FAMOUS GEOGRAPHERS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Night of the Round Tables, AP Human Geography Reading 2018
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OLD GEOGRAPHERS
Circulating among AP Human Geography teachers are activities that highlight these 25 “famous geographers.” All but two are white men, and most of them are no longer alive. I would argue that these men are not indicative of what most geographers practicing today consider “famous geographers.” While the old theories of von Thunen, Weber, and Burgess are in the course articulation, and are useful in understanding the core principles of geography -- describing and explaining spatial patterns -- very few of us are interested in these theories on their own. Instead, these ideas are only basic jumping off points for a far more vibrant contemporary understanding of spatial patterns.

NEW GEOGRAPHERS
I propose that we expand and update this list by looking at more diverse, more modern, examples of important contributors to geography. These new examples of “famous geographers” highlight how geography is being practiced today. Like the previous list, not all of these people are actually working under the title of geographer, but their work strongly influences -- and is indicative of -- how we understand geography today. These are only a few examples, and I don’t mean them to be an end point, but rather a beginning for thinking about the work that modern geographers are doing and tying it back to the required content for the AP Human Geography course.
UNIT 1 GEOGRAPHY: ITS NATURE AND PERSPECTIVES

Yi-Fu Tuan is a key figure in humanistic geography and is best known for his work on the concepts of place and space. He coined the term “topophilia,” meaning love of place, and wrote frequently about how people become attached to certain locales. Dr. Tuan defined geography as “the study of Earth as the home of people.” He is currently Emeritus Professor of Geography at University of Wisconsin Madison.

Cynthia Brewer is an expert in how humans read and perceive maps. She developed the ColorBrewer, an online program that helps users select color schemes for thematic (choropleth) maps that optimize the readers’ abilities to differentiate between each range. Dr. Brewer also works to create maps and color schemes that are legible to those with colorblindness. Dr. Brewer is Professor at the Pennsylvania State University Department of Geography.

A pre-GIS spatial analyst, William Bunge was also a social activist with a particular interest in geographies of inequality in Detroit. Dr. Bunge, known as a “radical cartographer,” used mapping as a tool to push for social change. He published maps in the early 1970s titled “Where Commuters Run Over Black Children,” and “Region of Rat-Bitten Babies.” These maps highlighted the different worlds of racially- and economically-segregated Detroit.
Susan Cutter is an expert in natural hazards. Her website explains that her research focuses on "what makes people and places where they live vulnerable to extreme events and how vulnerability and resilience are measured, monitored and assessed." Dr. Cutter is frequently consulted by government agencies regarding hurricane risk and recovery. Her research makes the connection between race, poverty, and vulnerability to natural disasters. Dr. Cutter is a Carolina Distinguished Professor of Geography at University of South Carolina.

UNIT 2: POPULATION & MIGRATION

Patricia Ehrkamp studies immigration in Europe and the U.S., with a focus on the "spaces of everyday life" created by immigrants in urban spaces. Her research includes debates surrounding the construction of minarets and mosques in Western Europe, Iraqi refugees in the U.S., and the role of religion in anti-immigrant movements in the U.S. South. Dr. Ehrkamp is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky.

William Frey's wide-ranging expertise in demographics of the U.S. is of particular interest to geographers in his analysis of population growth and decline and the impacts of internal migration. Dr. Frey coined the term "the New Sunbelt" in an effort to describe states experiencing recent population growth as opposed to the Old Sunbelt (which included FL, TX and CA). Also key in Frey's work on population growth is his differentiation between population growth due to immigration (in the Melting Pot states of TX, CA, IL, NY and FL) and growth due to domestic in-migration in the New Sunbelt). Dr. Frey is a Senior Fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institute.
UNIT 3 CULTURAL PATTERNS AND PROCESSES

Laura Pulido is an expert in how race, class, and gender hierarchies affect places. Her research is in the intersection of race and political activism with a focus on environmental justice, particularly in the city of Los Angeles; among her books is the “People’s Guide to Los Angeles,” which provides a tour of sites of race, class, gender and environmental struggle in the city. Dr. Pulido has also examined the perception of “Mexican” as a race rather than ethnicity in the U.S. She is currently Professor of Ethnic Studies and Geography at the University of Oregon.

Don Mitchell is best known for his work as a critical Marxist, but he is also an important contributor to how geographers study landscape today. He studied the role of immigrant labor in shaping California’s agricultural landscape, and examined the changing nature of public space under increasing regulation and surveillance. In 2000, Dr. Mitchell published Cultural Geography: A critical introduction, which provides multiple examples of reading the landscape with race, gender, and class in mind. He is currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Geography at Syracuse University.

Audrey Kobayashi is an expert in urban landscapes, and how they are shaped by processes of race, class, and gender. She is particularly interested in the long-term Japanese Canadian residents of gentrifying neighborhoods, as well as in the forced removal of these residents (or their parents or grandparents) in the 1940s. Dr. Kobayashi is Professor of Geography at Queen’s University.
UNIT 4: POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF SPACE

Katharyne Mitchell is an expert in immigration, refugees, and citizenship. One focus of her work is on illustrating her theory of transnationalism by examining how immigrants reshape the urban landscape. Dr. Mitchell’s current work is looking at the concept of “sanctuary” for immigrants and intersection of transnational migration, faith-based organizations, and grassroots activism. She is currently Dean of Social Sciences at University of California, Santa Cruz.

