Unit 1:2, 14th Century Crises

1. The Black Death
   1. Causes
      1. Bubonic plague
      2. Was carried by fleas on Asian black rats and brought to Europe on ships returning from Asian trade.
      3. Overcrowding in cities and homes facilitated the spread of the disease
      4. Many aristocratic families slept in one room and many prosperous peasant families slept in one bed for warmth; less prosperous peasants were even worse off.
      5. Poor Sanitation in cities
         1. garbage filled
         2. rat infested
         3. No sanitation: sewers, etc.
      6. The Little Ice Age
         1. Temperatures fell around 10° on average
         2. Made for crop failures and malnutrition
         3. This lowered immune systems and made people more susceptible to disease
         4. Poor hygiene: not only did people fear to drink the water because they thought it was contaminated, but they feared to bathe in it as well. This point can be exaggerated however.
   2. Results
      1. Loss of ⅓ Europe’s population
         1. In some places, e.g. Florence, ½ of the population was killed.
         2. Economy in towns suffered (less so in rural areas)
      2. The plague did not create the economic decline, only made it worse.
         1. The plague created a breakdown in trade
      3. Cyclical Famine
         1. Poor Crops lead to worse plague, fewer workers, poor crops, poor health, fewer workers etc.
      4. Labor shortages
         1. Led to high wages, eventually the nobility refuse to pay, led to peasant revolts
      5. Inflation
   3. Social impact
      1. Serfdom ended in many areas in western Europe, it simply was no longer possible
      2. Peasant revolts in England and France (originally over taxation)
      3. 80% of the parish priests died
      4. Spike in Anti-Semitism
      5. Literature and art reflected pessimism
         1. The Dance of Death
         2. Morbid fascination with Death
      6. The Population would not recover in numbers for nearly 200 years.
2. The Hundred Years War
   1. Causes
      1. Rival claims on the French throne.
      2. English kings had married French noblewomen, who brought control of French lands to the English crown
      3. English kings also became heirs to the French throne
      4. French royals attempted to prevent this through the implementation of the Salic Law
      5. French kings began confiscating lands controlled by the English crown
   2. The War
      1. Most of the war was fought in France and the Low Countries
      2. Only intermittently fought, the war was off and on
      3. By 1415, the major battles had been won by England and Paris itself was now threatened
      4. Burgundy, France’s eastern neighbor also threatened and allied with England
   3. Joan of Arc
      1. French peasant girl begins to have visions of the Saints etc.
      2. She seemed to fulfill an old French prophecy
      3. She persuaded the king to allow her to lead troops.
      4. In 1429, she the French army to victory at Orléans during a crucial stage of the war
      5. The French heir to the throne was crowned as a result, and the government was thus strengthened
      6. Joan was betrayed by her French supporters, captured by the Burgundians, sold to the English, tried for witchcraft and burned at the stake in 1431
   4. Results
      1. France permanently removed England from France, except for Calais
      2. The Struggles of war began to modernization of state building in France and England
      3. Peasant Revolts
         1. Causes, taxation during the Hundred Years War,
         2. Desire for higher wages
         3. Higher expectations of freedom and independence from the peasantry
      4. English peasant revolt (1381)
         1. Largest revolt as many as 100,000 involved
         2. Not successful
         3. Revolts crushed but did lead to the end of old feudalism in England about 170 years later
3. Crisis in the Church
   1. Background