The Region in Canadian Geography
Reading

• Course website (www.yorku.ca/anderson)
• Lists today’s reading
  – Links to it
• How-to video on how to find journal articles in the library
Region and Place

- Fundamental terms/concepts in geographical language
- Rich and complex in meaning
- They are conversations, ways of talking about things
Steve Zero’s Time Lapse of Toronto
July 2011

• 234 Augusta Ave, Toronto

• Place is dynamic
  – Place is process, not static
  – In constant change and flux
Place

- Place is about relationships
  - Things in relation to others
  - Things in one place in relation to things in others
Place

• Place depends on how you view it
  – Who you are, where you view it from

• The betweenness of place:
  – It occurs between the observer and the observed
Region

• Has similar texture to place
  – Similar complexity
• Regions are areas given meaning by common characteristics
Region

- Can be defined around a common characteristic
- For example:
  - A region in which French is commonly spoken
  - A region which is mountainous
Region

• Can be defined functionally
  – Places sharing the characteristic of working together as a unit

• For example: The Greater Toronto Area
  – Diverse cultural landscapes which work together as an urban economic region
Regions

• Regions are usually part of larger systems
  – And these systems change

• For example:
  – Nova Scotia’s forests and coves ideal for wooden shipbuilding in the C19th Atlantic economy
  – When shipping shifts to steam and iron, Nova Scotia’s shipbuilding declines
Natural Resources

• The west of Canada is regionally distinctive as an energy and resources-producer
  – Makes it different from the Ontario-Quebec manufacturing belt
• But the west depends upon continental & global demand
  – Regional distinctiveness arises from interaction with other regions
Regional Change

• Regional patterns change over time
• Example of Natural Resources:
  – Newfoundland & Labrador becomes Canada’s second most powerful oil & gas producing region with fresh implications for its politics
  – Quebec’s hydro makes it a potentially powerful “green-energy” industrial economy.
Definition vs. Meaning

- Definitions:
  - The boundaries of what something means

- Meanings:
  - The content of an idea
Geography

• Has various meanings and definitions
Geography Studies

• An object: the world we live on
Geography Studies

- The interaction between people and the environment
Geography

- Tries to understand how people live through *spatial synthesis*
- Spatial techniques are crucial to geographical analysis
Geography

- Is interested in the human relationship toward place, space, landscape and region
Regional Geography

- Makes the region the **object** of geographical enquiry
- Regional geography is interested in a wide range of aspects of place
  - Physical features, economy, politics ....
  - And how they fit together
Regional Geography

• A traditional, perhaps no-longer fashionable, focus in the discipline of geography
• But continues to be meaningful
Regional Geography of Canada

• Despite what we have said about regions, places
  – Their complexities, dynamism
  – The way they depend on your perspective

• Most regional geographies of Canada treat regions as static
  – Tend to assume everyone must look at them the same way
The Regional Geography of Canada

- Canada has many regions
- Five regions
- Patriotic regions
- Macro regions
ABSOLUT CANADA.
ABSOLUT VACATION.
Absolut Canada

• Canada iconised in 6 views
  – The arctic (inukshuk)
  – The prairies (heartland)
  – The mountains
  – The multicultural cities
  – Confederation
  – Snowbirds

• Re-uses the classic regions
Regions of Canada

• The culture seems to have well-established ideas about the regions of Canada
  – Part of a symbolic order

• A culturally-mediated way of looking?
Regional Geographies of Canada

- Bob Bone: 6 regions which resemble provinces
- John Warkentin: 6 regions which loosely resemble provinces
- Larry McCann: Heartland-Hinterland concept but handled as regions made out of provinces
- Brett McGillivray: 7 regions which resemble provinces
Regions of Canada

- To an extent the well-established traditions about the geography of Canada do line up with major physical/political units in the country.
Regions of Canada

• Canada’s political territory
  – Provinces, Territories
  – Historically shaped by physical geography
Physical Geography & Political Territory

• Provinces of Maritime & Atlantic Canada created from sea-based access, access to a shallow and productive continental shelf
Physical Geography & Political Territory

• St Lawrence lowlands & Great Lakes basin a physical unit vital to early water-based communication routes
  – Became Ontario & Quebec, divided by language
Physical Geography & Political Territory

- Ottawa chosen as capital by Queen Victoria
  - Straddled the English-French “faultline”
  - Where Canadian shield & palaeozoic rocks came together
  - A symbolic junction of north and south, English & French
Physical Geography & Political Territory

• The high mountains on the west coast acted as a barrier to eastward movement
  – Largely became British Columbia
  – Tempted to join Canada with promises of a railroad
Physical Geography & Political Territory

- Historically and geographically, you can justify the regional structure which culture celebrates.
- Most textbooks do this.
- But is it wise?
- Organizing your textbook region by region may conflict with other approaches to looking at the geography of Canada.
Canadian English

• Does it come in regional forms?
Canadian English

- Different from UK and US English
- **Possible regional variations**
- Some regional distinctiveness
  - Newfoundland [1](#) and [2](#)
  - [Woodbridge dialect](#)
- How regional is Canadian English?
Canadian English

- **Canadian Raising**: tendency to raise vowel sounds
  - Differs from most of the US
  - East-west trend in raising within Canada
- **Canadian Shift**: tendency to shift certain vowel sounds (cot/caught tend to sound the same)
  - Active among the young, AB, Ontario, BC
  - Less common in Maritimes, Prairies, among the old
  - More common in urban than in rural?
Canadian English

• There are some distinctive regional forms
  – Newfoundland, Maritimes,
  – And ethnic forms

• But regional differences are relatively slight
  – Not much regional contrast

• The dominance of the classic regions is exaggerated
Regional Structure

• Canadian English does not really break down regionally along the lines of the classic regions

• Is this true for other aspects of Canadian culture?
  – Music
Other ways of looking at Canadian geography

• The Heartland vs Hinterland, combined & uneven development perspective
• The people in relationship to the environment perspective
• Territorialization/Reterritorialization perspective
Heartland vs Hinterland

• Combined & uneven development
• Metropolitan cores (heartlands) exploit the resources of the periphery (hinterlands)
  – Buy vital resources cheaply, switching suppliers when resources run out
  – Profit by controlling the hinterland economy, selling it goods and services
  – Critical and political
Heartland vs Hinterland

• In its classic form:
  – 1960s Canada is dominated by the Heartland of the Ontario-Quebec manufacturing belt
  – This ‘Heartland’ dominated the resource producing ‘Hinterland’

• Since the 1970s manufacturing in decline, rise of city regions outside the ‘Heartland’
Claim that despite the decline of manufacturing ‘Heartland’ has become more dominant
   – And ‘Hinterland’ weaker
Although new ‘Heartland’ emerging in SW BC and the Edmonton-Calgary corridor.
People and Environment

• A tradition of geography
• People relate to the environment, do so differently in different places
• Look at the ways this varies over Canada
Territorialization/ReTerritorialization

• Political power, forms of identity tend to territorialise power
  – Taking control over land, deploying space economies, political territoriality
  – These overlay earlier forms of territorial, political and cultural order
  – Deeply connected to power
  – Territoriality used to exploit the powerless and dispossessed (aboriginals?).
Regional Patterns of Canada

• Although most textbooks, and a lot of culture obsess about certain classic regions of Canada

• There are other important possibilities