CourseNotes

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**Chapter 11 - Renaissance**

Renaissance Society

**Renaissance = re-birth of classical culture**

* the birth of a NEW spirit of self awareness
* sense of relief after a disastrous 14th century
* sense of self assertion & celebration of the human spirit / potential

1. Artistic achievement

Renaissance can be dated as 1350-1550, and broken down into three distinct phases:

* Phase 1: 1350-1400: declining population, rediscovery of classical knowledge
* Phase 2: 1400-1500: artistic / literary achievements, population recovered, govt. stabilized
* Phase 3: 1500-1550: Fr. / Sp. Invasions spread the Renaissance to all of Europe

**Environment:**

* Italian cities never totally disappeared as the had in the rest of Europe

1. Late Middle Ages Italian cities represented 25% of the population
2. By 1500 7/10 of the largest cities were Italian
3. Developed into City-States, cities function as centers of political and ecclesiastical power

* Countryside developed around the city
* Rural Society: Landownership / sharecropping distinguished the social structure (80% subsistence farmers)
* Urban Society: divided by occupation

1. Monopolies were standard (guilds)

* Economic change in the early Renaissance

1. Black Death
2. Over production, aggregate demand declined, prices declined, labor supply declined, wages increased

* standard of living increased for the poor
* wealthy consumption pattern became increasingly conspicuous (lack of motivation for investment, heightened sense of mortality)
* Consumption of luxuries placed a higher value on skilled craftsmen (creativity)

**Family Unit:**

* Primary economic unit, as well as a grouping of relatives

1. Marriage was a political / economic transaction

* Patronage, dowry and status were primary considerations

1. Men married in their thirties (social dysfunction), women in late teens
2. Married women lived in a constant state of pregnancy (family interests)

* Wealthy hired help, poor experienced high mortality rates

1. Life for the poor improved (but was still fairly terrible)
2. Health increased - due to increased grain supply relative to population and new foods
3. Starvation remained rare - died from disease before you could starve

**Renaissance Art**

* Art represented a combination of individual talent and predominate social ideals

1. Leading edge of society
2. Technical innovations - perspective & three dimensionality

* Driven by societal demands
* Civic architecture - govt.
* Portrait painting - reflected the importance of individuals (prestige)

1. Elite patronized the arts (investment & prestige) and the skill craftsmen (practical) whob produced it

Renaissance Art can be broken down into three mediums: Architecture, sculpture and painting

* Most artists worked in all three mediums

**Architecture:**

* Designed and built by Renaissance Artists (great buildings increased one's fame and prestige)

Middle Ages: Gothic Architecture, pointed arches, vaulted ceilings, slender spires, large windows, flying buttresses.

* Goal was to overwhelm the viewer with the power and might of god.

Renaissance: reincorporation of classical features

* Brunelleschi - combined gothic and classical architecture

1. Florence Cathedral

**Sculpture**

* Donatello: created a flowing sense of reality, especially in the robes and clothes of his subjects

1. Judith Slaying Holofernes (1455), demonstrated perspective and is free standing

**Painting**

* Massaccio: used light and shading to create perspective, increased the display of human emotion (the human experience became the subject of the painting)

1. The Expulsion of Adam and Eve (1425)
2. The Holy Trinity (1425)

* Piero Della Francesca

1. The Resurrection (1463) - displayed technical innovations

* Botticelli: famous for classical themes and bright colors

1. The Birth of Venus (1478)
2. Spring (1478)

* Leonardo da Vinci: Great master famous for observation of detail and use of perspective

1. The Last Supper (1495-98)
2. La Giocada (Mona Lisa)

* Michelangelo

1. Pieta: sculpture of Madonna, new representation
2. David: union of classical sculpture and Renaissance style
3. Sistine Chapel: overwhelming accomplishment, portrays a narative of the Christian creation myth
4. Saint Peter's Basilica: Begun by Bramante, finished by Michelangelo