Derek Gregory is known for his contributions to understanding what he calls “the colonial present,” in which power relationships between states reflects continuing colonial characteristics long after this period supposedly ended. He is particularly interested in the role of the United States and the United Kingdom in the Middle East after 9/11. Dr. Gregory’s work reflects on Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism: the othering non-Western peoples and cultures and examines the intersection of this with military violence. He is currently Professor of Geography at University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Eric McGhee, along with law professor Nicholas Stephanopoulos, established the concept of the efficiency gap, a technique for examining whether a political party enjoyed a systematic advantage in an election due to gerrymandering. The efficiency gap is the difference between the results of a statewide vote versus the number of district-based seats won by a party: for example, the Purple Party barely won the race for governor at 52%, but consistently wins 75% of the Congressional seats available. McGhee proposes this gap be limited to 7%: anything higher and it is likely that the state’s districts have been illegally gerrymandered. He is currently a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California.
Vandana Shiva is physicist turned philosopher turned environmental activist who is a globally-recognized opponent of the Monsanto and GMOs. She is an expert in the negative consequences of the Green Revolution. Dr. Shiva’s work focuses on the intersection between development, agriculture, and gender.

Amy Trauger began her career studying women farmers in Central Pennsylvania, with an interest in how they organized cooperatives to support their work. Today her research examines the politics of food sovereignty, that is the universal right to healthy affordable food, and the role of governmental regulations play in restricting this right. Dr. Trauger is an Associate Professor of Geography at University of Georgia.

Michael Woods is best known for his work examining the effects of globalization on rural places. His key theory in this area involves the emergence of a “global countryside” and influences of globalized agriculture, amenity migration, and economic restructuring. Dr. Woods’ work also examines how cultural ideas about rural (and its distinction from urban) shape the social and economic structures of these places and the lives of residents. He is Professor of Human Geography at Aberystwyth University in Wales.
Doreen Massey is perhaps best known for her work, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, which recognized the relationship between uneven regional development and capitalism in a globalizing world. In parallel to World Systems Theory, her work recognized that work done in the core tends to be corporate management and research/development; work done in the semi-periphery involves assembly and basic management; and work in the periphery is basic low-skill manufacturing. She also wrote hopefully about the ability of globalization to strengthen, rather than weaken, sense of place in an essay “A Global Sense of Place.”

Farhana Sultana is an expert in the relationship between development, climate change, water access, and human rights. Her experience began as a program officer for the United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh. Dr. Sultana went on to research struggles for the right to safe drinking water across the globe, and she continues to study more broadly people in the Global South are adapting to climate change. She is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at Syracuse University.

Amy Glasmeier’s expertise is in economic geography, in particular, problems of persistent poverty in the U.S. She created the online Living Wage Calculator which determines the minimal income it takes to live without government support for different cities, counties and zip codes. The tool includes geographical differences in transportation, child care, housing, and medical care: this approach challenges current U.S. policies in which the “poverty level” is a single static number applied across the country. Dr. Glasmeier is currently Professor of Economic Geography and Regional Planning at MIT.
Richard Florida's research examines what promotes economic growth in cities. He coined the term “creative class” to describe a group of people who, if attracted to a city, would in turn transform the city and attract more residents, creating a cycle of economic growth. Dr. Florida argues that offering a range of urban amenities that appeal to workers in tech, art, and entertainment industries is a better plan for urban redevelopment than specific investments such as shopping centers and sports stadiums. He currently heads the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto.

Jane Jacobs was an urban activist whose ideas on urban spaces strongly influenced thinking about cities and community involvement in planning. Jacobs is best known for organizing opposition in Greenwich Village, NYC, to plans to bulldoze neighborhoods and build an expressway. Jacobs is credited with inspiring the New Urbanist movement with her focus on mixed use development, urban density, walkability and “eyes on the street.” Her ideas about involving citizens in their neighborhoods’ future can be seen in today’s planning which (in many cases) is more thoughtful, inclusive and transparent.

Robert Bullard is known as the “father of environmental justice” is known for his book Dumping in Dixie which exposed the racial motivation in siting of solid waste facilities. Pre-GIS mapping showed that all city-owned landfills in Houston were in predominantly black neighborhoods. Research by Bullard and others in the 20 years since this book was published showed similar inequalities in other environmental disamenities including chemical plants, landfill incinerators, and transportation facilities. His current research focuses on the unequal impacts of climate change on communities in the U.S. South. Dr. Bullard is Distinguished Professor of urban planning and environmental policy at the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, Texas Southern University.
David Harvey is known for his work on issues of social justice from a Marxist perspective. Among his most famous theories is an application of Henri Lefebvre’s “right to the city;” the human right to transform the city to be more equitable and just. Dr. Harvey’s work examines the inability of the market-based system to provide affordable housing to urban residents. He is a Distinguished Professor of anthropology and geography at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Neil Smith is best known for his theories regarding the economic processes that lead to gentrification. He argued that political and economic processes cause gentrification, rather than individuals choosing to move to urban neighborhoods. His work also details the negative impacts of gentrification including a cycle of eviction and homelessness for the working poor as they are displaced by new, wealthier, residents.

Dolores Hayden is an urban historian whose books include *A Field Guide to Sprawl* and *Building Suburbia*. Her work examines the intersection of culture and gender, planning policies, race, and economies of scale in producing the American suburb. She is currently a professor of architecture, urbanism and American Studies at Yale.