LECTURE 8: Rome II: Empire, Warfare, and the Decline

HISTORY 1130:
Themes in Global History:
Trade, Economy, and Empires

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Rome II: Empire, Warfare, and the Decline
Timeline of Emperors
Roman Conquests and Expansion
Warfare and Weaponry
Roman Engineering
Origins of Decline
The Sack of Rome
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Augustus
27 BC - AD 14

Tiberius
14-37

Caligula
37-41

Claudius
41-54

Nero
54-68

Galba
68-69

Otho
69

Vitellius
69

Vespasian
69-79

Titus
79-81

Domitian
81-96

Nerva
96-98

Hadrian
117-138

Antoninus Pius
138-161

Marcus Aurelius
161-180

Lucius Verus
161-169

Commodus
180-192

Pertinax
193

ETC. ETC. ETC.

BUT WHO WERE THEY? NEXT, SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS/INFAMOUS ONES REVIEWED...
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Caligula, aka Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus, was effective and somewhat politically capable to be ruler of the world, and his vicious maneuvers were a necessary part of his political agenda -- to return Rome to Caesar's form of rule. In October AD 37, Caligula fell very ill. His popularity was such that his illness caused great concern throughout the entire empire. But, when Caligula recovered, he was no longer the same man. Rome soon found itself living in a nightmare.

Caligula had four wives, three of them during his reign as emperor and he was said to have committed incest with each of his three sisters in turn. **Caligula's excesses knew no bounds**, and he introduced heavy taxation to help pay for his personal expenditure. He also created a new tax on prostitutes and is said to have opened a brothel in a wing of the imperial palace. Caligula also kept his favourite racehorse, Incitatus, inside the palace in a stable box of carved ivory, dressed in purple blankets and collars of precious stones. Dinner guests were invited to the palace in the horse's name. And the horse, too, was invited to dine with the emperor. Caligula was even said to have considered making the horse consul.

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Claudius Nero Germanicus (b. 10 BC, d. 54 A.D.; emperor, 41-54 A.D.)

was the third emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. His reign represents a turning point in the history of the Principate for a number of reasons, not the least for the manner of his accession and the implications it carried for the nature of the office. During his reign he **promoted administrators who did not belong to the senatorial or equestrian classes**, and was later vilified by authors who did. He followed Caesar in carrying Roman arms across the English Channel into Britain but, unlike his predecessor, he initiated the full-scale annexation of Britain as a province, which remains today the most closely studied corner of the Roman Empire. His relationships with his wives and children provide detailed insights into the perennial difficulties of the succession problem faced by all Roman Emperors. His final settlement in this regard was not lucky: **he adopted his fourth wife's son, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was to reign catastrophically as Nero and bring the dynasty to an end**. Claudius's reign, therefore, was a mixture of successes and failures that leads into the last phase of the Julio-Claudian line.

http://www.roman-emperors.org/claudius.htm
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Nero, last of the Julio-Claudians, had been placed in the difficult position of absolute authority at a young age coupled with the often-contradictory efforts of those in a position to manipulate him. Augustus, however, had not been much older when he began his bid for power, and so a great deal of the responsibility for Nero's conduct must also rest with the man himself. Nero's reign was not without military operations (e.g., the campaigns of Corbulo against the Parthians, the suppression of the revolt of Boudicca in Britain), but his neglect of the armies was a critical error. He left Rome not to review his troops but to compete in Greek games, and as a further slight had left a freedman, Helius, in his place at Rome to govern in his absence. The suspicion which surrounded him after the treason trials and the conspiracy set the stage for a series of civil upheavals, "the Year of the Four Emperors," which included the rise to power of men, such as Otho in Lusitania and Vespasian in Judaea, whom Nero himself had sent to the frontiers, unaware that they were to become his successors.

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Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) was the central figure of these "five good emperors," the one most responsible for changing the character and nature of the empire. He was also one of the most remarkable and talented individuals Rome ever produced. He appears as a conscientious administrator, an inveterate traveler, and a general deeply concerned for the well-being of his armies, and thus of the empire. There was generally peace throughout its lands, although his principate was not entirely peaceful.
Marcus Aurelius **Commodus** Antoninus, the son of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his wife-cousin Faustina, was born in Lanuvium in 161 AD. Commodus was named Caesar at the age of 5. His father died, possibly of the plague, at a military encampment at Bononia on the Danube on 17 March 180, leaving the Roman Empire to his nineteen-year-old son. Upon hearing of his father’s death, Commodus made preparations for Marcus’ funeral, made concessions to the northern tribes, and made haste to return back to Rome in order to enjoy peace after nearly two decades of war.

