BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND EASTERN EUROPE:
FROM CLASSICAL SURVIVOR TO ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY
FROM ROMAN EMPIRE TO BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The later Roman empire
- Western half crumbled, eastern half remained intact
  - Eastern half was largely Christian and Greek speaking
  - Eastern half also contained different Christian sects
  - Great wealth and large population
- The Byzantine emperors faced different challenges
  - Conflict with Sasanid dynasty (226-641 C.E.) in Persia
  - Invasions of migratory peoples from the north and east

The early Byzantine State
- Tightly centralized rule of a highly exalted emperor
- Caesaropapism: Emperor is both caesar and pope
  - The state and church are separate
  - Emperor appoints patriarchs, influence over pope
- Emperors also stood above the law
  - Dress and court etiquette designed to enhance rulers' status
  - Adopted Oriental style monarchy with all the symbols
JUSTINIAN AND THEODORA

- From 476 to late 6th Century CE
  - Empire was weak in Europe
  - Dealt with invasions

- Justinian and Theodora
  - Couple came from obscure origins
  - Seized power through bureaucracy
  - Theodora was a strong advisor

- Justinian Code
  - Issued *Corpus iuris civilis* (*The Body of the Civil Law*)
  - The code influenced civil law codes of western Europe

- Byzantine conquests
  - Belisarius, Narses reconquered part of western Empire
  - North Africa, Italy, coast of Southern Spain

- Threats from Sasanids and Slavic peoples
  - Persians were a constant threat
  - Slavs migrated into Balkans; settled in interior lands
BYZANTINE EMPIRE c. 600 CE
THREAT OF ISLAM

- The emergence of the Islamic state
  - Arab peoples conquered Sasanids, part of Byzantium
    - Lost Egypt, North Africa, Fertile Crescent, Crete, Cyprus
  - Prolonged sieges of Constantinople by Islamic armies
  - Byzantine survived partly because of "Greek fire"

- Imperial organization
  - Government run by trained bureaucracy, professional army
  - The theme system strengthened Byzantine society
    - Under rule of general, who ran army, civil bureaucracy
    - Responsible for protecting peasants
    - Themes were provinces organized on a military basis
    - Local officials recruited troops from within theme
  - Aristocrats limited by army, emperor, bureaucracy

- The revival of the empire
  - Reconquered Syria, Crete, Cyprus: 10th century
  - "Basil the Bulgar Slayer," crushed Bulgars in Balkans
THE THREAT OF ISLAM

Map showing the expansion of Islam and the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire.

- At the death of Muhammad, 632
- After the conquests of the first four caliphs, 661
- After the conquests of the Umayyad caliphs, 750

Legend:
- Outer limits of the Byzantine Empire
Tensions between Greeks and Latins

- Ecclesiastical tensions
  - Constantinople
    - Greek was religious language
    - Caesaropapist emperors
  - Rome
    - Latin was chief language
    - Autonomy from imperial authorities
  - Rivalry for conversion of Slavs

Political grievances

- First Franks then Germans claimed imperial authority
  - Charlemagne received imperial crown in 800
  - Otto of Saxony claimed himself an emperor in 962
- Byzantines felt they were only legitimate emperor
- Rivalry over Southern Italy and Sicily
BYZANTINE ECONOMY

The Agricultural Economy

- The peasantry
  - The backbone of the Byzantine army and economy
  - Landless peasants worked as share-croppers
  - Invasions of 6th, 7th century led to theme system
  - Since 11th century, free peasants declined

- Consequences of the peasantry's decline
  - Landowners shifted taxes to peasants
  - Landowners raised forces on estates
  - Pool of military recruits shrank

Industry and Trade

- Manufacturing enterprises
  - Byzantine craftsmen had high reputation in various industries
  - High-quality silk became important industry; imperial monopoly

- Trade
  - Constantinople, important for Eurasian, Mediterranean trade
  - Solidus was the standard currency of the Mediterranean basin
  - Byzantium drew enormous wealth from foreign trade

- Banks and partnerships supported commercial economy
URBAN LIFE

**Urban Life**
- The capital was the heart of the empire
- Housing in Constantinople
  - Enormous palaces owned by aristocrats
  - Less splendid dwellings owned by less privileged classes
- Attractions of Constantinople
  - City of baths, taverns, restaurants, theaters, Hippodrome
  - The most popular game - chariot races

**Greens and Blues**
- The two factions of fans for chariot races
- Frequent fights in the street between them
- Joined together in a popular uprising, 532
- The riot left Constantinople in shambles
THE CITY OF CONSTANTINOPLE
TWIN LEGACIES

- **Byzantine education**
  - State-organized school system,
  - Schools trained government bureaucrats
  - Private education for aristocratic families
  - Basic literacy was widespread even among lower classes
  - Citizens constantly engaged in intellectual disputes

- **Scholarship**
  - Emphasis on humanities, classics
  - Arts, architecture important for state, church
  - Natural science generally ignored
  - Educated considered heirs of classical Greece

- **Christianity (Church) was other legacy**
HAGIA SOFIA
BYZANTINE CHURCH

Church and state
- Church's close relationship with the imperial government
- Constantine actively participated in religious debate
- Under emperors, church was department of state

