European Discovery and the Conquest of America
Native Culture

Ancient land bridge and migration over centuries

At time of Eur. Discovery -> perhaps 54 million?; 2000 distinct languages? Thousands of peoples or nations?

*think “Europe”*

Differences and tensions between Indian groups

Just like today, variations in cultures

Some aggressive, others quite passive

Few alliances

Geography determines culture (truism)
A Susquehanna Indian Warrior.

Routes of the First Americans

- Possible migration routes
- Glaciated areas
- Present day shorelines
- Land areas

PACIFIC OCEAN

Siberia

Beringia

Continental Glaciation

Rocky Mountains

Route of the First Americans
European Motivation and Ability to Explore

A pent up desire from feudalism
Closed system opened through merchant class
Crusaders bring back eastern goods to Europe
Marco Polo et. al. changed the world for Europe
Eastern goods opened up the society
Exploration would be “market-driven”
Desire fueled innovations in sea science

The moveable sail (caravel from Arabia)
The Astrolabe (a rough measurement of latitude)
The Sextant (more accurate lat. measurement)
Spain and Portugal out early in this effort
Spain wanted to trade and dominate
Shorter, safer, cheaper route to Asia
Portugal led in navigation technologies
Prince Henry the Navigator
School for sea captains

Bartholomeo Diaz travels to bottom of Africa
Vasco de Gamma makes it to India and back

Cristoforo Colombo looked for shortest route
Goes WEST to head EAST
Explorations sponsored by Prince Henry of Portugal
At the time of his death in 1460, Portuguese sailors had reached Liberia.
Trade Routes with the East
Columbus

- Searching for a shorter route
- He convinced the new King and Queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, to sponsor the voyage
- He was not trying to prove that the earth was round (most learned people knew this already)
- Rather, he was attempting to show that the westward voyage was not a suicide mission because the earth was really smaller than most people believed
Columbus’s view of the world
The accurate view of the world
The Columbian Exchange

The Columbian Exchange refers to the widespread exchange of plant and animal species, as well as diseases, between the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia. This exchange had profound effects on both the natural environments and societies of the affected regions. Examples of plants exchanged include potatoes, tobacco, and tomatoes from the Americas to Europe and Asia, and tomatoes, potatoes, and tobacco from Europe and Asia to the Americas. The exchange also included the spread of diseases such as smallpox from Europe to the Americas, which had devastating effects on indigenous populations.
Worlds collide

- Old World diseases devastated New World natives
  - New World had lost Old World diseases and natives had lost antibodies to fight these diseases
  - Deadliest killer of natives was disease not actions of conquering Europeans (although enslavement and armed attacks did kill many)
  - 90% of the Indians in Americas in 1492 died in the centuries after Columbus
    - Demographic catastrophe without parallel in human history
    - Most of the dead had never laid eyes on Europeans because one Indian who met European traders could infect the rest of the tribe
Treaty of Tordesillas, 1494
Spanish Efforts

Cultural Exploitation

Bringing Christianity and Spanish culture to “savages”

Behind the warriors were the priests

Warriors = Cortez, Pizzaro, Coronado
Priests = Jesuits

Unimaginable wealth

Silver and gold

New warehouse ships (galleons) designed
THE SPANISH CONQUISTADORS

- Ponce de Leon (1519)
- Florida
- Francisco de Montejo (1527-32)
- Cuba
- Diego Velasquez (1511-14)
- Jamaica
- Nicholas de Ovando (1502-08)
- Hispaniola
- Puerto Rico
- Ponce de Leon (1508)
- Mexico
- Herman Cortes (1519-27)
- Yucatan
- Juan de Esquivel (1509)
- Hispaniola
- Cristobal de Olid (1524-25)
- Jamaica
- Antonio de Berrio (1592)
- Trinidad
- Hernández de Córdoba (1524)
- Honduras
- Pedro de Alvarado (1524-27)
- Nicaragua
- Núñez de Balboa (1513)
- Panama
- Venezuela
- Alonso de Ojeda (1510)
Ferdinand Magellan, 1519-1522
Juan Ponce De Leon
Hernando de Soto

De Soto's Explorations

1. May 1539: Expedition leaves Havana, Cuba
2. May 1539: Expedition lands near present-day Tampa Bay, Florida
3. June 1541: Expedition crosses the Mississippi River
4. May 1542: De Soto dies from fever; Expedition led by Moscoso
5. October 1542: Expedition returns to the Mississippi River
Incan and Aztec Empires, ca. 1500

The Aztec and Inca, c. 1500

- Aztec
- Inca
Francisco Pizarro

From 1524 to 1534, Pizarro probed the coast, found the Inca Empire, and took Cuzco.

First expedition 1524-5
Second expedition 1526-8
Third expedition 1530-4
The Conquest of Aztec Mexico

1519 – Hernán Cortés sailed from Cuba to Mexico to conquer Aztecs

- 16 fresh horses and several hundred men

On Yucatán Peninsula

- Rescued a Spanish castaway who had been enslaved by Mayans (and understood Mayan) and a female Indian slave who knew both Mayan and Nahuatl (language of the Aztec empire)

- Cortés now had advantage of superior firepower and ability to understand speech of the Indians he was about to conquer
Cortez Explorations
Meeting of Cortez and Montezuma
Tenochtitlán
Conquest of Tenochtitlán
1521 – smallpox epidemic; Aztecs surrender

Temples destroyed; Catholic cathedrals erected

Mexico City built over the ruins of Tenochtitlan

Spanish and native cultures intermarry, mix

New culture of “mestizos”

Mexican culture retains a mix of Old and New Worlds
Spanish & Portuguese empires, 1610
Principal voyages of discovery
Spain’s North American frontier
Pueblo Indians
“Black Legend”

- Spanish misdeeds led to rise of “Black Legend”
  - False idea that Spanish tortured and butchered the Indians (“killing for Christ”), stole their gold, infected them with smallpox, and left only misery behind
  - Legend popularized by anti-Catholic Protestants in Europe
  - Spanish did kill, enslave, infect countless natives, but this was not a systematic slaughter (like the Holocaust)
  - Spain also brought some benefits to natives such as technology, law, culture, religion
  - Natives brought some benefits to Spanish, including the fact that the Spanish intermarried with natives and fused native cultures into their own
“The Black Legend”