

Professor Jane O. Newman
 Email: jnewman@uci.edu

HCC (Fall, 2013): “War” – Week 4: The Thirty Years’ War / Gryphius, “Tears of the Fatherland” and Grimmelshausen, Simplicissimus

Many of you may be hearing about the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48) that tore across central Europe during the seventeenth century for the first time. (If you have heard about this devastating war before this class, you may not have heard about it in this amount of detail!). Just so you can keep some of the names and dates straight – and so you don’t have to write down all the information that I cover in lecture – here is a ‘cheat sheet’ to which you can refer as you review and discuss the lecture in section.

1. The Thirty Years’ War: A “real” war that took place between 1618-1648. It was the bloody culmination of a century of tensions and conflicts that started with the Protestant Reformation. (See below.)

2. It was a pan-European war fought primarily on “German” battlefields. Some major actors were the Holy Roman Empire, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Here’s a map of Europe at the time:



It’s hard to see on this map, but the area in the middle marking the Holy Roman Empire (what is now basically Germany) actually consisted of hundreds of small principalities and “imperial cities” with their own rulers and structures of governance, all under the umbrella of the Empire/Emperor. It was a complicated political entity.

3. The Thirty Years' War was actually a "war composed of many wars," each phase of which is known by the name of the main adversary to the Catholic Habsburg Empire (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation / HRE) and its ally, Catholic Habsburg Spain, during a given set of years.

- a. The Bohemian-Palatinate War (1618-23)
- b. The Danish-Dutch / Lower Saxon War (1623-9)
- c. Swedish War (1630-35) (Lutheran Swedes)
- d. Swedish-French War (1635-48) (weird Lutheran-Catholic alliance against the HRE)

By the end, this "succession of wars became so dense that it was perceived at its height and thereafter as a single war..." (Johannes Burckhardt)

4. The Thirty Years' War was brought to an end by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) (which took four years to negotiate...). There were 109 signatory parties to the Treaty. Westphalia is often identified as the founding moment of the modern international system of sovereign states, the rise of diplomacy as a 'science,' and the beginning of (only) bilateral wars between states. The Treaty of Westphalia is now considered a huge milestone in the history of International Law. It is often called upon to represent the beginning of political modernity in the west.

5. The "Causes" of the Thirty Years' War are a matter of debate:

- a. a "war of religion" / conflict between internally homogeneous confessional (religious) Christian states that were either Protestant or Catholic, OR
- b. a (German / central European) constitutional war, OR
- c. a "war of European state-building"

6. Varieties of Christianity:

To understand this war – the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) – it is important to remember that it was a seventeenth-century war that came after the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, which some historians argue began with the rebellious act of the (originally Catholic) monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546), who nailed his "95 Theses" to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg (Germany); in the "Theses," Luther complained of the corruption and lack of spirituality rampant in the Catholic Church and argued for more direct access to the "Word of God" (Scripture) for the people (and thus less mediation of spiritual salvation through the (Catholic) Church hierarchy). Calvinism (the "Reformed" religion) was another (and different) form of Protestantism that emerged in subsequent years. While "Lutheranism" came to be known as "Evangelical" Christianity at the time, it is not the same as modern Evangelical Christianity.

The (Catholic) Pope in Rome was (understandably) not pleased. Nor was the Holy Roman Emperor, who was Catholic, and who saw it as his duty to be the muscle behind the (Catholic) Church and its spiritual authority. Eventually the kings and queens of most of Europe's evolving nation-states, the princes and dukes of the smaller political entities, city councils, and the local populace took sides, and aligned themselves with either the Catholic or one of the new "Protestant" ("protesting") versions of Christianity – and thus with or against the Emperor. Central Europe was consumed by "religious wars" (which were also wars between parties identified with different classes and political positions) during the first half of the sixteenth century.

These wars were brought to an end by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, which the Emperor signed with the princes, allowing each prince and locality to decide on which version of Christianity would be the accepted one in his territory. This was the principle of "cujus regio, ejus religio," "who ever rules is the one who determines the religion." While this "peace" held until 1618, some historians argue that the principle of "cujus regio, ejus religio" set the stage for the Thirty Years' War by creating single-religion political units that could then get involved in conflicts with those on the 'other side'.