



## Defending The Globe

One of the things I like to do with courses is spend some time working with a globe. Unfortunately, I often wander the college and university campus and see many a globe, collecting dust in a neglected corner of the classroom. In fact, if you searched my garage, I am sure there are more than a few that have gathered, along with the bumps and bruises they have sustained as temporary soccer ball to one of my three boys. Given that the globe 'gets no respect' (*with an apology to the late Rodney Dangerfield*), it does have many unique properties that are useful for demonstrative purposes - aside from kicking.

First and foremost, in this global and connected world, I think it is important to grasp a feel of how small the Earth really is. Maybe it's just a matter of scale. Hold a globe outside or in a very large gymnasium and imagine how small the real Earth is on a magnitude of our solar system, our galaxy, or our universe. Perhaps if we all had a better appreciation of this small speck of granite, basalt, and water we would all have a better concern about our carbon footprint!

Speaking of scale, of course our globe is distortion and displacement free (well, unless it's a raised relief globe). At any rate, as we know from Cartography 353, all map projections are a give-n-take as we go from the real three-dimensional world to a flat plane. Therefore the globe of course is relatively scale correct, as it is also a three-dimensional model of the real thing. Can't fold it and toss it in the glovebox, but it is pretty much scale true. (See my previous discussion on Great Circles).

The globe also expresses the concept of continuity better than any map sheet I know of. The interconnectedness of our world is a very important aspect of geographic inquiry – what better way is there to demonstrate that, then with a globe? GoogleEarth, ArcExplorer, VirtualEarth aside, the globe is more intuitive to the user, even if you can't zoom in to aerial photography of downtown Cairo. Maybe it's a tactile thing.

The correct positioning and demonstrations of latitude and longitude, the positioning of the vast extent of the oceans on Earth's surface, the relative smallness of the land area of the southern hemisphere, and the correct relative positioning of countries and capitals, the expanse of (shrinking?) ice at the Poles, great circle travel displayed properly, and finally, Greenland which is not some huge imposing mass bigger than South America! The globe – a world at your fingertips! Why the heck is it tilted on a stand at 23-1/2 degrees?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgErv6M19yY>

*The Armchair Geographer holds no stock in any globe-making corporation*

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