The Middle Ages

State Formation in Western Europe (Chapters 17 and 20)
Clarification

- Western Europe (500-1500 CE) = “The Middle Ages"
- 500-1000 CE = the Medieval Period; “The Dark Ages”
  - Much of Roman Civilization was lost including written language, innovative architectural and building techniques, organized government, and long-distance trade.
The Germanic people could not read or write, and retained the isolated nomadic lifestyles of their ancestors.

Developed an agricultural economy with a decentralized political order in which most political authority was invested in local and regional governments.

The Roman Catholic church emerged as the dominant source of cultural authority.
Germanic peoples displaced Roman authority and institutions but largely lived according to tribal and customary law.

- Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Burgundians, Angles and Saxons, and the Franks
- The “center of gravity” in Europe shifted from Italy to France
  - The Franks were the most powerful and influential
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- In 500 CE, Clovis (elected king of the Franks), became the first Germanic ruler to convert to Catholic Christianity beginning an alliance between the Franks and the papacy in Rome.
- In 732, the Franks halted Muslim advances at the Battle of Tours, in present-day France. This battle was a turning point in European history as it marks the defeat of Muslim advances into Europe.
- When the Lombards attacked Rome, the Pope turned to the Franks for military aid. In return, the Frankish King Pepin was given papal authority in exchange for a tract of land across central Italy (the Papal States).
Pepin and his son, Charlemagne, forged the Carolingian dynasty and came close to reestablishing the frontiers of the Roman Empire in the West.

- Charlemagne reformed the educational system for priests including the mandating of the Benedict Rules for monastic life.
- During his reign, there was a revival of learning and the preservation of Greek and Roman writings.
- United his realm using *missi dominici* – messengers sent to proclaim his laws (known as *capitularies*) and report back to him on events throughout his realm.
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- His continued support of the pope eventually led to him being crowned the Roman emperor which angered the Byzantines (he gave them land in return so they would recognize his rule). This continued the tradition of the pope anointing the emperor and therefore creating his right to rule.

- The Treaty of Verdun in 843 CE divided Charlemagne’s empire between his three grandsons who were unable to maintain power while fighting among themselves and against outside invaders.
Vikings mounted invasions all along the European coastlines (9th-11th centuries) due to population pressures and a firm resistance to conversion attempts by Christian missionaries.

Results of the fall of the Carolingian empire...

- Smaller kingdoms of the Angles and Saxons (led by King Alfred) laid the foundations for a future nation of England.
- King Otto of Saxony fought against Magyar invasion and set the stage for German identity while earning the title of Holy Roman Emperor.
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- France became small principalities run by counts; the Vikings even established their own settlements in northern France
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- The adoption of Roman Christianity (after the conversion of Clovis) maintained crucial cultural elements from classical Rome
  - Charlemagne and other rulers help to convert reluctant pagans
  - The Great Schism of East and West in 1054 formally separated the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- Strong papal leadership led to growth and increased power
  - Pope Gregory I
    - Asserted papal primacy: the Bishop of Rome was the ultimate authority of the Christian church
    - Emphasized the sacraments – especially penance (confession of sins) which created a need for an educated clergy
    - Promoted an active missionary movement, especially in England, France, and Germany
    - Promoted monasticism (renouncing worldly pursuits to devote one’s self to spiritual work) as a way to serve God and church
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- Monasticism became increasingly popular in Europe even though it had begun in Egypt
  - St. Benedict’s Rules became the prime virtues (poverty, chastity, and obedience) for monks and their religious sisters (nuns) led by St. Scholastica (St. Benedict’s sister)
  - Discipline brought converts and wealth to the monasteries
    - Brought order to the countryside
    - Provided labor and direction to expand agricultural production
    - Provided social services for travelers, orphans, and those in need of medical care
  - Became the source for educated individuals who were necessary for effective government
  - Spread Christianity among Europe’s rural peasants
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- Feudalism became the political and social order of medieval Europe
  - Up until about 1300, the majority of the population of Europe were peasants, who lived in relative isolation in rural areas.
  - Unlike China, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and the Americas, Europe had few big cities, with the exception of Genoa and Venice.
  - European nobles built the system to protect their lands and maintain order in a decentralized society
    - Serfs, not fully free nor fully slave, cultivated the land in return for protection and a small plot of their own land
    - Manors (or fiefs) became the principal form of agricultural organization (self-sufficient communities)
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- Monetary exchange was based on barter.
  - Lords needed vassals (knights) to protect their holdings but they were expensive to train and support.
  - In exchange for their skills/protection, a vassal was given a plot of land (fiefdom). By the 12th century, a vassal typically had to serve his lord for 40 days a year. Vassals needed the lord’s permission to marry which was often done for political, social, or economic gain.
Characteristics of the Medieval Period

- Trade slowed with the disintegration of cities and transportation infrastructures, and repeated invasions
  - By the 10th century, political stability led to renewed trading relationships
  - Key inventions - moldboard plow, watermills, horse collar – allowed more land to be put to use (not enough to sustain cities but enough to trade for goods from other regions)
  - Norseman (descendants of the Vikings) helped maritime trade grow from Russia to Ireland to the Islamic empire
- Population decline due to disease, invasion, and the uncertainty of daily life
The High Middle Ages
The early medieval period left a legacy of regional loyalties, improved farming technology, and strong Catholic church.

