Chapter 26 (Sections 2 and 3)

The Atlantic Slave Trade and The African Diaspora
Social Change in Early Modern Africa

- Kinship and clans remained unchanged at the local level
- American food crops, for example, manioc (most important – used for bread), maize, peanuts, introduced after the sixteenth century
- Population growth in sub-Saharan: 35 million in 1500 to 60 million in 1800 – despite the mass forced migration of slaves
Foundations of the Slave Trade

- Slavery common in traditional Africa
  - Slaves typically war captives, criminals, or outcasts
  - Most slaves worked as cultivators, some as administrators or soldiers
  - With all land held in common, slaves were a measure of power and wealth
  - Slaves often assimilated into their masters' kinship groups, even earned freedom
Foundations of the Slave Trade

- The Islamic slave trade well established throughout Africa
  - When traditional sources were insufficient, raiding parties were developed to attack undefended communities
  - Ten million slaves may have been shipped out of Africa by Islamic slave trade between eighth and the eighteenth centuries
  - Europeans used these existing networks and expanded the slave trade
Human Cargoes

- The early slave trade on the Atlantic started by Portuguese in 1441
  - By 1460 about five hundred slaves a year shipped to Portugal and Spain
    - Often worked as miners, porters, or domestic servants, since free peasants and serfs cultivated the land
  - By fifteenth century African slaves were shipped to sugar plantations on Atlantic islands
  - Portuguese planters imported slaves to Brazil, 1530s
  - Spanish settlers shipped African slaves to the Caribbean, Mexico, Peru, and Central America, 1510s and 1520s
  - English colonists brought slaves to North America early seventeenth century
Triangular trade: all three legs of voyage profitable

- First leg – horses, European manufactured goods, and firearms in exchange for slaves
- Second leg – slaves could be sold for 2-3 times what they had paid for them; usually traded for cash, sugar or molasses
- Third leg – American products sold in Europe
At every stage the slave trade was brutal

- Individuals captured in violent raids
- Forced marched to the coast for transport
- The dreaded “middle passage”, where between 25 percent and 50 percent died
Volume of the Atlantic slave trade increased dramatically after 1600

- At height--end of the eighteenth century--about one hundred thousand shipped per year
- Altogether about twelve million brought to Americas, another four million died en route; another 3-4 million in the continuing Islamic slave trade
Impact of the Slave Trade in Africa

- Profound impact on African societies
  - Impact uneven: some societies spared (due to resistance and location), some societies profited
  - Distorted African sex ratios, since two-thirds of exported slaves were males
  - In Angola, it encouraged polygamy and forced women to take on men's duties
Impact of the Slave Trade in Africa

- Politically disruptive
  - Introduced firearms; fostered conflict and violence between peoples
  - For example: Dahomey, on the "slave coast," grew powerful as a slave-raiding state
Cash crops introduced to fertile lands of Caribbean early fifteenth century

- First Hispaniola, then Brazil and Mexico
- Important cash crops: sugar, tobacco, rice, indigo, cotton, coffee
- Plantations dependent on slave labor
The African Diaspora

Plantation Societies

- *Plantations racially divided: one hundred or more slaves with a few white supervisors*
  - High death rates in the Caribbean and Brazil; continued importation of slaves
  - Only about 5 percent of slaves to North America, where slave families more common
The African Diaspora
Plantation Societies

- *Resistance to slavery widespread, though dangerous*
  - Slow work, sabotage, and escape
  - Slave revolts were rare and were brutally suppressed by plantation owners
  - 1793: slaves in French colony of Saint-Domingue revolted, abolished slavery, and established the free state of Haiti
The African Diaspora
The making of African-American cultural traditions

- *African and Creole languages*
  - Slaves from many tribes; lacked a common language
  - Developed Creole languages, blending several African languages with the language of the slaveholder
The African Diaspora
The making of African-American cultural traditions

- African-American religions also combined elements from different cultures
  - African-American Christianity was a distinctive syncretic practice
  - African rituals and beliefs: ritual drumming, animal sacrifice, magic, and sorcery
Other African-American cultural traditions: hybrid cuisine, weaving, pottery
The African Diaspora
The end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery

- **New voices and ideas against slavery**
  - American and French revolutions encouraged ideals of freedom and equality
  - Olaudah Equiano was a freed slave whose autobiography became a best-seller
The African Diaspora

The end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery

- **Slavery became increasingly costly**
  - Slave revolts made slavery expensive and dangerous
  - Decline of sugar price and rising costs of slaves in the late eighteenth century
  - Manufacturing industries were more profitable; Africa became a market
End of the slave trade

- Most European states abolished the slave trade in the early nineteenth century
- British naval squadrons helped to stop the trade
- The abolition of slavery followed slowly: 1833 in British colonies, 1848 in French colonies, 1865 in the United States, 1888 in Brazil