

I. American Political Ideals

Ask students what American document contains the best description of the basic political ideals held by most Americans? (brainstorm on the board, discuss, highlighting the importance of the Declaration of Independence)

Ask students to list from memory the ideals contained in the Declaration (brainstorm on board)

Discuss, highlighting these three ideals:

- A. Natural rights. The doctrine of natural rights maintains that all people have, by birth, certain basic rights that governments cannot take away. The DoI defines these broadly as "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

What do we consider to be specific examples of natural rights?

- Freedom of speech and religion
- The right to own property
- Freedom of thought

In other words, natural rights guarantee our right to be an individual.

- B. Limited government. Jefferson makes it clear that the people are what make a government legitimate, and to remain legitimate, governments must do only what is in the people's interests.

- Discuss how this represented a huge change from the past when the people served the government's interests.
- Discuss how this means that even the rulers must follow the rule of law
- Discuss what Jefferson says the people can do if the government transcends these limits.
- Ask students how the idea of limited government is demonstrated in modern American politics?

- C. Diversity/equality. Jefferson's statement that "all men are created equal" is odd. Why? Are all people equal? Say Matt Cain and Mr. Haydock? Clearly, this is not what Jefferson meant. Have students brainstorm what he might have meant.

Jefferson's statement of regarding equality is a recognition that people are diverse, and that despite this diversity, all people should have equal opportunities regardless of their differences

Ask students if America lived up to this during Jefferson's time?

Explain the difference between an ideal (a goal to be strived for) and actual practice

Tell students that we will check periodically to see how well America is achieving her ideals and indicate that modern polices can, and ought to be, weighed against these ideals.

II. Sources of the American political tradition.

These ideas didn't just materialize out of Jefferson' imagination, they developed from a very specific set of influences that shaped what American political values.

A. Colonial self-rule. When England established its colonies it was already moving towards a more democratic form of government, so the colonies would reflect this trend (review from last year's discussion of sources of the democratic tradition). Examples of colonial self rule include:

1. The Mayflower compact-an agreement between the passengers of the Mayflower regarding how they would organize and govern their society. This is an early example of a constitution.
2. Colonial assemblies - From the very beginning of the colonial period, colonists asserted the right to rule themselves through locally elected assemblies or legislatures. For example:
 - Virginia House of Burgesses - 1619
 - Massachusetts General Court - 1634

This early tradition of self rule would continue to develop until, by the middle of the 18th century, all colonies had assemblies. These assemblies asserted the right to make local laws, impose taxes and stand up for the rights of the colonists.

While every colony had an elected assembly, only a very few could vote. Most colonies restricted voting to free, White, land-owning males.

B. The Enlightenment

What was the Enlightenment?

Solicit information from students about what they learned last year - list thinkers they remember on the board.

The Enlightenment sought to apply the principles of the Scientific Revolution (observation, experimentation, logic) to the study of human society and government. It took place roughly between 1689 and 1800.

1. John Locke (English, 1632-1704, major work - *Two Treatises on Government*)
 - a. Social Contract - The idea that people give up some of their freedom in exchange for the protection of organized society (government)

- b. Limited government - The idea that governments were subject to the will of the people - majority rule. Governments were not beyond the law.
 - c. Right of Revolution - The idea that the people as a whole have the right to change their government if that government becomes abusive (if it violates the social contract or does not abide by the idea of limited government)
2. Montesquieu (1689-1755, French, Major work - *The Spirit of the Laws*)
- a. Separation of powers - The idea that if power is concentrated it will be abused. Government's power should be divided into several parts or branches - such as the executive, legislative and judicial.
 - b. Checks and balances - The idea that each part of government is a check on the possible abuses of power of the other parts.
3. Voltaire (1694-1778, French, Many works, we reference the "Essay on Toleration")

Voltaire was a strong advocate of freedom of speech, thought and religion. He believed these freedoms were natural rights that could not be legitimately taken away by any government.

C. Colonial diversity

1. Origin of settlers (English, African, Scots Irish, German, Irish, Scottish, Dutch, Swedish)
2. Religion - Early America had many Protestant sects, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and a great mix of traditional religions of both African slaves and Native Americans.
3. Economics - The North had small manufacturing, fishing timbering while the south was primarily a plantation style economy that relied on exports

The impact of this diversity is that Americans from the outset had a very multi-cultural, multi lingual, diverse society. This meant that Americans would have to learn to be tolerant of their differences.

