Introduction to Political Geography
Terms and concepts
Introduction to Political Geography

• Political Geography is the study of the patterns and methods humans have used to organize claims to portions of the Earth’s surface.
State

• Basic organization of a group of people into a sovereign state with defined borders
  – Synonymously a country
Gaining Statehood

• Have a defined territory with permanent population and functional government
• Declare and effectively gain independence
• Gain recognition from established states as sovereign state
• Join the United Nations General Assembly
Sovereignty

• Ultimate authority for decisions pertaining to government, defense, and foreign politics
  – Simply put: Complete control of decision making without outside interference
Sovereignty Disputes

• When two or more states claim and area which often result in diplomatic tension
  – Often requiring mediation or intervention by the United Nations
Case Study: Falklands War 1982

- Disputed claims over the Islands reaching as far back as 18th Century
- British and Argentinian claims resulted in brief bitter war
- Islands remain disputed with both sides claiming rights
Nation

• A group of people in a given geographical area with common heritage, and culture
A mostly ethnically homogenous state with a sovereign government with clearly defined borders

- Often nations will push for independence citing differing nationality
Case Study: Basque

• Region of Northern Spain and southwest France almost entirely comprised of people declaring Basque, not Spanish, nationality
  – Basque has unique cultural heritage not linked to that of either Spain or France
  – Attempts to gain independence
Territory

- An area of land under the jurisdiction of a state but has not yet gained full rights of being part of the state
  - Ex. Voting rights, representation, etc..
Frontier

• Zone where no state exercises political control
  – Referred to as *Terra Nullius* or “Land belonging to no one”