Despite regular warfare among the regional powers, there is economic growth from participation in the world trade network and a flowering of cultural life.
Holy Roman Empire

Side Note

- Charlemagne is officially considered the first Holy Roman Emperor when he was crowned Roman Emperor in 800 CE.
- However, the next Holy Roman Emperor was not declared until 962 CE with Otto of Saxony
  - This began an unbroken line of emperors for more than eight centuries
Confederation of States established by German princes

- Enormous tension between the succeeding emperors after Otto and the popes
  - Emperors tried to control the Catholic church
  - Popes attempted to exert their authority over all monarchs
- Investiture Contest Controversy – Pope Gregory VII excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV for attempting to name the bishops in his own region
  - Henry IV backed down so the church maintained its authority
Holy Roman Empire in 1250
Frederick Barbossa also tried to enlarge the Holy Roman Empire through northern Italy which the popes prevented.

HRE was “neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire” according to Voltaire – instead it was secular, German, and a group of states.
France and England

- In France, Hugh Capet and his descendants formed a strong monarchy.
- The English were defeated by William the Conqueror in 1066.
  - The Normans reorganized English government and maintained a strong central authority.
- While both the Capetians and Normans faced internal challenges to their power, successive generations of French and English kings continued to fight each other as well.
Italy was decentralized under a mixture of Catholic states, city-states, and principalities.

- The popes influenced most Italian states, but they ruled central Italy exclusively as the Papal State.
- The Italian cities of Florence, Bologna, Genoa, Milan and Venice grew prosperous from trade and began to dominate the northern regions with their own governments and armies.
- The kingdom of Naples in the south was formed out of the former Byzantine and Muslim territories.
Iberia

- At the beginning of the period, the Iberian peninsula was split between a small northern Catholic region and the predominant Muslim states in the south.
  - By the 13th century, Christian armies had pressed south and conquered the regions that became Castile, Aragon, and Portugal. Only Granada remained Muslim.
In the middle of political warfare, Europe experienced notable growth in trade which changed the social hierarchy.

- Significant population growth between 1000 and 1300 (36% in the 13th century alone) → increased rates of urbanization and trade
  - New inventions (horseshoes and the horse collar) allowed even faster tilling of land.
  - Understanding field rotation and fertilizer
  - Experimented with new crops such as legumes and vegetables
  - Europeans published their findings in vernacular (the language of ordinary people) languages, rather than the scholarly languages of Latin and Greek
Economic Growth

- Increased trade led to the growth of cities
  - London, Paris, and Toledo became large regional centers of trade while new towns/cities were founded at advantageous spots
    - Flanders (Belgium) = woolen textiles
  - Italian cities prospered from the increased Mediterranean trade
  - Northern port cities on the Baltic and North Seas formed the Hanseatic League
    - Goods shipped by these merchants were traded in large market towns along the Danube and Rhine rivers
  - Banking and credit as well as group investment in business to decrease risk
Hanseatic League
Formula for the three estates – those who prayed, those who fought, and those who labored – changed during this time

- Code of chivalry governed the manners and actions of the fighting class – ending their boorish behavior of the medieval period
  - The Catholic church promoted the idea of piety and service to the Christian faith as part of the code
  - Appealed to elite women because it promoted the ideas of respect for women and proper behavior
Code of Chivalry

Live one's life so that it is worthy of respect and honor.
Live for freedom, justice and all that is good.
Destroy evil in all of its monstrous forms.
Fight with honor.
Never attack an unarmed foe.
Never attack from behind.
Obey the law.
Administer justice.
Defend the weak.
Protect the innocent.
Avenge the wronged.
Respect life and freedom.
Show respect to authority.
Die with honor and valor.
Always maintain one's principles.
Exhibit self control.
Always keep one's word of honor.
Exhibit Courage in word and deed.
Never betray a confidence or comrade.
Never abandon a friend, ally, or noble cause.
Loyalty to one's friends and those who lay their trust in thee.
Social Development

- Troubadours
  - Traveled between castles and sang love songs and poems based on sophisticated traditions of Muslim Spain
  - Eleanor of Aquitaine was their most important patron
    - Married both a king of France and a king of England
Social Development

▪ Merchants became more powerful
  ▪ Demanded charters from local lords that exempted them from feudal control
▪ Guilds
  ▪ Groups of craftsman in cities
  ▪ Protected prices and established uniform standards of production
  ▪ Provided support and friendship to its members (social safety net in hard times)
Status of women grew with urbanization
- Opportunities to work the same jobs as men in cities
- Professionals, bankers, merchants, butchers, and brewers
- Dominated the production of clothing
- Even became members of female guilds
Social Development

- Life of peasants
  - Peasants who migrated to cities and lived there for one year and one day could earn their freedom from feudal restrictions.