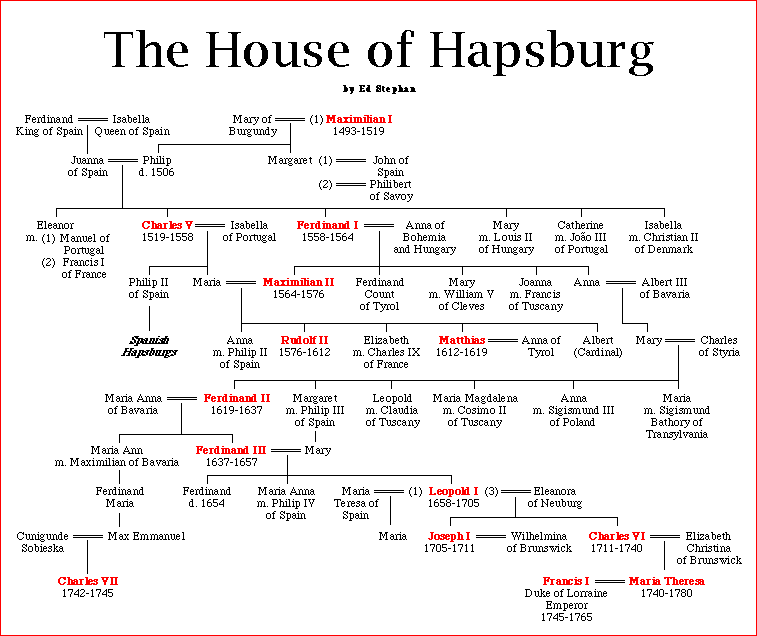
Modern European History

Unit 5 – Absolutism in Europe

Spanish Absolutism

***Read and annotate this handout.***

**The Habsburg Monarchy / Dynasty**

The Habsburg Monarchy (also sometimes called Hapsburg, as in chart to the left) had been in place well before the year of 1500, but during the age of Absolutism the Habsburg Monarchy was Europe’s most powerful royal family. The Habsburg Empire included Spain, Portugal, the Holy Roman Empire (present day Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia Luxembourg, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and parts of Poland, France and Italy), and the empire in the Americas created by the Conquistadors (present-day Mexico, Southwestern United States, and Northern South America). Needless to say, at one point in the Habsburg Empire covered almost half of the known world at that time. Ruling this huge empire was a tough task that some met and others did not.

**Charles V** (1516 – 1556)

The Habsburg Empire reached its greatest size in 1516 under the rule of Charles V who was the grandson of King Ferdinand II of Spain and Queen Isabella I of Spain and the nephew of Henry VIII’s 1st wife Catherine of Aragon. Charles V governed all of the Habsburg land effectively and with pride, gaining international respect for his people but also gaining enemies with his shrewd use of power and diplomacy. Throughout his reign Spain was constantly at war and constantly trying to create wealth to finance the wars. By 1556 Charles V was exhausted and he decided to abdicate. Charles V always thought the Habsburg Empire was too big to be ruled by just one man. For this reason, Charles V relinquished his throne and divided it between his brother Ferdinand II and his 29-year old son Philip II. Ferdinand II was given Austria and most of the Holy Roman Empire while Philip was given Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Milan & Naples, and the newly established American Empire of the New World.

**Philip II** (1556 – 1598)

 Calvinism and Catholicism had become highly militant, combative religions, aggressive in winning converts and in eliminating each other’s supporters. Around 1500, Catholic Spanish kingdoms had expelled Spanish Jews and reconquered Muslim areas in Spain, forcing Muslims to convert or go into exile. Spain saw itself as a nation chosen by God to save Catholic Christianity from Protestant heretics. Philip II, the “Most Catholic King,” ascended to the Spanish throne in 1556 and reigned for 42 years until his death in 1598. Unlike his uncle Ferdinand II, who was ruling Austria and most of the Holy Roman Empire, Philip II was able to establish an absolute monarchy in his Spanish Habsburg Empire. And unlike many other monarchs of his time, Philip II was remembered as hardworking, devoting much of his time to government work and hardly any to leisure activities. He insisted on strict conformity to Catholicism and strong monarchial authority. During his rule, Philip II had many things on his political agenda; create wealth for himself and Spain; create a powerful Spanish military; expand Spain’s borders and its political influence; spread the Catholic religion throughout Europe; make Spain the most powerful country in Europe. Philip II felt that if he achieved the first four objectives on his political agenda, then the fifth item would naturally happen.

