

Justinian Code v. Present Laws

“Things which are common to all and not capable of being owned are:
the air, running water, the sea, and the seashores.”

-Justinian Code

Laws about	Justinian Code	American Laws
Women's Rights	All women can own property, make contracts and will, and bring a lawsuit.	All women can own property, make contracts and wills, bring a lawsuit. Women are guaranteed the same right as men.
Robbery	Robbery was not a crime. The victim could sue the robber for up to four times the values of the stolen property.	Robbery is a crime and is punishable by a fine and/ or a prison sentence.
Failure to pay debts	People owed something had to the person owing them to gain debt back.	People owed something had to the person owing them to gain debt back.
Murder	Murder was punished by banishment	Murder is punished by a prison sentence or death.
Inheritance	Women could not inherit property from their husbands unless it was provided in a will. Children received equal amounts of the father's estate.	Standard law allows wives and children to divide an estate. Other directions can be provided for in a will.

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the chart.

- 1.) How are the rights of women similar under the Justinian Code and current American law?
- 2.) What is the difference in the treatment of robbery between the two law systems?
- 3.) Under which law system could women benefit most from an inheritance? Why?
- 4.) Which current law has basically unchanged when compared to the Justinian Code?
- 5.) Which legal system is “softer” on murderers?
- 6.) Why was the Justinian Code “new” and somewhat “radical” for the time it was introduced in 533 A.D.?

