

# 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: 11<sup>th</sup> 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