**Culture Summary Notes**

**Introduction:**

The term pop culture has come to be used in a variety of different ways. It might be to describe a particular type of music or to explain a new fashion trend, but not many people are clear about its actual scope. Popular culture is any manifestation of an idea, trend or belief that has spread from one group of people to another until it is accepted in various areas of the world. For most of us, our entire life is based on popular culture. Does this mean we are all the same?   Not exactly, there are small differences in the regionalization of culture as well as small isolated groups that have held onto their own unique culture, known as folk cultures.

**Essential Questions:**

* How does culture diffusion from one location to another?
* What is the interaction between various different cultures?
* What is the difference between popular and folk cultures?
* Why are folk cultures becoming less prevalent?
* How is culture visible within the landscape?

The spread of popular culture due to improvements in transportation, communication and technology has had the side effect of diminishing folk culture. As globalization of culture becomes more prevalent it can be difficult for folk cultures to isolate themselves from the reach of pop culture. There are several groups that maintain their folk cultures, the most obvious American example being the Amish, but even these groups are accepting certain changes diffused along with popular culture. The uniform, although constantly changing, nature of popular culture can be both positive and negative. Globalization through popular culture can bring new agricultural and medical advances to areas in desperate need, but at the same time it can introduce new values that undermine (and in some instances even lead to the extinction of) folk cultures.

# Lesson 1: The Characteristics and Patterns of Culture

* **Culture** is the shared beliefs, traditions and behaviors of a group
  + Culture can be associated with ethnicity and race, but these are distinct ideas
    - **Race** is the biological and physical features of a common genetic group
    - **Ethnicity** is the identification with a group from a specific origin and their shared customs and beliefs
* **Cultural Geography** studies the interaction of humans with their environment and the changes we make to our areas based on our practices
  + This study is based on the various **cultural regions** of the world and the customs, practices and beliefs that makes each area unique (along with the traits and customs that unite us)
* **Cultural Landscape (or the built environment)** demonstrates changes to the natural landscape made by humans o The focus is on architecture and land use; however the landscape will be influenced by a number of cultural traits and customs
  + This includes art, language, food, music, clothing, gender relations and religion
* Carl Sauer invented the concept of cultural landscapes with the focus on **possibilism**rather than **environmental determinism**
  + Possibilists believe that although the environment will impact cultural groups, it will not define them, as they are able to make adaptations (the more technologically advanced the culture, the more adaptations)
  + Some modern geographers go as far as saying that there are no limits placed on humans by the environment **(Cultural determinism)**
* Cultures use **adaptive strategies** to gather the necessities of life from their environment

**Material Culture**  are the visible  **artifacts**  of a group

* Whereas, **Non-Material Culture** are the abstract concepts and customs shared by a group
  + Values (moral standards)
  + Beliefs (ideas accepted as truth and based on values)
  + Behaviors / norms (actions of the group)
* **Habits** are repetitive acts of an individual (may not be adopted by the entire group)
* **Customs** are repetitive acts or practices of a group (habits that becomes widely adopted)
* **Tradition** is a collection of customs within a culture (i.e. holiday practices)
* **Cultural complex** the collection of social customs of a group
  + Specific combination of traits
  + Unique to one culture because no other culture will have exactly the same traits
* **Cultural Identity** or the feeling like you belong with a certain group, based on the cultural traits and customs
  + Includes and supported by:
    - **Neolocalism** - seeking regional rather than global identity (a focus on what makes an area unique)
    - **Authenticity** - legitimate and original traditions and customs
    - **Cultural linkage** - contact with others with the same beliefs in different locations
    - **Cultural revival** – movements against globalism, can be seen in festivals, traditions and practices of a specific area
* **Folk Culture** – Small, homogeneous group in an isolated area with unique customs and beliefs
  + These groups are having a harder time maintaining their unique traits due to globalization
    - Amish
    - Polynesian Islanders
* **Popular Culture** - Large, heterogeneous society, with customs that overcome ethnic and national boundaries
  + Fashion, music, etc. from countries such as the US, Japan, and Western European countries
* **Spatial Diffusion** – the spread of customs on a local or global scale
  + Folk Culture operates on a much smaller scale through **relocation diffusion**(movement of the group) or **migration diffusion** (slow movement of a group overtime which leads to the loss of that group in the area of origin)
  + Popular Culture spreads through **hierarchal diffusion** - movement from the most to less influential places (important financially, militarily, socially, politically, etc.)
  + With the movement of people and their beliefs we will see the creation of **ethnic enclaves** (due to **chain migration**) these are areas where people of the same ethnicity have settled and introduced their culture
  + This is normally determined by the **charter group** – which is the first cultural group to reach an area
* Hearth Area of origination for a custom (core) and the further away the weaker the impact (periphery)
  + Folk hearths are often unknown
  + Pop Culture hearths are the more developed countries (MDC), with more technology and free-time
* *Examples of differences between popular and folk culture characteristics:*
  + Sports
    - Folk culture sports were diffused with the movement of each group and developing in a regional fashion
    - Popular culture sports spread through hierarchal diffusion and are marked by the financial aspect of the games and the willingness of people to give up their money and leisure time
  + Music
    - Folk Music is usually written by unknown people and changed as they are passed down through each generation.   The changes are based on everyday life for each different group of people and might be based on nature.
    - Popular Music is written by specific individuals with the purpose of being sold.   This type of music spreads quickly through **hierarchal diffusion**
      * Within the US this music started in Tin Pan Alley (in Manhattan) which became the location for most songwriters who at first sold sheet music and then moved on to selling recordings
      * Hip Hop also originated in NYC in the late 1970s, but in the Bronx with impoverished African-Americans and Puerto Ricans speaking about the problems of minority groups.   This is a great example of pop culture because of how widely accepted it is and how quickly it diffused.

