"We hold these truths to be self evident. . ."

An American Revolution??

The American Revolution

3 KEYS:

I. The Revolutionary Context
II. Inventing the Revolution
III. An American Revolution?

The Revolutionary Context:

EMPIRE & ECONOMICS
RELIGION v. ENLIGHTENMENT

EMPIRE: Global Trade Empires, ca. 1770

1776 Revolution of Self-Determination

(sort of)

HS041 Week 02-Lecture01

15 September 2004

“Americans wanted to return to the rights and freedoms they had long enjoyed before Parliament and King George III violated them. In this sense, their revolution signified a return, in the literal astronomical meaning of the word Revolution suggests -- “a circuit around a central axis, ending at the point from whence the motion began.”

The American Revolution

3 KEYS:

I. The Revolutionary Context
II. Inventing the Revolution
III. An American Revolution?
Behold, I fall before thy face,
My only refuge is thy grace,
No outward form can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within.
No bleeding bird nor bleeding beast,
No hyssop branch nor sprinkling priest,
Not running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash the dismal stain away.

(from Psalm 51)

**Mercantilism:** American colonies export raw goods to England. England uses raw materials to manufacture finished products. Finished products exported/sold to American colonies.

**Navigation Acts:** Series of laws designed to control English trade (and ensure its profitability). Leads to extensive smuggling in American colonies.

**Revolutionary Context II: Religion**

God’s will is intrinsically JUST. God has absolute autonomy.

The Puritans fled England first to Holland, and then to North America.

Calvin: “Our condemnation is not set before us in the law, that we may abide in it; but that having fully known our misery, we may be led to Christ, who is sent to be a physician to the sick, a deliverer to the captives, a comforter to the afflicted, a defender to the oppressed.” [Commentaries on Romans]

**Empire: Colonial Conflicts/Imperial Wars**

- King Phillip’s (Metacom’s) War, 1675-76: 20% of New England towns burned down
- King William’s War, 1689-97 [War of the League of Augsburg]
- Queen Anne’s War, 1702-13 [War of Spanish Succession]
- King George’s War, 1744-48 [War of Austrian Succession]

**French and Indian War, 1755-1763** [Seven Years’ War]

- France no longer a threat to American colonies
- London now wants colonies to prove for their own defense
- End of “salutary neglect”

George III


Puritan heritage -- Human Depravity

“GOD ALMIGHTY in his most holy and wise providence, hath so disposed of the condition of mankind, as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission.” John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630) and first Gov. of Massachusetts Colony

NB: The “depravity” doctrine preserves God’s absolute sovereignty. God absolutely free to do what God wills. [Predestination]

Note also: Sounds depressing... but is it more depressing than being told “in order to be saved you must do x, y, z...” ??

Key for American democracy: vision of “human nature”

“The people” are not “good.”

The “majority will” Must not be allowed to tyrannize.

Keep in mind while reading Adams / Madison!!!

NB: The “depravity” doctrine preserves God’s absolute sovereignty. God absolutely free to do what God wills. [Predestination]
Enlightenment / Rationalism

**Three Key Ideas:**
- A: Original Intolerance
- B: Social Contract
- C: General Will
  - [To explain (example)]

**Rousseau**

(But inconvenient problem of depravity and tyranny of majority)

II. Inventing the Revolution

Boston Massacre (Fruits of Arbitrary Power, or the Bloody Massacre Perpetuated by the State) 5 March 1770

NB: British soldiers defended by John Adams, all acquitted of murder. Two found guilty of manslaughter and branded on thumbs.

Reactions to Tea Act (actually reduced duty on tea, but threatened smuggler’s profits)

Problem Solved!

The Spirit of the Laws (1748)

- Admired British Constitution, but believed there was no perfect form of government.
  - Checks and balances: 3 branches of government.
    - "In republican governments, men are all equal; equal they are also in despotic governments, in the former, because they are everything; in the latter, because they are nothing." — The Spirit of Laws, Bk. VI, Ch. 2

Rousseau

Locke - Two Treatises on Government (1690)

Taxes and “Virtual Representation”:
- 1764: Sugar Act
- 1765: Stamp Act
- 1766: Stamp Act repealed
- 1767: Townshend Act leads to non-importation movement
- 1770: Townshend Acts reduced, non-importation ended
- Parliament: Americans are “virtually” represented like all other British subjects

Taxes on Colonies were proportionately less than on those living in England!

Tom Paine, Revolutionary

Common Sense, January 1776

“Government by kings was first introduced into the world by the Heathens, from whom the children of Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention of the Devil ever set on foot for the promotion of idolatry.”

“Sacralizing” Events

- Sacralize: “to make sacred”
  - Root: “sacrifice”
- Why? Need to invest
  - Continent events [those “ruled” by luck or fortuna] with meaning significance

Function: To place order/meaning on arbitrary events!
"Sacred significance": cosmic, world-historical, or even "religious" proportions

Alternative?

A sense of living in a random/arbitrary/chaotic universe.

Mary Douglas: Culture is “A system or positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered.”

American Revolution: Sacred Moments

"First in the hearts of his countrymen"

Charles Wilson Peale, George Washington at the Battle of Princeton (1780-81)

"Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind in the service of my country." Speech to unruly troops, 1783

John Trumbull, The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker’s Hill (1786)

Declaration of Independence 4 July 1776

"When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them…"

To Arms! Sorry- we just couldn’t wait

John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence (1787)

NB: Revolution is justified - articles of secession in S.
Yorktown: October 1781

Siege equipment: French
Engineers: French
Artillerymen: French
Artillery: French
American regular troops outnumbered by: French
Fleet in harbor: French

Watching your Arch-Enemy get paddled by their colonists: PRICELESS

Washington Crossing the Delaware, Emmanuel Luetz (1851) - 12 ft x 21 ft

Battle of Trenton, Dec. 26, 1776 (they crossed at night?)

CF: Friday: David, *The Tennis Court Oath*

“Treaty of Amity and Commerce” (1778)
Americans request 200 cannon, 30 mortars, 200,000 lbs gunpowder (not produced in colonies), arms and clothing for 25,000 men

KEY: An American Revolution?
House of Lords = U S Senate
House of Commons = U S House
Lifetime appointments for federal judges
Federalist #10: Dilute power of factions
Indirect elections: U S Senators; President/Electoral College

“All men are created equal”: unless they are non-white, non-male, or propertyless

“Why Paul Revere?”

LISTEN, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, “If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower, as a signal light,—
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm.”

Longfellow, 1860
Who are the “Americans”?

“A national language is a bond of national union.”

A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings (1790)

“In the essays, written within the last year, a considerable change of spelling is announced by way of experiment...The man who admits that the change of household, wonder, source, mouth into husband, mind, gone, month, is an improvement, must acknowledge also the writing of death, breath, roost, roog, month, to be an improvement.”

Noah Webster

Problem of logic?

A conflicted American system: self-representation, but not TOO much.

Franklin and Jefferson both initially oppose adoption of Constitution.

Franklin: “I confess that there are several parts of this Constitution which I do not at present approve, but I am not sure I shall never approve them. For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged by better information or fuller consideration to change opinions even on important subjects, which I once thought right, but found to be otherwise.”

Gridlock is GOOD? Susan Dunn: “scramble to the insipid center”

• French government is good because it is activist.
• Would she say the same thing now? CF: 202 - 207

Final Note In 2000:

Bush won Florida by 537 votes
Gore won New Mexico by 366 votes

statesofthevote.org
rockthevote.org
vote-smart.org

GET INVOLVED...
The world is run by those who show up