Introduction to Culture

What is it?
Popular Culture vs. Folk Culture
Culture Defined

Culture: The behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group

(Dictionary.com)

With your partner come up with a list of about 10 things that make up culture.
Cultural Facets

- Education
- Government
- Agriculture
- Economy
- Sport
- Grooming
- Values
- Work ethic
- Etiquette
- Courtship
- Recreation
- Gestures
- Religion
- Language
- Architecture
- Cuisine
- Technology
- Music
- Dance
- Sports
- Medicine
- Dress
- Gender roles
- Law
Habits, Customs, and Definitions

- **Habit**: An action one person does repeatedly (biting nails, reading the newspaper each day)

- **Custom**: An action of a group done often enough that it becomes a characteristic of the group (clothing style choices)

- **Folk Culture**: Traditionally practiced by groups in homogeneous, rural, isolated areas.

- **Popular Culture**: Found in large, heterogeneous societies that share certain habits even if there is much diversity.
Popular Culture vs. Folk Culture

• Popular Culture: Hierarchical diffusion
  – Rapid diffusion through modern communication and transportation
    • Ex. Films or Internet

• Folk Culture: Relocation diffusion
  – Slow diffusion through the actual movement of people
Folk vs Popular Culture
Why is folk culture only in small areas

• Physical environment
  – Clothing is often specific to the natural world around people
  – Food choices are often a result of what can be grown in that climate, how much land is available, and what is acceptable to be eaten
  – Housing styles are initially a result of the natural world.
Case Study: Mongolia
Why is folk culture clustered?

• Isolation
  – Throughout history, slow communication and diffusion of culture meant that even short distances could keep people from sharing cultural traits.
Case Study: Inuit
Why does spread of popular culture cause problems?

• Threat to folk culture
  – Loss of traditional values
    • Change in food, shelter, and clothing preferences because of exposure to popular culture
  – changes in culture can lead to controversy, especially in very religious places.
Case Study: United States

Tom Torlino (Navajo), pictured 1882 (left), and three years later (right) at Carlisle Indian Industrial School.