Iconoclasm
- Controversy over use of icons in religious services
  - Old Testament prohibition on false images, Islamic influences
  - Iconoclasts wanted to purge all churches of icons
- Ban inaugurated by Emperor Leo III in 726 C.E.
  - Unpopular policy sparked protests, riots throughout the empire
  - Opposed by Western Christians, Pope
- The iconoclasts abandoned their effort in 843 C.E.
  - Much protest, excommunications from pope
  - Emperors worried

Greek Philosophy and Byzantine theology
- Examine theology from philosophical point of view
- Debate about Jesus's nature, a philosophical issue
  - Arian Heresy
  - Monophysite Controversy
ICONS

The word of God in art used for prayer: Iconographers read Bible passage, paint as a prayer. Icons follow certain styles using specific colors, images.
MONASTICISM AND PIETY

- **Asceticism**
  - Extreme asceticism, self-denial by some Christians
  - Many famous, wealthy retreated to monasteries
  - "Pillar saints"

- **Byzantine monasticism and St. Basil**
  - Earliest monasteries of dedicated hermits, ascetics
  - Monasticism began in Egypt area
  - Reforms urged by St. Basil, 4th century C.E.

- **Monasteries provided local social services**
  - Hospitals, orphanages, poor relief
  - Heavily endowed by wealthy

- **Not centers of learning**
THE GREAT SCHISM

- Constantinople and Rome
  - Political rivalry in Central Europe, Balkans, Southern Italy
    - Popes supported anti-Byzantine Normans, Hungarians
    - Papal missionaries active in Greek areas
  - Iconoclastic movement in the east criticized by the west
    - Emperors vs. Popes
    - Who is head of the church – pope or an emperor
  - Ritual, doctrinal differences
    - Leavened vs. unleavened bread
    - Marriage of priests
    - Liturgy in the vernacular
    - Council rule versus the monarchical style of the pope
    - Filoque controversy: Holy Spirit – from who does it proceed?

- Schism
  - Power struggle led to mutual excommunication, 1054
    - Rivalry between pope, patriarch
    - Papal ambassador excommunicated patriarch; vise versa
  - Origins of Eastern Orthodox & Roman Catholic churches
  - It was really post-1054 actions were made split permanent
DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AND FOREIGN CHALLENGES

- Social problems
  - Generals, local aristocrats allied, a challenge to imperial power
  - Free peasants were declining in number and prosperity
  - Imperial government had fewer recruits, many fiscal problems

- Challenges from the east
  - Muslim Seljuk Turks invaded Anatolia, defeat Byzantines, 1071
  - Also took control of Abbasid Caliphate, Holy places in Jerusalem
  - The loss of Anatolia sealed the fate of the Byzantine empire

- Challenges from the west
  - Norman army expelled Byzantine authorities in southern Italy
  - Normans, western Europeans mounted a series of crusades
  - The fourth crusade sacked Constantinople
  - Byzantine forces recaptured the capital in 1261
  - Byzantines never recovered

- Turks gradually push Byzantines out of Asia; into Europe
EASTERN EUROPE

- Slavs, Avars, Magyars (Hungarians), Vlachs (Rumanians)
  - As Germans moved west, Slavs moved into vacuum
    - Pushed into Balkans, Greece, Central Europe
    - Generally agriculturalists, favored trade
  - Avars and Magyars were pastoral nomads who invaded area
    - Settled in Pannonia, area of Danube plain outside Byzantine control
    - Split Northern or Western Slavs from Southern Jugo-slavs
  - Vlachs: Latin speaking agriculturalists, herders in Transylvania

- Eastern Europe
  - Byzantine ruled area up to Danube, into Bosnia
    - Slavs settled inside imperial boundaries
    - Maintained close contact with Byzantium from the 6th century
    - The peoples included Serbs, Croats, Macedonians
  - Rise Bulgars
    - Bulgars were Turkish pastoralists
    - Conquered, settled in Danube area; adopted Slavic traditions
    - Formed very powerful kingdom, threat to Byzantines

- Missions to the Slavs
  - Byzantium sent missionaries to Central Europe, Balkans
  - The mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius, mid-9th century
  - Cyrillic writing stimulated conversion to Orthodox Christianity
  - Split Allegiance of Eastern Europe
    - Pope: Magyars, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Croats, Slovenes
    - Patriarch: Serbs, Bulgars, Macedonians, Russians, Romanians
SLAVIC MIGRATIONS

5 The expansion of the Slavs to c.700

- Expansion of Slavs
- Western limit of Slav expansion in 8th century AD
- Sorbs: Slav people
- AVARS: non-Slav people
RUSSIA

- **Rise of Russia**
  - Area inhabited by Slavs
  - Varangians (Vikings) arrived, used river system
  - Set up state based on trade, conquest around 9th Century
  - State founded by Rurik, people called Rus; capital Kiev

- **The conversion of Prince Vladimir, 989**
  - Converted for trade, commercial reasons
  - Elites baptized by order of prince, often against will
  - Served as conduit for spread of Byzantine culture, religion
  - Conversion led to literacy, use of Slavonic; Greek traditions
  - Byzantine art and architecture dominated Kiev

- **The growth of Kiev**
  - Princes established caesaropapist control of church
  - After 1453 claimed to inherit imperial crown of Byzantium
  - State divided into provinces ruled by princes/boyars
  - Landed nobles called boyars, constant strife with princes
  - Kievan rule was very decentralized
  - Constant threat, war with steppe nomads
MEDIEVAL RUSSIA