AMSCO Chapter 16

The Americas in the Early Colonial Period

1. Columbian Exchange – widespread sharing of animals, plants, cultures, ideas, technologies, and diseases between Afro-Eurasia and the Americas that started with Christopher Columbus in 1492
2. European Interests in the Americas
3. Columbus was looking for a new way to Asia
4. When the Spanish encountered the Aztecs and the Incas, they saw the gold and silver that eventually drove exploration, conquest and settlement in the new world
5. Interaction of Cultures
6. Superior weaponry and disease enabled the Europeans to conquer and decimate native populations, eventually enslaving and converting those who remained
7. Why did the Europeans Want to Explore? (Gold, Glory, and God)
8. Search for new trade routes to Asia that would detour around the Mediterranean
9. Compass, astrolabe, caravel all allowed sailors to travel farther and faster
10. Christian duty to convert new Christians
11. Search for silver and gold
12. Diseases and Demographic Catastrophe
13. Native Americans had no exposure to diseases of Europeans; disease, along with horses, gunpowder, and metal weapons enabled Europeans to conquer natives
14. Conquistadores like Pizarro, Cortes and Columbus brought smallpox, measles and influenza which killed off groups like the Taino of the Caribbean
15. Columbian Exchange
16. New crops and livestock moved in both directions
17. Pigs, cattle, wheat, grapes all came from Europe, along with mosquitos and rats
18. Maize, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peppers and cacao went to Europe, increasing the food supply and the population
19. Enslaved Africans brought okra and rice to the Americas, while tobacco and cacao went to Africa and the Middle East in exchange for slaves
20. Economic Changes
21. Encomienda system forced local peoples to work for landowners in exchange for food and shelter
22. Silver in Mexico and Peru led to major silver mining industry, which used mit’a system where young men had to work a certain amount of time on public projects and villages were forced to send the young men to work in mines
23. Policies of mercantilism and the infusion of silver from the New World made Spain very powerful, and enabled them to build a strong navy
24. Trade Across the Pacific – Spanish galleons (ships) brought silver from Mexico to China, where it became a form of currency
25. Sugar
26. Portuguese focused on sugar plantations in Brazil; natives either died or escaped, so African slaves were brought to work
27. Transatlantic slave trade developed as a result of demand for laborers; very poor working conditions on sugar plantations resulted in 5-10% death of workers
28. Led to pursuit of other cash crops like tobacco
29. Political Changes
30. Fall of Aztec Empire
31. Aztecs already had many enemies in the region
32. Hernan Cortes exploited this, and those conquered the Aztecs by 1521; smallpox killed thousands in the capital of Tenochtitlan; Cortes founded New Spain and began to send gold back to Spain
33. Mexico City was built on the ruins of the Aztec capital
34. Demise of the Incan Empire
35. Pizarro conquered Incas, their ruler Atahualpa and their 12 million citizens
36. Established a colonial capital at Lima
37. Other regions of the Americas
38. Treaty of Torsedillas of 1494 divided the Americas between Spain and Portugal, as per the Pope
39. Pedro Menendez de Avila established St. Augustine fort in Florida in 1565
40. Colonial Administration – Spanish and Portuguese viceroys administered the colonies for the kings; audiencias (royal courts) provided a place for Spanish settlers to appeal viceroy decisions, but most details were decided localy
41. Creoles (children of parents from Spain or Portugal) came to dominate the colonies and lobby for independence
42. Cultural and Social Changes
43. Earlier empires like Rome or Mongols either allowed local traditions to remain or created a combination of local and new traditions; Spain and Portugal destroyed local cultures completely
44. Cultural Changes
45. Conquistadores burned native books and documents as unholy, very few remain from native viewpoint
46. Spanish priest Bernardino de Sahagun wrote Florentine Codex, detailing Aztec life
47. Spanish and Portuguese (in Brazil) replaced local languages
48. Religion in Latin America
49. Dominican, Jesuit and Franciscan religious orders all sent missionaries to convert natives to Christianity
50. Religious syncretism (blending of religions with native beliefs) developed such as Vodun, Santeria and Candomble
51. Social Changes
52. African slave labor new to society, mixed with European and indigenous peoples, resulting in hierarchy
53. Peninsulares – born in Europe
54. Creoles – born in New World of European parents
55. Mestizos – European and indigenous
56. Mulattoes – European and African
57. Zambos – indigenous and African
58. Racial and ethnic backgrounds determined social status in Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the New World
59. French Colonies
60. Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence river near today’s US border with Canada
61. French also looking for gold, established Quebec as a trading post, and began to trade in fur
62. Missionaries established schools
63. Lasalle explored the Great Lakes and travelled down the Mississippi, claiming what is now Louisiana for France
64. French did not settle in large towns, but rather traded with trappers along the way, so they had better relations with the Indians
65. English Colonies
66. In 1497 John Cabot sailed from England an tried to claim lands in Newfoundland, but encountered Spanish naval forces until the Spanish Armada was defeated by the British Army
67. In 1607 around 100 English settled in what is now Virginia in Jamestown.
68. London Company (joint stock company) owned Jamestown but it was not profitable, built on a swamp, many died from disease
69. By 1620 the settlers were growing the native crop tobacco, which led to the establishment for more plantations in Virginia, causing natives to attack until peace reached in 1640s.
70. Indentured servitude developed in North America, as someone who contracted to work without pay for several years received passage to America; first African Americans came as indentured servants, but Virginia law changed to establish slavery in southern states, while indentured servitude was more common in the north.
71. Dutch Experience
72. 1609 Henry Hudson sailed up Hudson River and established settlement on island of Manhattan called New Amsterdam; traded furs and tobacco back to Netherlands for manufactured goods; 1664 the English took over New Amsterdam, but many Dutch settlers stayed
73. Environmental Impact – Europeans used land more intensely than natives, cutting down large areas of trees to create farms which were cultivated year after year, leading to deforestation and soil depletion