# Lesson 2: Folk Culture

**Folk cultures** are small groups of homogenous people (meaning the people tend to be very similar in appearance, language, religion, etc.) closely tied to the environment because they are usually self-sufficient, have a lack of technology and a focus on agriculture as a way of life

* 1. These cultures focus on the environment and social norms for almost all of their decisions
  2. Initially driven by indigenous groups (the original inhabitants of an area
* **Folklore** helps to keep folk cultures alive by passing down collected stories that illustrate the morality and ethics of the group
* Folk cultures tend to have a very defined sense of gender roles
  1. Normally patriarchal in design, the roles of men and women are very static (these might be threatened by modern or pop culture beliefs)
* Folk cultures have to consider soil, climate and terrain when deciding what food to produce
  1. For example, terroir is the specific consideration of these aspects when growing grapes for wine
  2. Rice - milder, wet climates in Asia
  3. Wheat - colder, drier climates (Great Plains)
  4. Populations become accustomed to the food they can grow
     + Soybeans in Asia: These are not healthy raw, so they are eaten as bean sprouts, soy sauce or bean curd
* Folk culture habits are also driven by the social norms of the group
  + Some foods are eaten because of their supposed qualities (intelligence, strength, etc.)
  + Some foods are avoided because of their cultural, environmental or religion connotations
    - Taboo customs are restricted (can be food or in any other cultural area)
    - Cultural - superstitions for children and pregnant women
    - Religious - avoiding pork (Islam and Judaism) / not eating beef (Hindu)

 Folk culture housing styles are a combination of environmental factors and social choices and these architectural forms may change over time

* + Building materials have to be available
  + Most common wood and brick (modern wood can be cut to very specific angles)
    - If there are different materials, they will normally be evident in home facades (stone, clay bricks, etc.)
    - Yurts, teepees and even log cabins are examples
  + It is possible to bring in resources, but it will cost more money (sign of power and status = popular culture)
  + Form of homes might reflect environmental, religious or social factors
    - Religious - sacred areas of the home or the direction of the home
    - Orientation might be effected by the sun or winds; pitched roofs for snow or rain
    - Directionality of homes and even beds to avoid bad luck and show respect

*US Survey Systems*

* 1. As the US expanded, the method for dividing land for homes and property changed (the US is no longer considered a folk culture – but the original charter groups and indigenous people were)
     1. **Metes and Bounds** - based on English property which was marked by landmarks (used early on and east of the Appalachians)
     2. **Long-lot** - based on French property, land was very narrow with each piece coming from a common river or road (used in Quebec, LA and TX)
     3. **Township and Range** - American design based on rectangular land division across the Great Plains and Midwest
* US Housing Traditions
  1. Homes built in the US during the 18th and 19th centuries were in the **folk culture** fashion
     1. They used local materials (wood) and brought whatever style was popular from the East Coast city they were migrating from
     2. Three major **hearths** of home design:
        1. New England
        2. Middle Atlantic
        3. Lower Chesapeake
  2. Ever since the mid-20th century, the homes in the US have followed **pop culture** patterns
     1. Designs and material choices move with hierarchal diffusion and are greatly influenced by the world around them
* Effect on the Landscapes
  1. **Folk landscapes** are usually perceptual for the majority of the population and tend to be based on the main characteristic of an area

