**Decline and Fall of Empires**

Nine major factors led to the decline of the classical empires

– Dynastic Succession

– Bureaucratic Corruption

– Inequitable Economic Burdens

– Regional, Racial, or Ethnic Tension

– Decline of Martial Sprit

– Moral Decline

– Escapist or Otherworldly Religions

– Costly Technology

– External Enemies

**Reasons for the Fall of the Han Empire**

* Social:
  + Landholding elite held all of the power
  + Disease--several devastating epidemics that wiped out nearly half the population
* Political:
  + Political fighting between eunuchs, Confucian scholars and nobles, concubines and wives
  + Government corruption and bribery
  + Power in the hands of local landholders and governors (decentralization)
  + The bureaucracy became corrupt and the power of the central government weakened.
  + Local landlords became more powerful as government control and supervision declined.
  + Because of no centralized power, China was vulnerable
  + Could not control all lands conquered
* Political and Social:
  + Only wealthy elite could gain political position
* Cultural
  + Challenged by arrival of Buddhism
* Economic:
  + - Crop failure, flooding
    - -9 million die
  + Failure to implement land reform
  + Higher land rents and more taxes

**Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire**

* Social:
  + Invasions from Germanic tribes
  + The expansion of slavery
  + Decline in Roman civic duty
  + Moral decay
  + The decline of patriotism
* Cultural
  + State not united by religion or philosophy
  + Divided by language
    - Latin in west, Greek in east
  + Christianity challenges traditional Roman institutions
  + Reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire
* Economic:
  + Dependence on foreign products—trade imbalance
  + Traditional work ethic declined
  + Decline of cities’ infrastructure
  + Trade deficit
  + The high cost of military, welfare and government
  + Class economic warfare between rich and poor
  + Unequal taxation
  + high tax burden on a population that was decreasing because of plague and poverty
  + The small farm disappears
  + High unemployment (bread and circuses) and no stake in economic system
* Political:
  + Problems of succession (the next emperor)
  + Empire became too large for the government, and reform came too little and too late
  + Government became dominated by the rich and military elites
  + Citizens lost their interest in the government
  + Required more soldiers to patrol its borders and frontiers
  + The military lost its prestige

**Reasons for the Fall of the Gupta Empire**

* Political
  + Gupta Empire was not as centralized as the Mauryans under Ashoka.
  + They remained divided into regions where local politicians made most of the laws and decisions. When the Huns attacked, the empire easily fell apart along the fault lines of the local regions.
  + Inability to centralize the Raj princes—local raja’s revolted and fought among themselves
  + Because of decentralization, no Indian leaders to unify the subcontinent
  + Hun invaders from the North—Huns establish kingdoms (but will assimilate into India)