**Renaissance Ideals**  
Humanism: reaction to an intellectual world that was centered on the church doctrine

* Secular outlook, NOT NECESSARILY anti-religious

1. Emphasis on human achievement

* Studied and taught “humanities” – liberal arts

1. Applied their ideas to spiritual / secular world
2. Petarch: “father of Humanism” – Cicero
3. Bruni: Greek scholar who advanced Platonic ideals
4. Alberti
5. Valla: Philology

**Humanists and classical studies**

* Byzantine scholars (fleeing Muslim expansion) were influential
* Developed new standards for studying classical texts and new educational standards

1. Liberal Arts: rhetoric, grammar, moral philosophy, philology and history

* intent: boost the abilities of the individual to reason and think

Philology: study of words, their origins and correct usage provided the first challenge of humanist thought to the Church intellectual tradition

* Valla disproved the Donation of Constantine (tax exemption of the church)

**Civic Humanism**

* Leon Battista Alberti: On the Family (1443), looked at newly emerging civic virtues
* Baldesar Castiglione: The Courtier (1528), etiquette book for the elite seeking power and influence, advocated the moralistic and traditional exercise of power
* Nicolo Machiavelli: The Prince (1513), discussion of amorality in civic leadership and Discourses on Livy (1519)

1. Impact:

* Intertwining of Classical and Renaissance worlds
* Explained how and why Princes gained and maintained power
* Represents the first purely secular understanding of govt.

1. removed divine authority

**4. First attempt to explain the actions of govt. using a scientific methodology**

* Key axiom was Machiavelli’s association of the Prince and peoples interest as the same
* Thus virtuous Prince was defined as a one who gained and maintained power
* Any action that increased a Prince’s virtue was good, thus power became an end that justified any means

The Politics of the Italian City-States  
**Background:**

* The collapse of the HRE and the Great Schism left no unifying force in Italy
* Guilds and powerful families took over regional governments:

1. Mediterranean trade enriched guild members and merchant families
2. HRE provided a vast market for manufactured goods of the Italian guilds
3. City-states had enough agriculture to sustain their populations

**Five Powers of Italy:**

* Papal States: Rome. Politics dominated by the Pope and a collection of powerful families.
* Florence: Republic on paper, but came under the control of the Medici faction.
* Major industries were textiles (wool, cotton and silk) and finance
* Established bank branches throughout Europe
* External conflicts led to a financial crisis
* Cosimo de Medici financed govt. and took control
* Lorenzo the Magnificent: assassination attempt, glorification of Florence
* Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) – theocracy in Florence 1494-98; (predicted French invasion due to paganism and moral decay of Italian city-states); burned at the stake
* Milan: Located just south of the Alps, Milan provided manufactured goods to the French and HRE
* Dominated for much of their history by the Visconti despotism and fear of Germanic invasion
* Sforza took over during da Vinci’s stay in Milan
* Naples: Hereditary monarchy. Eventually taken over by Spanish  
  Venice: Key to their success was their role in Mediterranean trade.
* Maritime power
* Oligarchy of wealthy merchant / guilds people (hereditary elite)
* Special treaty with the Byzantine Empire that allowed them exclusive trade rights
* Government controlled trade, ensured profitability
* Impact: Italy exported manufactured goods, capital resources and cultural innovations.  
  Decline of Italian City States:
* Established the Peace of Lodi: Major powers would not fight one another

1. Instead they gobbled up the rest of Italy
2. Massive mistrust developed

* Rise of the Ottoman Turks

1. Mehmed II Conquered Constantinople in 1453 and threatened Eastern Europe
2. Cut off much of the profitable trade that the Italian City-States relied on

* Wars of Italy (1494-1529)

1. Naples, Florence & Rome v. Milan + France (secret alliance)
2. Venetians allied with Spain / HRE

* Result: Almost everyone in Europe is fighting in Italy, but he Italians (like WWII)  
  Germans Sack Rome in 1527, significance is that it ends the Renaissance in Italy

