Class 10b: Diffusion and popular culture

- Basics of diffusion
- Sports: from folk to popular
- The blues: from Mali to Memphis
Definitions

• Diffusion: the process by which some characteristic spreads over space
  – Concepts or ideas
  – Practices or activities
  – Material objects, diseases

• Hearth: where a characteristic originates
Relocation diffusion

• Spread through physical movement of people
• Languages to Western Hemisphere
• Islam to North Africa, Spain
• Foods to and from New World
Expansion diffusion

• “Snowball” method of diffusion
• Spread from person to person in place
• Diseases through Western Hemisphere
• Democracy from U.S. to France
• Christianity in Roman Empire
Contagious diffusion

• Person-to-person contact
• Distance-decay effect
• S-shaped adoption curve
Hierarchical diffusion

• Among levels of a hierarchy
• Usually top-down
• Based on cities or organizations
Diffusion of folk vs. popular culture

• Folk culture
  – Anonymous or multiple hearths
  – Relocation, not expansion

• Popular culture
  – Deliberate innovation, advanced economies
  – Mass production
  – Expansion (hierarchical or contagious)
Diffusion and sports: soccer

- English, Scots, Vikings, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Chinese, Japanese, Toltecs, Native Americans
- Folk origin: 11th century England
- Village-wide contests
- Banned between late 1300s and 1600
Diffusion and sports: soccer

- Transition to popular culture
- Industrial Revolution: more time, income
  - Professional soccer leagues (1863)
  - Standardized rules
  - Distinguished from rugby
Diffusion and sports: soccer

- Spread by contagious diffusion
  - Exchange students from Netherlands
  - English engineers to Spain
  - Expatriates throughout British Empire
- Rugby modified in U.S.: American football
- Rapid spread through television
Diffusion and sports: baseball

• Based on British “rounders”
• 1846: first game with U.S. rules: leisure game for wealthy
• Contagious diffusion via Union Army
• 1871: first professional league
• 1903: first “World” Series
Diffusion and sports: baseball

• Relocation diffusion
  – Via military: Japan, Caribbean
  – Via elite students: Latin America
• Shifting center of population
• New leagues; real World Series?
Diffusion and music: the blues

- Folk music of African-Americans
- Based on slavery, religion
  - Call-and-response
  - Hidden messages
  - Subject matter
Diffusion and music: the blues

- Hearth: Mississippi Delta
- Relocation diffusion: Memphis, Chicago, Texas, St. Louis, Detroit, Piedmont
- Contagious diffusion: radio, TV
- Popular culture: jazz, rock-and-roll, hip-hop
Diffusion and music: the blues

• Original hearth: Africa?
• Similar sounds, rhythms
• Griot or traveling storyteller/musician
• Banjo/guitar, percussion