III. Ideas in Practice: Establishing a government consistent with American ideals

A. The Articles of Confederation - The first government

The Articles of Confederation was the first constitution of the United States

1. It was written in 1777 and ratified in 1781
2. The AoC established a 1 house congress in which each state had one vote

3. The AoC had many weaknesses, most stemming from its lack of powers, including
 - a. No power to tax
 - b. No power to regulate trade
 - c. No independent executive
 - d. Amendments required a unanimous vote of the states
4. These weaknesses led the government to the verge of bankruptcy, a very weak foreign policy and the inability to suppress local rebellions, such as Shay's rebellion in 1786. Continuing weakness led the leaders of the new nation to call for a revision of the AoC, the meeting where this was to happen was at Philadelphia in 1787 and comes to be known as the Constitutional Convention.

B. The Constitution - Written in 1787 at the Philadelphia Convention. Ratified in 1788. This document is still in effect today.

Structure of the Constitution:

Article I - Legislative Branch

Article II - Executive Branch

Article III - Judicial Branch

Article IV - Relations between states

Article V - Amendments

Article VI - National supremacy

Article VII - Ratification

C. American ideals in the Constitution

1. Limited government (Remind students what limited government means)

- Popular sovereignty - The power resides with the people and the government serves the people's interests.

- Examples:

The Preamble - the government is formed by the people "We the people . . ."

The House of representatives is elected directly by the people

The President is elected indirectly by the people

- Checks and balances - Numerous checks and balances were built into the Constitution to keep any one part of the government from becoming too powerful. Partner brainstorm of checks and balances. Make sure to list the following:

Presidential Veto (Limits Congress)
President appoints judges (Limits the courts)

The Supreme Court can declare a Law unconstitutional. (Limits Congress) This power was confirmed in 1803 in the case Marbury v. Madison which declared that the Supreme court has the power of Judicial review - this means the power to declare a law unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court can also declare a presidential action unconstitutional (based on the same case)

Congress (the Senate) approves federal judges (This limits the President, and the courts)

Congress (the Senate) approves presidential appointees (Limits the President)

Congress can override a presidential veto

Congress can impeach and remove the president

Congress can impeach and remove a federal judge

Laws involving taxation have to start in the House

- Checks and Balances at the state level

Remember that the AoC tilted toward giving the small states too much power. This was a conflict at the Constitutional Convention also.

Small states worried that their voice would be drowned if representation were based on population. They Proposed the New Jersey Plan which kept a single house congress in which each state had 1 vote, but gave the federal government the power to tax and regulate trade.

Large states wanted representation to be based on population. They proposed the Virginia plan, which created a two house Congress, with representation in both house apportioned by population

This conflict was resolved by the Great Compromise which created a two house congress with the lower house apportioned by population and equal representation in the upper house.

Amendments to the Constitution also required the ratification of 3/4 of the states, so the states had the final say on any future changes to be made by the Constitution.

2. Natural Rights - The Bill of Rights

Ratification - Ratification is a word that means to formally approve. The Constitution required 9 out of 13 states to ratify before it would become the law of the land. Not everyone agreed that the new Constitution should be adopted.

a. Federalists and Anti Federalists

i) Federalists sought the ratification of the Constitution. They were supporters of a strong federal government with extensive powers. The Federalists included James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay who wrote a series of 85 articles supporting ratification that came to be known as the *Federalist Papers*.

ii) The Anti-Federalists feared a strong federal government. They objected to the fact that the Constitution contained no Bill of Rights. Among the most famous anti-federalists were Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson and Richard Henry Lee.

b. The Bill of Rights

To gain the support of the Anti-Federalists, it was agreed that a Bill of Rights would be added to the Constitution. This agreement, another compromise, led to the Constitution's ratification in June 1788. The Bill of Rights as adopted in December 1791. It describes the basic freedoms of all Americans that cannot be taken away (not even by a majority vote):

I - Five Freedoms - Speech, Press, Religion, Assembly and Petition

II - Right to Bear arms

III - No quartering

IV - Protections against unwarranted search and seizure

V - Rights of the accused

VI - Right to a fair trial

VII - Right to a jury trial in civil cases

VIII - prohibition of cruel and unusual punishments

IX - Retention of unenumerated rights

X - Reserved powers of the states

3. Equality - The unfinished project

There were many examples of legal inequality in the Early history of the United States. For example:

- Slavery - Although the word “slavery is never mentioned in the Constitution, it was implicitly recognized in 3/5 clause, the fugitive slave clause, and Article V

Slowly, over the course of almost 200 years, racial equality was written into the Constitution through amendments:

Amendment 14 (1868) Recognized former slaves as citizens and guaranteed “equal protection of the laws”

Amendment 15 (1870) Banned voter discrimination based on race. (states would circumvent this through poll taxes, literacy tests and intimidation tactics.

