Social World of the Late Roman Republic

Chapter 6: Rome and the Barbarians
Social Order

- As Roman state spread throughout Italian Peninsula and into Western Europe – what is a citizen?
- Patron/client relationship
  - Protection/dependence social glue
- Family
  - Power of paterfamilias
  - Position of Roman women in society
- Patricians vs. Plebeians
- Limitations placed upon absolute power of Rich
Struggle between Rich and Poor

- Small farmers ruined by constant wars
- Consolidation of enormous rural estates (latifundia)
- Extreme wealth and poverty in Rome
- “Bread and Circuses”
- Noble / Poor conflict paved way for end of Republic
  - Rise of G. Julius Caesar – First Triumverate - Dictator
  - Dependence of soldiers on their generals
From Republic to Empire

- Octavian (Augustus Caesar) as sole ruler
  - Establishment of principate
  - Rule of Augustus as “golden age”
- Growth of power of imperator
- Further conquests – Britain / Syria
- Pax Romana – Era of Roman Peace
- Economic life in the Empire
  - Exploitation of subject people
  - The problem of decadence
  - Flourishing of trade – creation of administrative cities
  - Luxury trade – very profitable
  - “All Roads Lead to Rome”
The Roman Legion: Instrument of Empire

- Legion – “Call-up”, not permanent
- Military service required – path to citizenship
- Largest army in history of world.
- Scientific military organization / training
- Virgil and the “rhetoric of greatness”
- Adaptation / Perfection of military technology
- Overextension of military and use of auxillaries – problematic.
  - “What is Rome?”
Transformation of Roman Empire

- The problem of “barbarians”
  - Celts (Northwest)
    - Arrival in Europe c. 2000 BCE
    - Expansion/ threat to Mediterranean c. 400 BCE on
    - Defeats by Romans
  - Germans (North)
    - Many conflicts along the frontier
    - Gradual settlement of Germanic tribes within western Empire
  - Steppe peoples, especially Huns (Northeast)
    - Huns upset balance of borders c. 370 CE
    - Move of Goths into imperial territory to escape Huns
Dismemberment of the Empire

- Plague
- Third-century crisis; series of invasions
- Division into eastern and western empires
- Settlement of Germans within Empire as “federates”
  - 410 sack of Rome
  - 476 abdication of last western emperor
- Causes for the “fall”
  - Military = too expensive for its economic base
  - No fixed system of imperial succession
  - “Nasty Northern Nomads”
Roman Empire in the West

- Legacy of the Roman Empire
  - Linguistic
  - Legal
  - Urban
- Transformation of Roman administration by Christian church
Eastern Roman Empire

Byzantine Empire

c. 600-1453
Connections to last time period:

- Old Paradigm – Western Europe always numero uno
- Western Roman Empire Collapse
  - Military (too expensive), Imperial failings, Invasions
- Survival of eastern empire until 1453.
- Continued to flourish and trade with rest of the world as Western Europe descended into the Dark Ages.
Foundations of Eastern Empire

- 330CE – Constantine inaugurated “New Rome” – Constantinople
  - Co-capital (help with administration of large empire)
  - Characteristics
    - Greek language and culture
    - Roman Law and administration
    - Christian faith
- Invasions
- Resurgence under Justinian I (r. 527-565)
Justinian

- Recaptured many western regions
  - S. Spain, N. Africa, Italy (Rome)
  - Costs of maintaining crippled his empire
- Justinian code
  - Civil Law codified, helped greatly with administration of Eastern empire
- Architectural feats, and public works
- Religious disputes w/ Monophysites
  - Oppression leads to the loss of these territories to Muslim competition in 7th century
Religious Struggles

- Arabs (632) captured much of Eastern Empire
- Confrontation- (religious and military)
  - Themes : administrative and military units
  - Farms for military service
  - Impregnable fortifications
- Iconoclasts
  - Use of religious images/icons in religious worship
  - Banning of “idol worship” – backed by emperors
  - Further strained relationship between Eastern and Western Church
Why did the East not fall?

- Strong administrative system
- Ruling class was never isolated from the people as they were in the west
- Less geographically overextended
- Could successfully defend its heartland
  - Sources of wealth close
  - Urban centers are connected through trade
- Germanic tribes turned their attentions west, in favor of open agricultural lands of Western Roman Empire.