**The Golden Age of Spain**

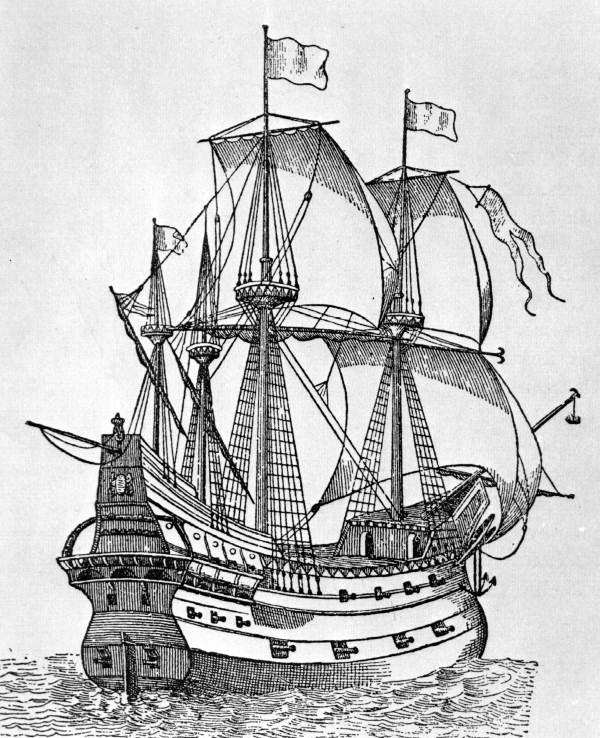
During Philip II’s 42-year reign Spain experienced the “siglo de ore,” or what historians call the “Golden Age” of Spain, so labeled because of Philip II’s devotion to art and literature. Philip II had architects build beautiful statues and sculptures throughout Spain, and he established academies of science and mathematics to enrich the knowledge of Spanish people. This was all funded by the Spanish trading empire in the Americas/New World. This trading empire consisted of precious metals, tobacco, cocoa, indigo, and sugar, all of which were in heavy demand by other European countries and constantly flowing from the Spanish trading empire in the Americas. As other countries bought these materials, the Spanish economy grew as well as its wealth.

**Philip’s Wars**

Having the goal of expanding the Spanish Empire, Philip II waged many wars during his time on the Spanish throne, using the wealth of Spain to build one of the most powerful and most feared militaries in all of Europe. Spain’s leadership of a Holy League against the Turks resulted in a stunning victory over the Turkish fleet in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 (left), which took place in Mediterranean Sea, Spain defeated the Ottoman Empire’s naval fleet. In 1580 Spain overtook Portugal, and united the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) under Spanish control. Although both of these wars were seen as great accomplishments, they both put a strain on Spain’s wealth. The underlying factor to fighting a war is having the money to fund it. Feeding the soldiers, paying the soldiers, providing ammunition, and building and repairing weapons all began to add up. The Spanish treasury could simply not keep up with Philip II’s spending habits.