Amendment 24 (1964) banned poll taxes.

- Women - Women had no protections in the new Constitution. At the time the Constitution was adopted, women lacked the right to vote (with few exceptions), legal rights and property rights.

Women did not win the right to vote until 1920 with the passage of Amendment 19.

- Many other examples of inequality can be found in the early history of the US including the government’s treatment of Native Americans, Mexican Americans (after the Mexican war) and Asian Americans.

D. The challenge of diversity - religion in America. There is perhaps no better example of the great diversity of early (and later) America than with regard to religion. This section will examine the history and growth of American religious diversity, the government’s policy regarding religion and the persistence of religious intolerance over the course of American history.

1. Colonial religious diversity

Colonial America was religiously quite diverse. Colonial America included:

Many Protestants denominations

Catholics

Jews

Muslims

Traditional African religions

550 distinct Native societies

2. The making of modern religious diversity

a. Two religious revivals - The Great Awakenings

The First Great Awakening was a period of religious revival that swept America from the 1730s to the 1750s

The Great Awakening was characterized by roaming revival preachers like George Whitefield and charismatic local preachers like Jonathan Edwards. These preachers had tremendous emotional appeal and often spoke before audiences of thousands. This was a big difference from the typically dry preaching many were used to.

The Great Awakening had three effects:

- It brought colonists of different traditions together around the common emotional experience of revival
- It also fostered religious diversity as new denominations were formed out of the religious ferment of the period
- It gave Americans practice questioning authority. For this reason, some historians believe it helped make the American Revolution possible

The Second Great Awakening

- Period of religious revival lasting for the first half of the 19th century
- This revival came partially in response to changes brought on by industrialization and urbanization (breakdown of traditional communities and social constraints due to the rise of cities and large migrant populations, alcohol abuse, etc)
- In 1800 just 1 in 15 people belonged to a church, by 1850 it was 1 in 6
- Christianity during the second Great Awakening emphasized evangelism - the idea that people could be saved through church revivals (born again)
- The great Awakening saw the development of several new denominations of Christianity including the Seventh Day Adventists and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). LDS was founded in by Joseph Smith, who in 1830 published the book of Mormon, which Mormons believe to be another book of the bible that had been lost. The Mormons ultimately settled in the Salt Lake region of Utah.

b. New immigrants

- After 1870 a new wave of immigrants came to America from eastern and southern Europe. Many of these new immigrants were Catholic, Jewish and Eastern Orthodox Christians. This greatly added to the religious diversity of the US
- Following Immigration reform laws in the 1960s many new groups came to the US including SE Asians (mainly Buddhist), Filipinos (Catholic), Immigrants from the Indian sub continent (Muslim, Sikh and Hindu) and the middle east (Muslim, E. Orthodox Christianity)

Today, America is more diverse than ever (see Pew study slide)

3. Religion and the US government

The new nation needed a religious policy that recognized this great diversity. The policy that was to be adopted was one of tolerance, the idea that religious diversity would be lawful (This was not true in most countries of Europe at the time)

The first important American figure that advocated religious tolerance was Roger Williams, the Founder of Rhode Island. In his 1644 book, *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution*, he argued that governments had no business telling their citizens what religion they should practice. This was a revolutionary idea at the time. Williams was an important influence on the religious policy of the new nation.

The first example of broad religious tolerance in the new nation was the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty passed in 1785. While this only applied to the state of Virginia, it granted total religious freedom and asserted that such freedom was a natural right.

Religion is mentioned twice in the US Constitution

- Article VI forbids “religious tests” as a condition of holding government office. This meant that government jobs would be open to people of all religions.
- Amendment 1 prevents the government from creating an official religion (the “establishment clause” and prevents Congress from making laws that would restrict religious practice (the “free exercise clause”)

4. Religious intolerance

Despite America’s religious diversity and official policy of religious tolerance, many examples of religious intolerance, both official and unofficial, can be found throughout Colonial American and US history. (See religious persecution documents)