

GEOG 2170 – Culture, Environment, & Society

The world is a complex and dynamic place where humans are constantly reshaping the geographies of life and livelihood. GEOG 2170 studies human interaction with the world and critically investigates how these interactions change the places, communities, cities, and nations that we are so familiar with. Processes like, development, under development, poverty, inequality, globalization, urbanization, suburbanization, gentrification, inner-city decay, migration, conflicts, and war represent complex set of interactions between human societies and the spaces they inhabit, these specific processes of interaction are the topics under study. We will begin with a brief introduction to the history, nature and scope of Human Geography, and study the dominant 'schools of thought' like, environmental determinism, possibilism, regional school, quantitative revolution, behavioral approach, and radical geography. The aim is to understand different philosophical traditions and theoretical positions within the discipline of Human Geography so that we are armed with a set of conceptual tools. Using these conceptual tools we will then explore human interactions in specific contexts: human interaction with the urban environment (urban geography), human interaction with cultural phenomena (cultural geography), human interaction with social issues (demography), human interaction with economic processes (economic geography), and human interaction with political issues (political geography). By understanding how urban, economic, cultural, social, and political processes are negotiated by humans, this course hopes to offer a comprehensive understanding of Earth as the home of humans.

Geography is the analysis of the why of the where, i.e., how things got to be where they are and why they are the way they are. These questions lead us away from simply memorizing place names or types of landforms to conducting in-depth inquiry into the processes behind the patterns that are present on the landscape. These processes are fundamentally cultural (i.e., their roots reach down into religion, language, politics, economics, and built environments, among other things) and reflect human demands for food, energy, and resources. The patterns we see on the landscape are also outcomes of the opportunities and constraints imposed by the natural environment. This course analyzes the interrelationships among cultures, the environment, and society by asking: 1. What is culture? 2. How do culture and the environment interact? 3. How does this interaction affect who we are?