**Commodus, being the son of Marcus Aurelius was one of the best prepared Roman emperors in history.** Unfortunately his intent was not to rule, but to bask in a life of wealth and luxury. Commodus is often thought to have been insane, and he was certainly given to excess. Commodus was extremely proud of his physical prowess, disdaining the more philosophic inclinations of his father. He thought of himself as the reincarnation of Hercules, frequently emulating the legendary hero’s feats by appearing in the arena to fight a variety of wild animals. The emperor also had a passion for gladiatorial combat, which he took so far as to take to the arena himself, dressed as a **gladiator**. This was considered scandalous by the people of Rome, who regarded gladiators as occupying the lowest rungs of society.

http://www.roman-emperors.org/commod.htm

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**The movie Gladiator in historical context:**

http://ablermedia.com/ctcweb/showcase/wardgladiator1.html
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ROMAN CONQUESTS AND EXPANSION:

Expansion during the Early Roman Empire
(31 B.C.E. - C.E. 180)

When the Roman Republic came to an end, the territorial frontiers of the Roman state were poorly defined, but Augustus, Rome's first emperor (r. 27 B.C.E. - C.E. 14), led campaigns that extended Roman influence to the natural boundaries defined by desert, sea, ocean and river. His armies conquered all of North Africa, and territory reaching as far east as the Red Sea and the Black Sea, as far west as the Atlantic and north to the great rivers of central Europe: the Rhine and the Danube. These rivers provided the northern frontier to the new provinces of Raetia, Noricum and Pannonia that today encompass Switzerland and Austria. To the east, the Danube provided the northern limit to the new provinces of Pannonia and Moesia that encompass parts of present-day Slovenia, Hungary and Bulgaria. The Rhine and the Danube, the northern frontier of the Roman World, would prove to be the fatal weak link in Rome's defences by the fifth century. As early as C.E. 9, when attempting to make territorial gains north of this frontier, Augustus suffered the only defeat of his many military campaigns; German tribes annihilated three Roman legions in the Teutoburg Forest in northwestern Germany. Augustus, now at the end of his reign, decided against further expansion and urged his successor to do the same.
Although Augustus' advice was heeded for several years, the next century did see the incorporation of client kingdoms, and the successful annexation of Britain in C.E. 43 and of the Agri Decumates, a triangle of territory at the junction of the Rhine and Danube frontiers, in C.E. 74. Not all was well within the empire, however, and revolts and uprisings within Roman provinces forced Rome to redirect some of its troops from the Rhine and Danube frontiers to the rebellious areas. This move left the northern frontiers ill-defended and open to border raids. Rome responded to this threat by strengthening the frontier defenses with additional legions.
The third century marks a clear reversal as Rome’s military policy became one of defense rather than territorial expansion. As the century progressed, the northern frontier was seriously weakened as it fell victim to the increasingly heavy migration of German tribes from northern Europe. The western and eastern halves of the empire were attacked by successive waves of Goths, Vandals and Burgundians. Invaders overwhelmed the frontiers, and the borderlands were abandoned by the Roman troops. Many regions were lost to the invaders, and cities and towns were pillaged or destroyed in both the west and the east; Athens was taken and plundered in C.E. 267. During the late third and early fourth century centuries, the borders were strengthened and the number of legions increased, but these efforts ultimately failed as wave after wave of Germanic peoples invaded and settled in western Europe in the fifth century. Symbolic of this was the sack of Rome in C.E. 410.
WARFARE AND WEAPONRY:

According to John Keegan, Rome was “the mother house of modern armies”. Based on the Greek advances in warfare, Rome moved beyond the hoplite model in organization. Roman commanders found that tight ranks of the phalanx put their troops at a disadvantage. They introduced a system with subsections, to maneuver in the battlefield, introduced the javelin (soldiers, called legionaries, also used swords). Eventually, abandoned some of the heavy armor in favor of a light shield, and lighter body-armor.

Romans were set apart from others in warfare by their ferocity in battle. Romans also later utilized cavalry, but to the extent like the Mongols did later on.

The basis of the military force was citizenship, later a selection process known as the dilectus. It also became paid service. Military service also became an avenue towards citizenship later on.
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For most of its history, Roman army was based on its legions. A legion varied in strength from 4,000 to 6,000 men, and was subdivided onto ten cohorts. Its leader used the title of legatus. His staff officers were called tribuni. Senior non-commissioned officers were called centurions, who varied greatly in rank. The soldiers of the legion were picked men: They were all Roman citizens and received a higher pay than the auxiliary troops - that is, foreigners who serve with the Roman army.

A legion consisted of heavily armored infantry (foot soldiers). The Roman infantry became a feared force, well disciplined and well trained. Their weapons were two pilum or javelins each and a short thrusting gladius or sword. Cavalry was supplied by the auxiliaries (second line troops) and was organized mainly in units 500 strong.

The river valley civilizations, for example, paled in comparison with the military might and economy of one of the most efficient military behemoths of all time: the Roman Empire. Military spending was the largest item of public spending throughout Roman history. All Roman governments, similar to Athens during the time of Pericles, had problems in gathering enough revenue. Therefore, for example in the third century A.D. Roman citizenship was extended to all residents of the empire in order to raise revenue, as only citizens paid taxes. There were also other constraints on their spending, such as technological, geographic, and other productivity concerns. Direct taxation was, however, regarded as a dishonor, only to be extended in crisis times. Thus, taxation during most of the empire remained moderate, consisting of extraordinary taxes (so-called liturgies in ancient Athens) during such episodes. During the first two centuries of empire, the Roman army had about 150,000 to 160,000 legionnaires, in addition to 150,000 other troops, and during the first two centuries of empire soldiers' wages began to increase rapidly to ensure the army's loyalty. For example, in republican and imperial Rome military wages accounted for more than half of the revenue.

http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/eloranta.military
Roman Engineering:

The Romans put a great deal of emphasis on engineering and building infrastructure. Roman engineering led to the building of some remarkable engineering feats that have survived to this day throughout western Europe - be they roads, theaters, baths or Hadrian’s Wall. Engineering was used as a way of improving the lifestyle of the Romans even on day-to-day issues such as a frequent water supply.

