Physical Geography of China

- China is large & has varied geographic features
- Mountain Ranges:
  - Qinling Shandian
    - Runs East & West
    - Separates Huang & Chang Rivers
  - Himalayas mark south western border
- China Proper
  - Stretches from East China Sea inward to mountains
  - Includes three great river systems
    - Huang River (Yellow)
    - Chang River (Yangtze)
    - Xi
- Gobi Desert lies to the north
- Climate varies greatly
  - Mountains regions have generally cold climate
  - Northern part of China has short growing season
The Rivers of China

- **Huang River**
  - Also called the Yellow River
  - Stretches 2,900 miles
  - Fertile river valley
    - Yellow soil called loess
  - Prone to devastating floods
    - Built dikes to control flooding
    - Dikes caused silt to build up in river forcing water levels higher
    - River sits 12ft above surrounding land, dikes all that holds river in

- **Chang River**
  - Also known as the **Yangtze**
  - Flows 3,343 miles
  - Lower river an important commercial waterway
  - Cuts through deep gorges (valleys)
  - **Three Gorges Dam:**
    - largest dam construction project ever attempted
    - Will create largest man-made lake in world
    - Huge environmental & archeological cost

- **Xi River**
  - 1,200 miles long
  - Important commercial waterway
The Shang Dynasty

- **Xia**
  - A line of kings who ruled over the early Chinese people
  - Name by which early Chinese people are classed
    - Developed written symbolic language
    - Little centralized government
      - No organized system of irrigation or flood control

- **Shang invaders took over Huang River Valley**
  - Developed methods of irrigation & flood control
  - Empire would stretch over 40,000 miles

- **Government**
  - Created a highly organized bureaucracy
  - Hereditary line of kings (The Shan)
  - Well organized military

- **Economy:**
  - Based mostly on agriculture
  - Developed silk industry
  - Artisan class developed
The Shang Dynasty: Culture

• **Scientific Advancements**
  - Used two calendars:
    • Lunar: used for personal and public record keeping
    • Solar: used by early astronomers to ensure lunar calendar met the 365 day requirement

• **Religion**
  - Believed that spirits inhabit everything (**animism**)  
  - Believed in a great dragon spirit that inhabited the rivers and seas
  - Worshiped the spirits that controlled the elements
  - **Shangdi**: the god who controlled human destiny
  - Priests practiced divination
    • Attempts to foretell the future
    • Oracle bones: priests would read the interpret the cracks created when the bones were fired

• **Language & Writing**
  - Many varied dialects
  - Created a character language that could apply to all dialects
  - Reading & writing limited only to those who worked for the king
  - Writing developed into the art of **calligraphy**
The Zhou Dynasty

- Ruled from 1050 BC - 256 BC
- Government:
  - Not centralized/no organized bureaucracy
  - Created Feudal System
    - Divided China into territories
    - Territories ruled by the different branches of the Royal family
    - Territory leaders pledged loyalty & military service to Zhou kings
  - “Mandate of Heaven”
    - Right to rule came from the god of Heaven
- Fall of the Zhou Dynasty
  - Territorial leaders fought amongst selves
  - Attacked by outside invaders
  - Zhou rulers lost power,
    - territories ruled independently of the kings
    - Zhou kings said to have lost the “Mandate of Heaven”
The Qin Dynasty

- **Founded by Cheng**
  - Known as the “first emperor”
  - Capital moved to Xian
  - Lasted only 15 years but had lasting effect on Chinese culture & history

- **Government:**
  - Established an autocratic government
  - Emperor had total power
  - Suppressed education
  - Executed people who spoke against the gov.

- **Great Wall of China**
  - Built to protect China from Mongol invaders
  - During Qin Dynasty, 1,500 miles completed
  - Used forced labor to build wall

- **Fall of the Qin Dynasty**
  - Rebel army revolted against gov
  - Liu Bang, a Qin general, overthrew empire
The Han Dynasty

- Founded by Liu Bang, King of Han
- Government:
  - Centralized, beaucratic government
  - Expanded the Chinese empire
  - Favored Han leader was Liu Ch’e, also known as Wu Ti
    - Moved capital to Ch’ang-an
    - Expanded empire into Manchuria & Korean Peninsula
  - Created a civil service system
    - A way of running the day-to-day business of the gov.
    - People who wanted to work for the empire took a test
    - Created well-trained gov workers
- Major Achievements:
  - Created “leveling” system to control prices on food
  - Silk Road
    - Trade route that stretched across China into Mediterranean Region
    - Traded silks, jade, and other goods for gold, silver, wool, etc
  - Spread paper to the western world
  - Population grew to 50 million
Ancient Chinese Beliefs

• Chinese history is marked by conflict & instability
  – Chinese beliefs center around restoring harmony

• Dualism
  – Nature is two sided
  – There must be a balance between two opposing forces
    • Yin
      – Female
      – Dark
      – passive
    • Yang
      – Male
      – Bright
      – Active

  – Forces not in conflict, but dependant on each other
  – Conflict is a result of loss of balance
Confucianism

• Confucius was a leading philosopher during Zhou period

• Teachings collected in the *Analects*
  – Concerned with causes of political and social unrest

• Confucius Says…
  – Every person should accept his/her role in society
  – Government & its leaders should be ethical/virtuous
    • Leaders should be most concerned w/ welfare of people, not self
    • Virtue is correct behavior toward others
  – Social institutions should be respected
    • Family most important social institution
    • Respect the elderly
    • Revere the past and one’s ancestors
Daoism

- Founded by Laozi
- Ideas compiled in the Dao De Jing
- Dao
  - an indescribable force that governs the universe
  - Known as “the Way”
- Central Ideas:
  - People should withdraw from the world
  - Peace comes by contemplating nature
  - Do not seek material wealth
  - Harmony comes by being humble, quiet, & thoughtful
Chinese Buddhism

• Buddhism brought from India during Han Dynasty
  – End of Han dynasty marked by violence
  – Peasants felt Buddhism explained why the unrest occurred

• Basic Beliefs of Chinese Buddhism:
  – China practices Mahayana Buddhism
    • Believe Buddha was a savior
    • Buddha to save people from misery of the world
  – Emphasis on charity & compassion

• Confucianism, Daoism, & Buddhism all discuss balance & harmony, key in China’s