“Hemispheres Colliding” Reading Questions

Directions: Read Chapter 18, “Hemispheres Colliding,” and respond to the following questions in sentences. The reading is found online at “Meinhart History.”

1. What was the largest and most complex society found in the Western Hemisphere in the decades just after 1492? Who was the leader of this empire? What European power led to this empire’s downfall?

2. What is the main question Jared Diamond seeks to answer in this chapter?

3. What was the “most glaring difference between Native American and Eurasian food production” according to Diamond?

4. How many species of large domesticated animals did Eurasia have? How many were found in the Americas?

5. For what types of activities are llamas ill suited?
6. What is the benefit to a society that has many large domesticated animals? For what activities did Eurasia use these animals?

7. Diamond explains that there was less productive agricultural activity in the Americas before Columbus as compared to Eurasia. What disadvantages does he list to explain the less successful nature of American agriculture compared to Eurasia?

8. Following disparities in food production, what were the “resulting proximate factors” that contributed to the success of European conquests in the Americas?

9. Why were the immunities and germ resistance of Europeans stronger than that of Native Americans?

10. What were the reasons for Eurasia’s more advanced technologies?
11. How did Eurasian societies use wheels as compared to those in the Americas?

12. What differences in political organizations were found between Eurasia and the Americas?

13. What capability allowed for Eurasian bureaucracies to accomplish more than their Native American counterparts? What system allowed the Incas to communicate at a basic level?

14. What was the first documented attempt of Eurasia to colonize the Americas? Why was it a failure?

15. Why was the second attempt at western hemispheric colonization successful?

16. What methods, both intentional and unintentional, did the Spanish use to conquer the Aztec and Inca?
17. By what percentage did the Europeans reduce North America’s population after Columbus?

18. What is the total human population of the Americas now-post 1492? Why?