Roman aqueduct:

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/roman_engineering.htm
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The Romans used the ideas of the Ancient Greeks to implement their own engineering plans. The whole issue of supplying Rome with water was solved using a system of 640 kilometers (roughly 398 miles) of aqueducts. The aqueduct at Segovia in Spain is 60 meters high in places. The fact that it has survived so long and in its current condition is testament to the engineering skills of the Romans. Another classic example of Rome’s engineering skill has to be the numerous Roman roads that still exist all over western Europe.

The famous Appian Way:

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A good road system also made it easier for the emperors to control their empire as messages and orders could be sent quickly. Roman roads were famed for being straight and well made. However, the Romans usually built roads around a natural obstacle rather than go through it.

Hadrian’s Wall is 117 kilometers (roughly 73 miles) long and is built in stone. In places it is six meters high and three meters wide - enough for two soldiers to do sentry duty side-by-side. Every Roman mile (about 1500 meters) a mile-castle was built which housed twenty soldiers. Turrets guarded by soldiers were built every 500 meters. Major forts such as the one at Housesteads, were built along the wall at every eight kilometers. These could accommodate between 500 and 1000 Roman soldiers. Housesteads had a hospital, granary, barracks, workshop and washroom/toilets built. Soldiers always had a reasonable supply of food. A Roman road called the Stanegate was built to supply the soldiers based at Hadrian’s Wall.

All the building was done by the Roman soldiers themselves. They were trained to do this and the army had its own skilled engineers who designed the wall. That so much of the Wall has survived is a testament to their building skills.
Romans built atmospheric pressure aqueducts and hydrostatic pressure aqueducts, which brought water over arches around the hills, drilling mountains, running on bridges and ditches, viaducts and earth platforms to maintain the regular downflow even if the distance became very long. Hydrostatic pressure aqueducts brought water pipelines, to surmount gradients and to put water in distributions system under-ground in the cities.

Famous Colosseum:
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The Roman Forum:

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Circus Maximus:
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ORIGINS OF DECLINE:

- Decay
- Financial Problems
- The Dole and Barbarians
- Economic, Military, Gradual
- Christianity
- Vandals and Religious Controversy
- Division of the Empire
- Lead
- Hoarding and Deficit

http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/romefallarticles/a/fallofrome.htm

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Emperor Diocletian in AD 286 split the empire into east and west, and appointed a Dalmatian colleague, Maximian (d. AD 305), to rule the west and Africa. This division was an acknowledgement of the de facto division that existed already.

The traditional date of the fall of the Roman Empire is September 4, 476 when Romulus Augustus, the Emperor of the Western Roman Empire was deposed. However, many historians question this date, and use other benchmarks to describe the "Fall". Why the Empire fell seems to be relevant to every new generation, and a seemingly endless supply of theories are discussed on why it happened, or indeed if it happened at all.

For more, see e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decline_of_the_Roman_Empire
THE SACK(S) OF ROME:

The city of Rome (=West Rome) has been sacked on several occasions, such as:

- **387 BC**: Battle of the Allia - Rome is sacked by the Gauls
- **410 AD**: Sack of Rome - Rome is sacked by Alaric, King of the Visigoths
- **455**: Rome is sacked by Geiseric, King of the Vandals
- **546**: Rome is sacked and depopulated by Totila, King of the Ostrogoths, during the war between the Ostrogoths and the Byzantines
Alaric’s sack of Rome in 410:

Five questions. Getting three right = attendance. Getting five right = automatic half a point of extra credit.

1. How did Rome support its emperor and central government? [A] they couldn’t support the government—this is why Rome fell [B] booty from conquered lands—mostly in the Middle East [C] very high taxes [D] newly instituted taxes on merchants [E] taxes from provinces like Gaul (France) and Egypt

2. Roman technological expertise is evident in: [A] building fleets of boats called junks” and pioneering sea routes to Asia. [B] their invention of gunpowder. [C] the invention of the water wheel. [D] compositions of symphonies as well as the invention of the violin. [E] engineering roads, aqueducts, concrete, and arches.

3. From the reign of Augustus, the Roman army was reorganized and redeployed to [A] allow non-Romans into the military. [B] shift from an offensive to a defensive strategy. [C] face the threat from the Parthian Empire. [D] invade Russia. [E] fight several civil wars against other Romans.

4.

5.
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ANY QUESTIONS ON TODAY’S LECTURE?
ANYTHING ELSE?