**The Dutch Revolt**

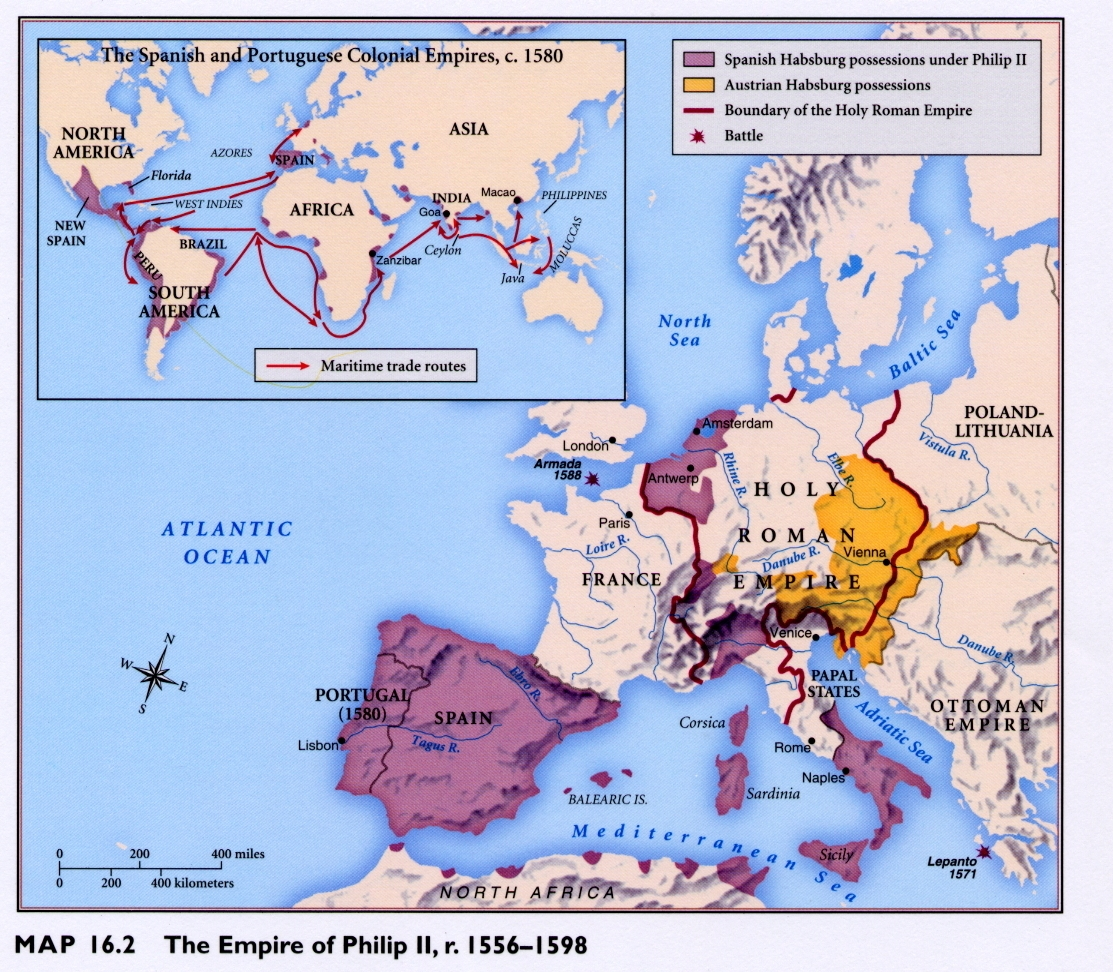
Philip II wanted to rid Europe of the Protestant faith and make the entire continent Catholic. One of the richest parts of Philip’s empire, the Spanish Netherlands consisted of 17 provinces (modern-day Netherlands and Belgium). Philip faced growing resistance from the Dutch in the northern provinces led by William the Silent, the prince of Orange. England became involved in this war in a unique way: prior to the beginning of this war, Philip II was married to Queen Mary I of England (his cousin) in an attempt to unite Spain and England and help spread the Catholic faith all throughout England. Mary I was also a devout Catholic who opposed the Protestant faith and is known for burning almost 300 Protestants alive for their religious beliefs, giving her the fitting name “Bloody Mary.” Mary I only ruled England for five years, and could not conceive a child because of the ovarian cysts that caused her death. Philip II tried to gain the hand of Mary I’s successor, and half sister, Queen Elizabeth I of England for the same reasons. Elizabeth I, who was a Protestant, rejected the marriage proposal.

When Elizabeth I openly supported the Dutch in their war against Spain, Philip II declared war on England. In 1588, Philip II made preparations to send his armada to invade England, as a successful invasion of England would mean the overthrow of English Protestantism. The heart of the Spanish military, the mighty Spanish Armada (including Spanish galleons, seen left) was a naval fleet that consisted of 132 ships, 20,000 men, and 2,400 cannons. The Armada’s power was well known and well respected throughout Europe and the world. Unfortunately, the smaller and faster English ships were too much for the Armada to handle, and in the end the hoped-for victory never came. The Armada was forced to sail back to Spain by a northern route around Scotland and Ireland where it was pounded by storms.

The struggle dragged on until 1609 when a 12-year truce finally ended the war (Philip II never really saw the end of this war as it ended after his death). The northern provinces began to call themselves the United Provinces of the Netherlands and became the core of the modern Dutch state. Both the Netherlands and England remained predominantly Protestant.

**Philip II’s Legacy**

By the end of Philip’s reign in 1598, Spain was not the great power that it appeared to be. Philip II had created wealth for Spain and himself, established a strong military, and expanded the borders of Spain, making it the most populous empire in the world. But Philip had failed in his attempt to spread the Catholic faith throughout Europe, which then destroyed the possibility of achieving his other objectives. Spain was bankrupt, (Philip II had spent too much on war), the armed forces were out of date, and the government was inefficient. Spain would never be as powerful or as great as it was during the reign of Philip II. Spain continued to play the role of a great power, but England and France would compete for the recognition of being the most powerful country in the world.



Now you’re going to fact check the information provided in this handout.

Find three FACTS about something Philip II was involved in that is contained in this reading.

Do a little research about each of those facts – find it on the web, in a textbook, or in another resource. You must corroborate (confirm or give support to) this information from at least THREE different sources. Write a correct Chicago manual of style footnote for each source (see handout) and then list the information you found that corroborates the fact. Be sure to use complete sentences in your identification.

**(Write this information into a Google Doc and share it with me AND print out a copy to use during an activity we’ll be doing next class.)**