Peacemaking in World History
500-1500 CE
European Middle Ages
Christianity as a Force for Peace

• Christ himself allied with the sick, the poor and the outcast. He preached “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God” in his first sermon.

• The cross as a Christian symbol stands for self-sacrifice for the good of other people.

• Christianity sometimes justified war to combat evil
Endemic Warfare

• Medieval warfare occurred between kingdoms and between nobles across the various regions.
• Knights swore to defend the king (or lord) only 40 days a year, so warfare was part-time.
• Hierarchy and unity of command, seen in many armies, did not exist. Warfare often consisted of single battles, no clear strategies, and a lack of discipline.
• The knights’ military values of defending personal honor and displaying courage in battle were linked to Christian values of truthfulness, mercy, and loyalty. These values, taken together, came to be known as the code of chivalry. Because this code was connected with Christianity, it was taken seriously. Knights were supposed to defend the weak and be generous to the poor. In this code lay the roots of international law as church clergy tried to enforce it.
• Over the centuries medieval warfare has been romanticized, glamorized, and stereotypes hardened into fact.
In Medieval Warfare

- Violence and carnage were common.
- After battles, villagers looted corpses and ate horses.
- Injured knights were left to die of infections.
- Falls from mounts resulting in back injuries were often fatal.
- Combatants, left on fields, bled to death or died from shock and overexposure.
- The victor sometimes mercifully returned to the battlefield to kill those injured, but still alive.
First image of a European cannon in Siege of Orleans in Hundred Years’ War 1429
Peacemaking

• It could be that the Middle Ages, more than any other period, shaped modern peace principles and practices.

• The fusion of Roman and Germanic peace traditions brought compromises: Romans offered Germanic peoples land and citizenship in exchange for taxes, military service, and non-aggression pacts. During Germanic festivals, Edward Gibbon in his famous book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* said: “The sound of war was hushed, quarrels suspended, arms laid aside, and the restless Germans had the opportunity to taste the blessings of peace.”

• The conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity was a unifying force. Christian kingdoms had reciprocal obligations, mutual recognition, and investiture by popes and bishops which gave the people much in common and brought stability and order.
• By the 900’s Pax Dei (Peace of God) was in effect. It was a clergy-led movement prohibiting attacks on church grounds and on unarmed churchmen and peasants, merchants and traders.

• By the 1100’s Treuga Dei (Truce of God) prohibited violence on holy days which were signaled by church bells

• By late 1100’s King Richard of England commissioned knights to keep peace, they were called Justices of the Peace. They mediated disputes, tried to prevent crime, and gave out punishments.
While the Roman empire could guarantee peace and enforce it, the multitude of medieval kingdoms required an ad hoc approach to peacemaking. Treaties were signed between rulers:

- Pax Nicephori between Charlemagne and Byzantine Empire 803 AD
- Treaty of Bonn between West and East Franconia 921 AD
- Pactum Warmundi an alliance between crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and Venice, 1123 AD
- Treaty of Windsor between England and Portugal, oldest interstate treaty, 1386 AD
Just War Doctrine

- Originated with writings and speeches of Cicero, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and St. Thomas of Aquinas all who assumed taking a life is immoral except under limited circumstances such as:
  - peaceful alternatives must be exhausted,
  - war must be declared by a competent authority,
  - war must have a just cause such as self-defense or protecting the innocent,
  - there must be right intentions including restoring peace, minimizing violence, and treating the enemy as human beings
  - means must be proportional to cause, that is, the probable good must be weighed against the harm war will cause and a reasonable calculation of the probability of success made
Monks as an Influence for Peace

• St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) the saint of peace, founded a monastic order. His famous prayer is:
  Lord make me an instrument of your peace
  Where there is hatred, let me sow love
  Where there is injury, pardon;
  Where there is doubt, faith
  Where there is despair, hope
  Where there is darkness, light
  Where there is sadness, joy

• St Anthony, St. Pachomius, and St. Benedict all lived under rules for “peace and charity” loving one’s enemy in a peaceful communal and spiritual life
Black Death Plague: How people coped with a peace-threatening crisis
Origins and Spread of the Black Death in Asia

KEY
- Green: Portion of Silk Road
- Blue: Common Sea Trade Routes
- Orange: Common Overland Trade Routes
- Yellow: Areas of Plague
- Red: Dates of Breakout

1346

*Origins and Spread of the Black Death in Asia* is copyright © 2003 Melissa Snell
People reacted

• “No bells tolled and no one wept because everyone expected death”

• “In these days was burying without sorrowe and wedding without friendship.”