**Northern Renaissance**

* Christian Humanism: emphasis on early church writings for answers to improve society
* Desiderius Erasmus (Erasmus of Rotterdam) (1466-1536) – In Praise of Folly most famous intellectual of his times criticized the church: “Erasmus lay the egg that Luther hatched”
* Thomas More (1478-1536) – Utopia – creates ideal society on an island; but to achieve harmony and order people have to sacrifice individual rights

**Northern Renaissance Art**

* Low Countries produced especially important artists
* Jan Van Eyck – Flemish painter, detailed realistic works
* Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) German – foremost northern Renaissance artist.
* Myscticism: belief in personal relationship with God

**Contrasting the Renaissance and Later Middle Ages (from on-line source)**

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| --- | --- |
| **Renaissance** | **Later Middle Ages** |
| **Philosophy: Humanism –**Emphasis on secular concerns due to rediscovery and study of ancient Greco-Roman culture. | Religion dominates Medieval thought.  **Scholasticism:** Thomas Aquinas – reconciles Christianity with Aristotelian science. |
| **Ideal:**   Virtù – Renaissance Man should be well-rounded (Castiglione) | **Ideal:**   Man is well-versed in one subject. |
| **Literature:**   Humanism; secularism   Northern Renaissance focuses also on writings of early church fathers   Vernacular (e.g. Petrarch, Boccacio)   Covered wider variety of subjects (politics, art, short stories)   Focused on the individual   Increased use of printing press; propaganda | **Literature:**   Based almost solely on religion.   Written in Latin   Church was greatest patron of arts and literature.   Little political criticism.   Hand-written |
| **Religion:**   The state is supreme to the church.   “New Monarchs” assert power over national churches.   Rise of skepticism   Renaissance popes worldly and corrupt | **Religion:**   Dominated politics; sought unified Christian Europe.   Church is supreme to the state.   Inquisition started in 1223; dissenters dealt with harshly |
| **Sculpture:**   Greek and Roman classical influences.   Free-standing (e.g. Michelangelo’s *David*)   Use of bronze (e.g. Donatello’s *David*) | **Sculpture:**   More gothic; extremely detailed.   Relief |
| **Art:**   Increased emphasis on secular themes.   Classic Greek and Roman ideals.   Use of perspective.   Increased use of oil paints.   Brighter colors   More emotion   Real people and settings depicted.   Patronized largely by merchant princes   Renaissance popes patronized renaissance art | **Art:**   Gothic style   Byzantine style dominates; nearly totally religious.   Stiff, 1-dimentional figures.   Less emotion   Stylized faces (faces look generic)   Use of gold to illuminate figures.   Lack of perspective.   Patronized mostly by the church |
| **Architecture:**   Rounded arches, clear lines; Greco-Roman columns   Domes (e.g. *Il Duomo* by Brunelleschi)   Less detailed   Focus on balance and form | **Architecture:**   Gothic style   Pointed arches; barrel vaults, spires   Flying buttresses   Elaborate detail |
| **Technology:**   Use of printing press   New inventions for exploration | **Technology:**   Depended on scribes |
| **Marriage and Family:**   Divorce available in certain cases   More prostitution   Marriages based more on romance.   Woman was to make herself pleasing to the man (Castiglione)   Sexual double standard   Increased infanticide | **Marriage and Family:**   Divorce nonexistent   Marriages arranged for economic reasons.   Prostitution in urban areas   Ave. age for men: mid-late twenties   Avg. age for women: less than 20 years old.   Church encouraged cult of paternal care.   Many couples did not observe church regulations on marriage.   Manners shaped men to please women.   Relative sexual equality |
| **Status of Women:**   Legal status of women declined.   Most women not affected by Renaissance   Educated women allowed involvement but subservient to men.   Rape not considered serious crime. | **Status of Women:**   Legal status better than in Renaissance |
| **Politics:**   State is supreme over the church.   New Monarchs assert control over national churches.   Machiavelli | **Politics:**   Church is supreme over the state. |
| African slavery introduced. | Few blacks lived in Europe. |
| Exploration and expansion. | Crusades |