Augustan Stability and the Making of a Ruling Class

a. Augustan age = British poetry and politics of mid-18th century
b. The Age of Augustus was an imperial age; aristocrats of Britain saw themselves as a definite ruling class (control as courtiers, H. of Lords, patronage, and pocket boroughs)
c. Class often defined in terms of economics (wealth or relation to ownership of means of production): can also be defined in terms of relation to the wielding of power
d. As Parliament sessions became more regular, Parliament became the main avenue to political power (not the Court, not the localities)
i. change in meaning/features of elections before and after Septennial Act (1716):
   (1) pocket boroughs
   (2) rotten boroughs
   (3) MPs increasingly interested in career advancement
   (4) Unreformed England as an Ancien Regime explain

2. A Disjointed Empire

a. Stuart Visions of Empire
i. East India Company, chartered by Elizabeth, 1600
ii. Royal African Company, directed by James duke of York
iii. New York → Dominion of New England
b. Regions
i. West Indies (jewel of the first empire)
ii. American mainland
iii. Africa and Asia
c. Wars
i. 9 Years
ii. Spanish Succession
iii. Jenkins’ Ear/Austrian Succession
iv. 7 Years/French and Indian

3. Old Corruption I: Walpole as Prime Minister

a. South Sea Bubble and Rise
i. Origins: South Sea Co. formed 1711, a Tory/landed interest response to the Whig/moneyed interest Bank of England
ii. Bubble: South Sea Co. stock rises with new scheme of new stock to be issued based on market values; thus, if stock market value rises, less stock issued for same money
iii. Crisis and Walpole: resigned position in government in 1717; only returned June 1720; had not organized scheme and tried to buy stock in Aug. (but banker would not let him)
b. Management of King, Lords, and Commons
i. Prime Minister?; Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer = money positions, but not sole source of power
ii. attacked in Gay, The Beggars Opera
iii. management of:
   (1) Commons–placemen and wooing the country gentleman
   (2) Lords–Church patronage and new titles
   (3) King(s)
iv. Assessment: Old Corruption or Origins of Stability?

4. Old Corruption 2: The Fall of Walpole

a. War of Jenkins's Ear
i. smuggling (and mercantilism)
ii. boarding of Capt. Robert Jenkins' ship, 1731 (Spanish coast guards looking for contraband/cash–off Jamaica)
iii. legacy: control house of Commons, control bills of spending, control the government (something that later George III, with lack of training in the British system [at least practical training] did not learn)
b. Pitt and the Pelhams ("the Patriot" versus the "Old Corps" Whigs, 1740s-1760s)
   i. Whig oligarchy or the Robinocracy continued
   ii. from "that horrid electorate" to "conquering America in Germany"
   iii. Pitt and the Seven Years' War