• In Sienna work on cathedral abandoned owing to a loss of workers and the “melancholy and grief” of the survivors

• Nuns at Hotel de Dieu in Paris “having no fear of death, tended the sick with all sweetness and humility”

• Villagers seen dancing to drums and trumpets, when asked why, said they could keep the plague from them “by the jollity that is in us.”
They died by the hundreds, both day and night, and all were thrown in ... ditches and covered with earth. And as soon as those ditches were filled, more were dug. And I, Agnolo di Tura ... buried my five children with my own hands ... And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world.

—The Plague in Siena: An Italian Chronicle

How many valiant men, how many fair ladies, breakfast with their kinfolk and the same night supped with their ancestors in the next world! The condition of the people was pitiable to behold. They sickened by the thousands daily, and died unattended and without help. Many died in the open street, others dying in their houses, made it known by the stench of their rotting bodies. Consecrated churchyards did not suffice for the burial of the vast multitude of bodies, which were heaped by the hundreds in vast trenches, like goods in a ships hold and covered with a little earth.

—Giovanni Boccaccio
Plague victims being blessed
Magna Carta

When King John of England in 1215 agreed to abide by this charter, he limited his power and gave rights to his vassals. The rights of life, liberty and property and trial by jury and equal access to courts originated with the Magna Carta.
Crusades
1100-1300 AD
Richard the Lionhearted
Saladin
A humane Kurdish commander who befriended his enemy Richard the Lionhearted
Rise of Universities 1100 – 1300 AD
The word universitas means corporation or guild and referred to a society of professors and students
Rebirth of Cities
Town Charters

As the feudal system waned and ended, towns sprang up after 1,000 CE. People banded together and demanded regional landed aristocrats and the Catholic Church grant them land for a town. Towns were incorporated with a town charter. In these charters, people took oaths of allegiance to each other and pledged to protect the town. They established provisions for laws, adequate space for markets, standards for currency and coinage, and safeguards against arbitrary taxation.
Notarial Peace Contracts
Florence, Italy
1257-1343

From Jansen, Katherine, “Pro Bono Pacis: Crime, Conflict and Dispute Resolution, the Evidence of Notarial Peace Contracts in Late Medieval Florence,” Speculum, Vol. 88, No. 2, April, 2013
In the late Middle Ages in Florence, Italy, there was a peace instrument commonly used by everyday folk to restore order after a crime or act of violence. It was a binding agreement initiated by two quarreling parties and drawn up and stamped by a notary.
• Crimes and Conflicts were minor assault or public brawling, violent scuffles, loud arguments disturbing the tranquility of the community, insults, threats, and injurious words
• Insults which led to barred fist fights were bastard, thief, and liar
• Fights consisted of punching, kicking, slapping, biting, and pulling hair
• Throwing figs or pears in someone’s face or using rocks, knives, daggers or spears were serious offenses.
• **Thefts** consisted mostly of stealing clothing, weapons, and animals rather than money. The most popular item was a *mantello*, a hooded outer cloak for men, next was a tunic, then a vest.

• **Feuds** (continuous animosity) and **Vendettas** (the obligation of kinsmen to inflict revenge for an injury to a family member) were often settled with peace contracts.
After the quarreling parties had drawn up the peace agreement, and the notary signed and stamped it, an important ritual then ensued devised to reintegrate the criminals back into the community. This was a kiss which sealed the peace, ended the dispute, and offered forgiveness.

Gestures are often more powerful than words, they convey a ritual significance. The kiss was the culmination of the peace agreement, it finalized the peace contract and created a new state of peace between the parties and in the community.
The kiss of peace was also used in secular festivities. During the Middle Ages, for example, it was the custom to "seal the reconciliation and pacification of enemies by a kiss." Even knights gave each other the kiss of peace before proceeding to the combat, and forgave one another all real or imaginary wrongs. The holy kiss was also found in the ritual of the Church on solemn occasions, such as baptism, marriage, confession, ordination, or obsequies. However, toward the end of the Middle Ages the kiss of peace disappeared as the official token of reconciliation.
Because peace contracts reintegrated people back into good standing in the community, and, in accommodating and reinstating these people, the community was also reinforced and revitalized, these peace settlements were called by medieval scholar Andrea Zorzi “a politics of grace.” Everybody won.