

GEOG 111 Exercise #2

My Stuff: The Geography of My Belongings

GEOGRAPHY 111 (Dr. KALDJIAN)

This exercise is intended to help us realize how we participate in the world economy through our consumption, to help us appreciate the degree to which our material comfort is tied to many people a lot less comfortable than we, and to help us get to know the people and places that are making our private property – we ought to get to know who “they” are, as “they” are very important in our lives. Consider the following quote about those who work for minimum wages in the United States. It is extracted from Barbara Ehrenreich’s book *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* (Metropolitan Books, 2001).

“When someone works for less pay than she can live on – when, for example, she goes hungry so that you can eat more cheaply and conveniently – then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health and her life. The working poor, as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect . . . To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else.”

This was said about our fellow Americans. We can only imagine how much more this might be so for those that struggle in the far corners of the global work force.

Now, consider all of our daily activities, and how they are tied to stuff. Lots of stuff. It is no longer surprising that very few things we used on a daily basis were entirely made in the United States, by tools and equipment made in the United States, and with ingredients and raw materials made in the United States. We live in a global economy and our personal possessions come from all over the planet. Where do our things come from? On whom do we depend? Are there patterns? Does the geography of our personal possessions tell us something about the world in which we live? What does this mean? For whom? This assignment helps us think these through.

DATA COLLECTION THROUGH ANALYSIS: Step by Step Instructions -- Follow carefully

1. Most of the things you own have a sticker, tag, label, or engraving indicating where it was made. We are going to take an inventory of some of your personal items in your dorm room, apartment, or home that fall into the following categories (we won’t include food):

- a. Clothing: Shirts, Pants, Shoes, Jackets Only
- b. Electronics: Computer, Microwave, CD Player, and Other (Specify)
- c. Household Goods: Furniture, Glassware, Bowls, Lamps, and Other (Specify)

Choose your favorite items and those items that are most important to you in your daily life.

2. Enter these items, as in the example below, into Table I of the HW2 Data Form (the EXCEL SPREADSHEET) that has been prepared for you to automatically calculate the % of US GDP for you, as in the example below. **You are to type the data in for Country in which the product was made, its region and the GDP/Capita for that country. Once you enter the GDP/capita for each product, the spreadsheet will calculate the rest. Be sure to save your work.** If you

don't have enough items to complete the table, then check out a friend's stuff, but you must fill in every entry for the calculations to work. (NOTE: You should be able to open this spread sheet on any campus computer and save it to your own drive or disc -- if you have any uncertainties, see a computer assistant on campus or me during office hours.)

Category	Item	Country	Region	GDP/Capita (\$)	% of US GDP
Clothing	Shirt	Sri Lanka	South Asia	11,200	19.5%
	Shirt	El Salvador	Central America	8,900	15.5%

3. Use your atlas and the map below to find the countries and the regions in which your belongings are made.

4. To find the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per Capita (PPP, in US \$) for each country, use the [list](#) found in the [CIA World Factbook](#) (If a country you are looking for does not have 2016 data, use the most recent; if it is not there, check for an estimate). The Gross Domestic Product is a measure of wealth, similar to, but not quite the same as, a measure of average income. **As you fill in the GDP for each row, the % of US GDP is automatically calculated.**

5. From the list of GDPs per capita, you can click on the country to go to the World Factbook's page of that country. Go to the page of each country from which you have stuff, and go to the "Economy" section. Fill in Tables II and III with the data from this section. For table two, write in the primary import and export commodities. Also add up how many of your items come from each country. For Table III, type in the primary import and export partners, with the percentage in parentheses.

6. With the data in your tables, and with the information presented in Chapters 2 and 8 of Knox and Marston, you can now analyze your connection to the global economy through your stuff. You can compare the average wealth of a person in the country where your personal item was made with the average American's wealth. You can see where places fit in the core-periphery world system. You can begin to imagine the global commodity chains that end with you. You can wonder why the system works this way.

