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## People, Politics, and Economic Life. An Interactive Exploration of the Appalachian Region by Thomas Plaut

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tensive historical background is provided, which sets the stage for discussion of contemporary issues such as devolutionary pressures that emanate from nations who lack states. Europe is presented as one of the world's most economically successful regions, an assertion supported by several tables of data that make a useful addition to the text. The economic history of Europe, the development of various countries and regions, the nature of employment, the natural resource base, agriculture, transport and communication, manufacturing, services, international trade, and the environment are all topics discussed within an extensive chapter devoted to the economic geography of Europe. The chapter on urban geography acknowledges the importance of cities in Europe, and provides information on their history as well as on their contemporary systems and structure, problems, and policies.

Chapters 7 through 13 move the text to a regional focus by providing views of The British Isles, Western Europe, the European North, Southern Europe, West Central Europe, East Central and Southeastern Europe, and Russia and European Newly Independent States. The nature of each of these chapters varies greatly. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the contrast between the chapter devoted to Western Europe and that discussing the European North. The discussion of Western Europe is structured as separate sections on just four countries; France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Each of these countries is treated in the style of the traditional regional geography, cataloging such things as physical geography, population, the economy, agriculture, trade, and transportation. The European North is not structured by dividing into the various countries but rather is treated more holistically as a region. Issues germane to the region, such as environmental challenges and population growth, are discussed. Each of these regional chapters certainly has its own flavor.

*Contemporary Europe: A Geographic Analysis* has both strengths and weaknesses. The text contains a wealth of information and includes discussion of re-

cent changes in the region. In particular the chapter which presents information concerning Russia and the Newly Independent States draws in many contemporary issues. Each chapter stands alone as a significant source of information and all chapters are well written and contain ample good quality black and white maps and photographs. Also useful are the tables of data, the bibliographies included at the end of each chapter, and the glossary of terms. The editor himself acknowledges some drawbacks concerning the organization of the book. Allowing each author to use their own approach and not imposing a common chapter structure does lead to a duplication of material, and also means that some countries/topics are covered in great detail while others are only touched upon. As a result it would be difficult to structure a course around this text; instead it would be appropriately used as a supplement. For use in an introductory course too much detail may sometimes be included and the lack of color figures may be a detriment. Despite these drawbacks, for anyone who is a serious student of Europe this is a text that should be on their bookshelf.

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**People, Politics, and Economic Life. An Interactive Exploration of the Appalachian Region.** (student microcase) Thomas Plaut. Dubuque, Kendall/Hunt 1996, 111 pp., IBM compatible disk, glossary, maps, tables, figs., exercises, bibliog. \$21.99 ISBN 0-7872-2656-4 (paper).

Appalachia, although often suffering from negative stereotypes, is in fact a region of great multidimensional diversity. In this diversity Appalachia is typical of much of America. The 399 counties that make up the region span 13 states but retain a certain cultural identity, while at the same time representing the complexities of America as we move toward the 21st century. *People, Politics and Economic Life. An Interactive Exploration of the Ap-*

*palachian Region* consists of a workbook and computer disk designed to be used in conjunction to explore regional issues.

The workbook begins with a section which gets students started using the computer disk and which introduces them to the Appalachian region which extends from Mississippi to New York including portions of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. No prior computer knowledge is assumed and students are led through the process of setup and a few simple exercises in a step by step manner. Section II allows students to explore the settlement patterns of Appalachia by providing a series of work sheets and instruction on how to use the computer package to answer the questions posed. In similar fashion later sections focus on demographics, the economy, race, voting patterns, and alternative definitions of the Appalachian region.

The workbook is well thought out and organized, and offers students a variety of learning experiences. Through use of the package the user becomes more familiar with Appalachia as a region; however, another strength of the workbook lies in the fact that students are also introduced to regional analysis. In addition to learning about geographic patterns in Appalachia, other important skills are developed. By working through the series of exercises some basic computer skills are strengthened; the user becomes familiar and even comfortable with the computer, its commands, and the simple structure of the software. The concept of just what variables, data, and data sets are becomes clear—an invaluable learning experience that students will be able to transfer to other work. A substantial number of basic statistical terms, concepts, and techniques are also introduced in a non-threatening way that illustrates their practical utility. Finally, the student is asked questions that demand informed judgment and so is challenged to synthesize and analyze information and to think critically.

