The World before Islam

A picture of late antiquity
The Sasanian and Byzantine Empires
Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean

- Legacy of Rome and Hellenization
- The Urban Landscape
- Rise of the Church
- Problems with Barbarians
Contestations in Christianity

Monophysites and Diophysites
The Relationship with the Arabs
Sasanians as the standard bearers of Near Eastern Civilization

- Control of trade with the East
- Diversity of religious traditions
- Princely elites and court life
- Symbol of the Orient?

Ctesiphon
Ghassanids and Lakhmids
Arab proxies for the two empires
Arabia: A new player on the world stage

- Religious context – monotheism and polytheism
- Emergence of state structures
- Interconnections with the outside world
- Tribal politics and the notion of *assabiya* or “group solidarity”