The World System

- Vast changes in human society over the past 500 years
- Change is even more accelerated in the past 50 years
- Modern world system: world in which nations are economically and politically interdependent.

The World System

- Culture change is a large component of these changes
- Two main processes of culture change
  - Innovation
  - Diffusion

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- Innovation- anything, from religious beliefs to technological change, that is internally generated by members of the society
- Innovations usually occur by combining existing ideas into a new form or thought
  - Voodoo
  - Steam paddle boat
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- Diffusion - the borrowing or adopting a cultural trait from another society
- Anything can be incorporated through diffusion:
  - Religious beliefs
  - Technology
  - Plants
  - Political systems

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- What triggers cultural change?
- Romer's rule: an innovation that evolves to maintain an existing system can play a major role in changing that system.
- Many changes are adopted by a society in order to maintain the current social context

The World System - Romer’s Rule

- Some examples of change for maintenance:
  - Agriculture
  - New ship technologies
  - Industrial revolution
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- The world in 1500
- World population: 500 to 600 million
- Major Political Powers:
  - Spain and Portugal
  - Kongo and Songhai
  - China and India
  - Inca and Aztecs

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- The opening of the 16th century marks the beginning of European expansion
- Two phases:
  - Mercantile (1490-1800)
  - Industrial (1800-current)

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- Prior to European expansion contact between the major areas of the world was limited and sporadic
- Diffusion of new ideas and technology was very slow compared to the rates of diffusion after expansion
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Why Europe?
Europeans held a few advantages:
- In the Americas, Europeans held an advantage in military technology: iron, horses and guns
- Africa: similar to the Americas, though not as great
- Asia: only advantage was naval

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The Americas:
- “Discovered” by Columbus in 1492
- Conquest was done mostly by the Spanish for gold and silver
- By late 1500’s the Spanish had conquered every major American state

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Spanish conquests were rapid and devastating to local populations
- Up to 90% of the New World population died as a result of contact with European populations
- Example: Island of Hispanola
  - 1496: ~1 million native peoples
  - 1535: 500 native peoples
  - 1550: all native peoples are extinct
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- How did this happen when only a few Spaniards and Portuguese actually came to the New World?
- Three ways
  - Exploitation of local political struggles
  - Disease
  - Slavery

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- The relation of disease and conquest
  - New World populations had no immunity to Old World diseases such as small pox, measles, chicken pox, influenza, and typhus
  - Notice most of these are diseases of childhood

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- Why did Europeans have such immunity to such diseases and New World populations didn’t?
  - Live stock and crowds
  - All of these diseases have their origins in live stock- small pox has cow pox, influenza in ducks
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- Europeans lived closely with their livestock in crowded cities
- All of these diseases need virgin immune systems to infect
- Cities provide disease organisms with children to infect

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- In the New World there were cities, but there was a lack of livestock
- Only domesticated animals were:
  - Turkey
  - Llama
  - Guinea pig
  - Dog

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- None of the New World domesticated animals carried diseases that could be transmitted to humans, and these animals were not housed with humans
- When Old World populations came into contact with New World populations, the childhood diseases found new hosts in adults
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- After initial decimation of the population, New World populations could start to rebound if sufficient numbers were left
- New World populations were also enslaved by the Iberians
- Slavery caused further population problems

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- New World populations could not meet the demand for labor, so Iberians began importing slaves from Africa
- Africa's population suffered from the slave trade, approx. 11.5 million slaves brought to the New World (1495-1900)
- Some groups completely wiped out by the slave trade

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- Other effects on Africa
- Establishment of colonial governments by 1885
- Most Western European powers had colonies in Africa by this time
- Colonial governments cut across African political boundaries
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- Colonial governments imposed taxation and converted local economies into cash based economies
- Mono-cropping of New World foods introduced
- Maize allowed for great expansion of the population

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- Expansion into Asia was slow for Europeans
- By mid-1800’s the industrial revolution provided European powers with the military technology to challenge Asian states
- By the end of the 19th century most of Asia was under European control

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- The major agent of change in Asia was the implementation of a European based tax system
- Again, taxation encourages cash cropping for export
- Other domestic products will either be encouraged or discouraged based on market value
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- The industrial revolution
- Starts in England around 1750, then spreads throughout Europe and the United States
- Industrialism replaces domestic production of goods

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- Domestic production is characterized by entrepreneurs providing households with the raw materials for production
- In the industrial system, centralizes production in a factory
- Machinery replaces human labor
- Products are cheaper when manufactured

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- Availability of cheap goods and improving transportation systems allowed for dramatic population increases
- Cities begin to grow as factories pull in workers from the country
- For example, the population of Britain double from 1750 to 1800 and then doubled again from 1800 to 1850
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- Population explosion fueled consumption which lead to more production
- British producers couldn't meet demand, which spurs the rapid development of manufacturing technology
- British colonies also demanded manufactured goods

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- Why didn't the industrial revolution occur in France first?
- French had a large population base and could simply intensify their domestic production economy
- Another factor could be religious, British Protestantism v. French Catholicism