The software is simple to use and runs

in DOS. The program is somewhat unsophisticated at times and can be frustrating for users who have become accustomed to pull down menus and to using a mouse. The arrow keys rather than the mouse are used to select options on a screen, and previous screens must be reached in linear fashion by repeatedly pressing 'enter'. Despite these minor irritations the program does quite quickly grab the user's interest. The selection of variables included for the 399 counties that constitute Appalachia is good; 90 in the areas of subregions, urban/rural, race and ethnicity, population and migration, education, income, employment, poverty, demographics, employment sectors, farming, and voting. No data concerning physical geography is included. The data provided can be used in a variety of ways including to create color choropleth maps, charts, scatterplots, and tables. Data can be divided into subsets for manipulation, values for individual counties displayed on maps, tables, and scatterplots, and two maps can be visually compared on-screen. In addition, statistical analyses, including univariate statistics, correlation, analysis of variance, and multiple regression, are easy to conduct.

The program does have some limitations. The major limitation, in my view, involves data management; in particular no new data files can be created or imported. This prevents users from integrating data that reflect their specialized interests or from including updated data sets. There are also some more minor characteristics of the product that are less than ideal. For example, on-screen maps are presented in a set color scheme and I found no way to edit map colors; also the maps when printed out were not of high quality, maps could not be exported into documents, and map legends (when displayed) obscured a portion of the map.

Despite the limitations discussed *People, Politics and Economic Life. An Interactive Exploration of the Appalachian Region* would be an excellent way to introduce students, especially at the undergraduate or even high school level, to the regional geography of Appalachia, regional analysis, and applied statistical

techniques. This interactive exploration of Appalachia makes learning fun. The activities in the work book could easily be incorporated into classes to enrich courses in geography, sociology, political science, and economics.

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**The Geography of South Dakota.** Edward P. Hogan. Sioux Falls, The Center for Western Studies, 1995. 190 pp., maps, diags., photos, refs. and index, \$20.00, ISBN 0-931170-61-3

Edward P. Hogan has done a considerable service for the people of South Dakota through writing *The Geography of South Dakota*, the first such volume in 78 years. It is a book that was long overdue, but such a project also needs the right person at the right place and the right time to author it.

Hogan came to South Dakota in 1967 as the newly appointed head of the reconstituted Department of Geography at South Dakota State University in Brookings. From his vantage point he was able to study the landscape of his adopted state and achieve an appreciation of its diversity—a theme of his latest book.

*The Geography of South Dakota* consists of 15 chapters of varying lengths and complexity that systematically deal with the physical and human geography of the state. The format is conventional as Chapter One presents an overview of the state, followed by chapters focusing upon the state's terrain, its weather and climate phenomena, its biogeography and its water resources. Chapters Six through 13 concentrate on the state's human geography, beginning with the native American cultures and concluding with the Anglo-European settlement of the area. Interim chapters explore agricultural patterns, mining developments, industrial and commercial geography, tourism and recreation and transportation geography. As a capstone of geographic exposition, Chapter 14 is devoted to the regions of

South Dakota and the final chapter looks into the state's future.

Hogan's principal idea within the book was to take the main strength of geography—its ability to synthesize ideas, data and concepts from the various academic disciplines (such as history, sociology and economics)—and apply it to expounding upon South Dakota's geographical patterns, presenting a comprehensive picture. In this regard the author fulfills his goal many times over as the reader certainly comes away with an overall view of the differences found across the state's landscape.

The book is not encyclopedic, yet it is thorough in its various subject matter treatments. *The Geography of South Dakota* is illustrated with 33 maps (some in color) plus diagrams, tables and several dozen photographs, both in color and black and white. An extensive bibliography with some 330 citations supports the text.

The theme of the volume is the state's spatial diversity. In every chapter Hogan cites numerous examples of the physical and human variety found within South Dakota. He compares and contrasts the glaciated subtleties of the rolling plains of eastern South Dakota with the outlier of the Rocky Mountains found in the Black Hills region for example. The author analyzes the state's major urban area and juxtaposes it against the wide, open spaces of the northwestern area of the state. Along the way he introduces the reader to a number of not well known, but interesting to visit, locations.

At the level of generalization that the author has attempted, the book will appeal to a broad spectrum of readership. It will be useful as a textbook at both the high school and collegiate levels. Yet, general readers will find much of interest concerning the state's geographical patterns.

While the author's overall text is positive, some constructive comments are in order. A few outmoded concepts were noted, especially in relation to soils geography. Although the terms used are good for educational and illustrative purposes, a note should be added concern-