Class 7b: Geographies of Religion
Religion and culture

• Everyone has values and morals
• Religion means worship, faith in the sacred or divine
• Mentifacts: individuals’ beliefs
• Sociofacts: relationships based on those beliefs
Religion and geography

• Spatial distribution of religions
• Diffusion of religious beliefs and practices
• Impact on the landscape
• Territorial conflicts over religion
Distribution of religions

• Universalizing religions
  – Christianity, Islam, Buddhism

• Ethnic religions
  – More than a statement of faith
  – Judaism, Hinduism, Shinto

• Tribal or traditional religions
  – Animism, shamanism
Distribution of Christianity

• Largest religion (2 billion)
• Three major branches
  – Roman Catholic 50%
  – Protestant 25%
  – Eastern Orthodox 10%
• Others: Pentecostal, Mormon, Armenian, Coptic, Maronites
Diffusion of Christianity

• Began in Jerusalem
• Official religion of Rome by 313
• Split Roman Empire and Christian church
  – Roman Catholicism in West
  – Eastern Orthodox in East
• Protestant Reformation second split
  – Catholicism in South
  – Protestantism in North
Diffusion of Christianity

• Spread to New World by colonizers, settlers
Christianity and the landscape

• Church as center of settlement
  – Collective worship important
  – Architecture, layout symbolic
• Cemeteries as land use
• Hierarchy of spatial organization
Christianity and territory: Ireland

- English colony
- Independence in 1937
- 6 counties voted to stay
- North discriminated against Catholics
- IRA: terrorism for unity
- 1966-1999: 3000 dead
Distribution of Islam

• Fastest growing religion (1.2 billion)
• Two major branches
  – Sunni 85%
  – Shiite 15%
• North Africa, SW Asia, Indonesia
Five pillars of Islam

• There is no God but God, and Muhammad is his prophet
• Pray 5 times daily, facing Mecca
• Give to charity
• Fast daily during Ramadan
• Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once (hajj)
Other practices of Islam

• Qur’an or Koran: sacred text
  – Revealed to Muhammad
  – Should be read in Arabic
• Hadith: sayings and actions of Muhammad
  – “Chain of reporters”
  – Open to interpretation (e.g., veiling)
Other beliefs of Islam

• Tolerance of People of the Book
  – Jews, Christians
  – Descendants of Ishmael

• More egalitarian than Christianity
  – No intermediaries
  – Worshippers are equals
Diffusion of Islam

• Began in Mecca and Medina in 622
• Spread rapidly to east and west
• Conquered North Africa, Spain, SE Europe within 200 years
• Traders spread to SE Asia, Africa
Diffusion of Islam

• Split over succession
  – Shiites insist on hereditary leaders
  – Sunnis do not
• Iran, Bahrain, southern Iraq: Shiite
• Iraq civil war?
Islam and the landscape

• Sacred cities: Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem
  – Muhammad’s birthplace, Ka’ba
  – Muhammad’s first “conquest”
  – Muhammad’s ascent to Heaven
• Mosques for community gathering, worship
  – Mihrab points to Mecca
  – Minaret: tower for call to prayer
Islamic art

- Images of God (Allah) forbidden
- Images of people, animals discouraged
- Importance of words
- Geometric patterns, flowers
Islam and territory: Spain

- Muslims reached as far as France and Vienna
- Ruled much of Spain for 300 years
- Driven out by 1492
- Forced conversion sent Muslims, Jews east
Religion and fundamentalism

• Ultraconservative beliefs
• Reaction to modernism
• Want to institutionalize their values
• “Us against the world”