

Friday, September 16, 2011  
HST111  
1 hour Lecture

- the starting period around 1350 that starts of the period very badly
  - a terrible event, one of the worst in European history
  - medieval warming period led to prosperity because of agriculture success
    - areas further north were also able to grow crops
  - beginning in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, climate changes again
    - warming period was over, and Europe entered what climatologists call the “Little Ice Age”
      - cool and wet
      - not good for growing crops
    - led to disaster as agriculture began to collapse, that huge population of about 70 million that had been growing was suddenly without adequate food supplies
      - many starved
      - people were desperate for food
- by the early 14<sup>th</sup> century
  - many were starving, and those who weren't, were malnourished
  - left people who were malnourished and starving open to disease, many perished
- by the 1340s rumours were beginning to spread around Europe of great catastrophes in the East
  - of great floods, earthquakes, and a great disease that was killing many people
  - most people were interested, a bit concerned, but was not very worry some
  - eventually this disease would come to Europe because they had vast trade networks to connected Europe to faraway places such as the places from which this disease came from
    - products came from the east and traded with middle eastern traders who traded with European traders
    - trade routes brought this new plague to Europe
- the plague first hit Europe in its greatest trading areas
  - Venice, Genoa
  - Italian merchants being on the Mediterranean sent their ships to the Middle Eastern ports, and also traded up into the black sea
    - traded for luxury items (spices, silk, jewels, gold, silver)
    - also traded for grain and other foods
    - carried these things to their port cities in Italian states
    - brought the plague
- 1347 was the first recorded instance in which a trading ship landed in Italy carrying this new disease in Sicily
  - the ship was full of infected sailors who dies one after the other
- wasn't long before other ships went to other ports
  - in January of 1348 three galleys pulled in at Genoa horribly infected
    - when Genoa habitants heard of this, the ship was driven away by burning arrows, and war techniques
    - citizens of port cities realized that ships coming from the East were dangerous

- they did not allow them to land, and so ships would re-route and go to other port cities
  - ships went from port to port and infecting more and more people
- The disease they carried had been given to them by a little flea that lived on black rats
  - all ships had rats on them
  - the rats came on the ships from the black sea and Mediterranean to Italy
  - fleas would jump to humans and infect them
  - once a human contracted the plague, then he or she could pass on the disease to another
    - coughing, sneezing, etc
  - two ways to spread it: fleas and human contact
  - as a result this disease spread very quickly
- Those who got the disease had swelling in the groin and armpits, spact blood, and dies withing 3 days
  - swellings oozed blood and pus and were followed by boils and black marks on the skin
    - people called it “The Plague”
  - horrible and very painful
  - those who were infected smelled very badly
  - not everyone who had it died, but mortality rate was very high
- Europeans wanted to determine how to avoid the disease
  - needed to know how it spread in the first place, Europeans didn’t know for sure
    - had some ideas
    - didn’t know about the fleas on the rats, but they did know about contact with infected persons, but didn’t know why
    - various theories were put forward
      - on physician declared that you could get the disease through eye contact
      - others say that the bad odours spread the disease
    - some people were quarantined (people were shut up in a building, so they weren’t looked at or smelled)
    - people began carrying around with the sweet smelling perfumes to prevent the odour from reaching them
  - also learned very quickly that those in crowded cities were more likely to be infected than those in less populated rural areas
    - many who lived in cities and towns fled and lived in the countryside
      - wealthy had this option
    - those who stayed in cities and towns tried to find ways of preventing the disease
- Laws were passed to prevent people from doing dirty things in public
  - a connection was made between sanitation and spreading of disease
  - pigs were no longer raised indoors, waste could not be dumped in yards
  - laws were passed so that houses with those who had the plague had t be boarded up with the people inside
    - even if 1 family member had it
  - restrictions on travel was also increased, especially from communities that did not have the plague
  - travelers were often rejected from entering towns or cities
  - funerals were mandated to be attended by only immediate family members
    - dead bodies at least 5 feet underground

- Europeans did not just sit around helplessly
  - searching for answers and trying to deal with this public health crisis
  - plague was too vast and they did not really understand what they could do to stop it
- Physicians did not actually know much, and were powerless to help
  - medical science did not exist
  - physicians who were university educated were educated by reading books of ancient physicians
  - ill equipped to deal with the plague
- Europeans realized that the medical profession had very little tools from dealing with illnesses
  - didn't stop people from going, because they had to try something, but did not expect to be completely cured
- Physicians tried to help
  - came up with all kinds of solutions that did not actually work
  - most doctors agreed that bloodletting was a good preventative measure
  - gold was considered a good medicine
- in the end there was nothing the doctors could do prevent or cure the plague
  - most people knew that
  - one honest physician (the pope's) admitted that nothing could be done
- Approximately 1/3 of Europeans died as a result of the plague
  - approximately 20 million in 4 years (70mill – 10mill/3)
- The plague burned itself out in
- The biggest cities were the hardest hit
  - Venice had 100k before and approximately 60k died (2/3)
- Immediate reaction to the plague was immense grief
  - everyone who was left undoubtedly knew someone who died as a result of the plague
  - some people went mad with grief
  - with so much grief and sadness, people wanted to know why
    - people began to ask why the plague had occurred
      - many theories put forward
      - one physician said it was because of planetary alignment
      - many believed that the plague had resulted from sinning
      - astrology
      - the south wind
    - ultimately, people believed that God was behind the plague
      - even though most suspect astrology, they believed that God was responsible for astrological activity
- People believed this, plus it had precedence (Biblical plague)
  - if God has brought this plagues as a punishment, what is the best way to get God to stop
    - pray, be religious, and repent
- There were lots of instances of people who did extraordinary things to try and show God that they were truly sorry for their sins
  - there were some people known as Flagellants, flagellated (whipped) themselves
  - groups of Flagellants had formed
    - there was nobody directing this, it was generally spontaneous formation
    - originally formed in Eastern Europe, but spread
  - these groups were fairly large (could be over 1000 people)

- they gather and march for 33.5 days
- marched two by two led by a master and two lieutenants who carries banners
- whips were tipped with iron spikes
- they would congregate in the town centre and whips themselves and throw themselves on the ground, and encouraged others to join
- if a flagellant died, there was a celebration
- flagellants were not encouraged by the church
  - church leadership was nervous and suspicious of these flagellants
  - so popular that they were concerned that they would be teaching doctrine not approved by the church
  - the pope denounced the flagellants as heretics
    - many ignored and joined these groups
- Not everyone believed in the same solution
  - many people believed that wild living was the solution
  - a vast minority
- there was a subversion of order that came out of the black plague