern California
- Deserts and Steppe in California
- Highland Climate in Sierra Nevadas and Cascades
- Marine West Coast in North California, Oregon and Washington
- Windward and leeward slopes of mountains are crucial in this area: populations tend to settle on windward (moisture laden) side of mountains and become less dense on leeward side.
Population Geography

- More dense along the coastal areas, especially between San Diego, LA, and San Francisco
- Other urban centers exist around Seattle and Portland.
Development in Southern California

- Began to grow significantly when water was brought from the distant Owens Valley to Los Angeles early in the 20th century

- As water from the Colorado River Project was also made available to cities in the southwest & in southern California, growth accelerated

- Presently, about one-seventh of the United States population lives in southern California.
Economic Activity

- Hi-tech Industry
- Movie Industry
- Farming in the San Joaquin Valley
- Wine (Napa and Sonoma)
- Tourism
- Fishing on the coast