

# GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

The Local Landscape | Fall 2017

# What is Geography?

- Geography is the study of **place** and **space**.
- Geography is the study of **spatial patterns** and processes at the earth's surface.
- **Maps as tools** to understand and communicate about space and place

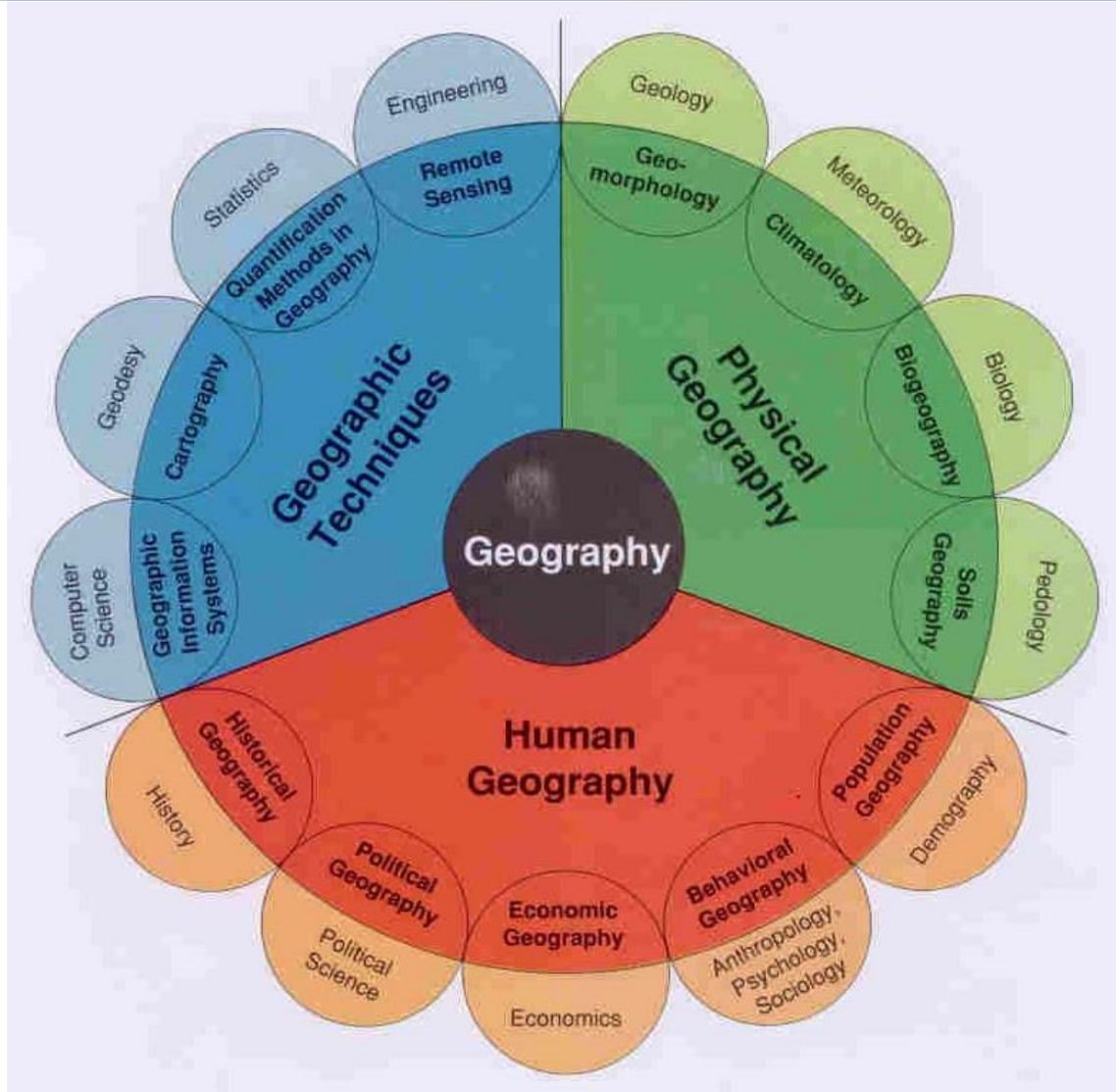


Geography is to space, what History is to  
time



GIS is to Geography, what the typewriter is  
to a Writer

# Place is at the core of Geography





Geography is essential because:  
Everything happens somewhere!

# Where? Why There?



Geographers seek to understand **why** things happens at a specific **place**

One way to understand **place** is through **maps** and the stories they tell

# Fieldwork – core to Geographic Approach

“principal training of the geographer should come, where possible, by doing fieldwork”

Carl Sauer, 1956

“most geographers have a deep connection with place, one that has drawn us to the field, one that we communicate to students, and one that binds together as an intellectual community. At its very heart is our interest in real places, how they look, feel, and work. Fieldwork is fundamental to the way many geographers understand the world.

Patricia Gober, 1997



# Cultural Landscapes

# Cultural landscape

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- Any natural landscape that has been modified by human activities and bear some sort of imprint of a culture

# Cultural landscape



- Helps geographers better understand the relationship between cultures & nature

# Cultural landscape

- Common built landscapes:
  - Buildings,
  - transportation networks,
  - Parks/public spaces,
  - cemeteries,
  - urban design,
  - religious symbols

# Cultural landscapes



“...all human landscape has cultural meaning, no matter how ordinary that landscape may be.”

Pierce Lewis

# Cultural landscapes

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- We can “read the landscape” similar to how we read a book – we can make cultural sense of the ordinary things that make up the world around us

# Axioms for reading the landscape



- Pierce Lewis developed essential ideas that underlie the reading of America's cultural landscape called 'axioms'

# The axiom of

## 1. **Landscape as a clue to culture**

1. Man-made landscape – the ordinary run of the mill things that humans have created and put upon the earth – provides strong evidence of the kind of people we are, and were, and are in the process of becoming

## 2. **Cultural unity and landscape equality**

1. Nearly all items in human landscapes reflect culture in some way. There are almost no exceptions. Furthermore, most items in the human landscape are no more and no less important than other items – in term so their role as clues to culture

# The axiom of

## 3. Common things

3. Common landscapes – however important they may be – are by their nature hard to study by conventional academic means.

## 4. History

3. In trying to unravel the meaning of contemporary landscapes they have to ‘say’ about us as Americans, history matters.

## 5. **Geography or ecology**

- 5. Elements of a cultural landscape make little cultural sense if they are studied outside their geographic context

## 6. **Environmental Control**

- 5. Most cultural landscapes are intimately related to physical environment. Thus, the reading of cultural landscapes also presupposes some basic knowledge of physical landscape

## 7. **Landscape Obscurity**

- 5. Most objects in the landscape – although they convey all kinds of ‘messages’ – do not convey those messages in an obvious way







# Developing your inner Geographer

Honing observation skills, identifying cultural landscapes, & getting into the field