 The cultural landscape in America usually focused on being modern, but in some areas (like Europe) **traditional architecture** is more valuable

* 1. The US landscape is becoming more uniform with subdivisions, large stores and fast-food restaurants ( **placelessness** )

# Lesson 3: Popular Culture

**Popular cultures** are large groups of heterogeneous people (meaning the people tend to be very different in appearance, language, religion, etc.) that make choices based on modern aesthetics and money. These groups they are usually well connected to other areas of the world, are technologically advanced and a focus on service industries as a way of life. o Money and power are the basis for most pop culture decisions

* Worldwide differences exist, but are becoming less and less every day. Popular culture is often based upon money and power and spreads via globalization
* Pop culture ideas and concepts most often move through hierarchal diffusion (from areas of power) and have a well-known hearth
* This can include independent innovations (ideas that were created in different locations separate of outside influence, for example the creation of paper money) and cultural appropriation (when cultures take customs from other cultures and use them for their own benefit)
  + This is tied to the financial gain of one culture based on the beliefs and practices of another (cultural commodification)
* Gender roles tend to be much more equal and based on the education of all people in order to provide economic opportunities
* Housing
  + Pop culture can be easily seen in US homes, because as styles change so do the new homes
    - The nearby materials do not matter, because people can afford to select any material they want
* Clothing
  + Pop culture clothing is reflective of income and occupation
    - Teachers, lawyers and mill workers dress differently
    - The more disposable income - the more involved one can be with changing "high fashion"
* Food
  + Although popular culture means that all varieties of food could be available, it usually just creates more consumption of alcohol and snacks
* Impact of Television
  + TV is extremely important to pop culture because it is the most popular leisure activity in MDCs and the most common means for spreading pop culture, Internet usage followed the same pattern and is surpassing television as the most important means of pop culture transmission (especially due to the wide spread use of social media)
  + US television stations (and some Western European stations) are owned by companies with licensing from the government but most TV stations are owned and operated by governments
    - Satellites have made the world available, which is why these are banned in several nations (mostly ME and Asia)
* Cultural Connections
  + **Cultural convergence** occurs when two cultures adopt the traits of each other and become more alike
    - **Syncretic** - a combination of new and old traditions (think about the combination of the Christian traditions of Easter and the secular idea of the Easter Bunny) ♣ Syncretism can also be seen in physical structures
    - Sequent occupancy can lead to syncretic traits – this type of cultural blending occurs when one group's architecture, practices, etc. are laid on top of a previous culture (imagine visiting a McDonalds while waiting in line to tour the Coliseum in Rome)
  + **Acculturation** - adoption of cultural traits in a new area (with the loss of some of the old)
  + **Assimilation** - Complete erasing of original characteristics of a culture by the more powerful culture
  + **Transculturation** - expansion and adoption of cultural ideas into another culture
* Cultural Regions
  + Even with globalization, **cultural regions** still exist (usually based on **perceptual regions** )
    - Each cultural region changes as people modify their environment
      * Money, technology, environmental changes, toponym, architecture, houses of worship, public buildings, symbols (i.e. Raiders) create the **regional identity**
* Effects of Pop Culture
  + Pop culture (especially American) can be viewed as an attempt to influence the entire world (spread of cheap entertainment and disposable products)
  + **Cultural homogeneity** - cultural sameness
    - **Cultural imperialism** - one nation "invading" another with its ideas
    - **Cultural nationalism** - rise of anti-cultural imperialism
      * **Maladaptive diffusion**   - diffusion of a process with negative side effects (what works well in one region may not in another)
* Globalization
  + Pop culture focuses on the modification of natural landscapes
    - Folk culture appreciates the natural environment
  + **Uniform landscapes** are becoming more frequent
    - Gas stations, supermarkets, hotels, cars, large retail stores and fast-food are similar all over the globe
    - These uniform landscapes have negative consequences
      * Increased demand for natural resources
      * Pollution