7. To help you visually represent and communicate what is going on, you are to use the data from Table I and what you have learned about thematic maps to neatly, meaningfully and creatively map your findings. Think about Homework #1 and how a map is subjective and reflects what you want it to reflect. You will need to begin with a base map ([The Arizona Geographic Alliance](#) has great [outline maps](#) you can use). Your map should use the country data you calculated and can be made by computer or by hand. If by hand, scan and save it as a pdf or jpeg so that you may submit it on D2L. Your map is to show the global nature of your stuff in such a way that the map is self-explanatory, that anyone who looks at it knows what it shows and understands the point it is making. Feel free to use additional data from the CIA website to help you tell a meaningful story with your map.

(CONT)

8. Finally, thoughtfully answer the following questions based on your tables and map. Your answers should be typed and neatly organized on the form provided. Each box will expand as you type.

A. What do you find? Discuss the geography (regions and countries) of where your stuff was made? Is there a relationship between any categories or items and the region(s) from which they come? What patterns?

B. Compare your findings with the world system discussed in Knox and Marston Chapter 2 and 8. Do your findings support their presentations? Explain. If they do not, why might that be?

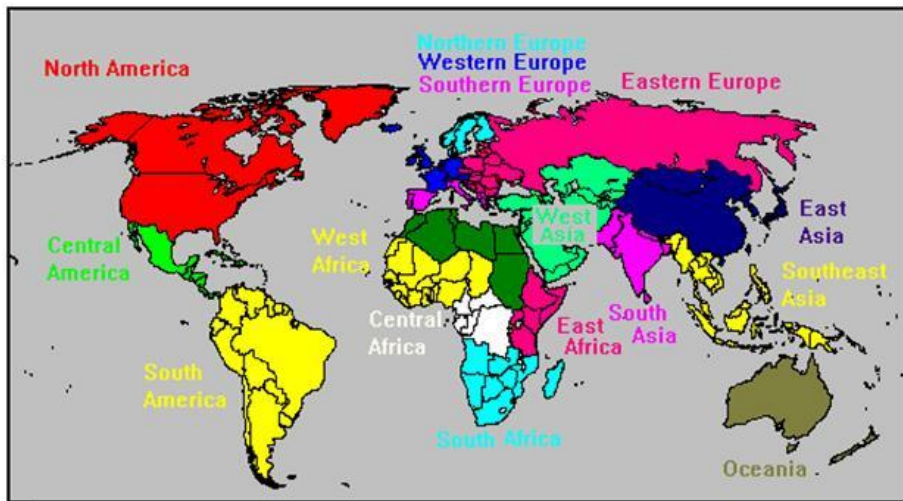
C. In the world system, who is dependent upon whom? Who benefits? Who doesn't benefit. Explain.

D. Discuss your role in the world system. What is it? Do you like it? If you do, why? If you do not, why not? What can you do you about it? Are there any alternatives?

E. Evaluate your map in terms of Homework #1. Show it to a couple of friends. What does your map show or say to them? Does it show what you intended? What did you intend to show? What are the biases and subjectivities of your map? How might you alter or redraw your map to emphasize a particular viewpoint or message? Discuss.

9. Make sure all your tables and materials are neatly formatted, titled, labeled, etc. After you have completed Tables I, II and III, made your map and answered the questions, submit them to me through [D2L](#) to me as a PDF document with yourlastnameEX2 as the file name before class begins on the day that it is due. If you do not know how to submit a homework assignment through D2L, the kind people at the computer helpdesk in the Old Library are waiting to help you. PLEASE, PLEASE -- MAKE SURE THAT YOUR TABLES, TEXT and MAP ARE NEAT BEFORE YOU TURN THEM IN. ADJUST FORMATS AS NECESSARY TO MAKE THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR HOMWORK LOOK PROFESSIONAL.

Use this map to determine the region of each country.



Song of the Shirt

Thomas Hood, 1843

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work,
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O, men, with sisters dear!
O, men, with mothers and wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of death?
That phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear.
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shattered roof—this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work,
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumbed,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"O! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"O! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or hope,
But only time for grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the
Rich!—
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"