

# **From 'Factions' to Attack Ads – A History of American Politics**

Class 1

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# What We Will Cover in the Course - 1

- Politics before the Constitution
  - The Four Founding Cultures and their impact
  - The American Revolution
  - Notes About the Constitution
- From Washington to the Civil War
  - Factions
  - The Origins and Demise of the First Party System
  - The Origins and Demise of the Second Party System
  - Major Trends impacting on Politics

# What We Will Cover in the Course - 2

- From the Civil War to World War I
  - Reconstruction
  - Politics in the Gilded Age
  - The Nuts and Bolts of Politics
  - Political Machines
- From World War I to World War II
  - The 1920s
  - The New Deal
  - Intervention vs Isolation

# What We Will Cover in the Course - 3

- From WWII to Obama
  - Cold War and McCarthyism
  - The 1960s & Political Polarization
    - The South Becomes Republican
  - The New Conservatism
  - The Impact of Television
    - Attack Ads & Political Commercials
- Some Changes – Political Conventions & Voting
- Notes on Some Key Elections
- Some Keys to the 2012 Presidential Election

# What We Will Cover Today

- The Four Founding Cultures and their impact on American Politics
- Politics and the American Revolution
- The Founding Fathers and the Constitution
- The Founding Fathers' Views of Factions

# The Regional Culture Origins of American Politics

# Four Founding Cultures

- English Settlement of the New World Consisted of 4 Distinct Founding Cultures
- They consisted of:
  - Puritan New England
  - Virginia/Tidewater South
  - The Mid-Atlantic Colonies
    - Delaware Valley
    - New York
  - The Frontier

# Roots of the Different Cultures

- The English Reformation and its long-term consequences
- British migration to America came largely from four distinct regions
  - \_ These regions differed widely in their socio-economic-cultural-religious characteristics
- Migration to America from the distinct regions took place
  - \_ In different time frames
  - \_ Involved differing social strata in each region
    - Each strata had predominantly different reasons for emigrating.
- The areas or colonies that British migrants settled had distinctive geographies, climates, and economies



# Puritan New England

# The Puritans

- The Puritans in England were largely an emerging middle class of small property owners, farmers, and self-employed shopkeepers and skilled artisans
  - They were highly literate
  - They felt threatened by the economic upheaval, crime, and poverty of an England undergoing a rural ‘enclosure’ movement that was driving many English peasants off the land
  - They were largely concentrated in East Anglia, a center of the textile industry which in the 1620s-1630s was in a depressed state

# Geography & Climate

- New England had a distinctive geography which greatly influenced its subsequent economic and political development
  - Land was generally poor due to stony, glaciated soil
  - Rivers not generally navigable but fast-flowing
  - Near excellent ocean fishing areas
- New England had a wet temperate climate that was cold in winter with a short growing season
  - Healthy for European settlers but relatively unhealthy for Blacks

# New England Colonial Economy

- Family Farms
  - Pioneer/Subsistence
  - Largely Subsistence
- Fishing
  - Export of salted fish, furs, timber, and timber products (planks, ships' masts, barrel staves, barrels & charcoal)
- Shipbuilding and related enterprises
  - Sawmills
  - Iron foundries
  - Barrel makers
  - Sail makers

# Calvinism & Politics

- Puritanism (and Calvinism) contributed three major ideas – both with political implications:
  - First, the idea of the “city upon the hill”
    - If society was to create “the city upon the hill” envisioned by Winthrop and the Puritans, then
      - The state had a major role to play in its creation
  - Second, the idea that every person should be able to read the Bible
    - This led to public grammar schools and near universal literacy

# Calvinism & Politics - 2

- Third, the idea that the godly should rule over the unregenerate. This idea led in two directions:
  - A state ruled by the godly should criminalize and punish sin
    - Led to the idea that if something was immoral, it should be illegal
  - The state should perfect the society by instituting the reforms and creating the infrastructure necessary for godliness to flourish

Virginia/Tidewater South

# The Virginians/Tidewater South

- Most settlers came from the South and West of England but some came from the West Indies
  - This area of England was dominated by a small landowning class with large manor houses and lording over a mass of tenant farmers, many of whom were being displaced by the enclosure movement
- Settlement motivated by a desire for profit and land
- Settlers consisted of
  - Indentured Servants (at least 75%)
  - Royalist Gentry
  - Slaves



# The Virginians/Tidewater South

- Climate
  - Hot, humid summers with high mortality
- Settlement Patterns
  - Dispersed Settlement on rich alluvial soils
    - Riverine plantations
    - Dispersed farms
  - Only one Town in Virginia in 17th century
  - Where 2 or 3 roads met, there was often a tavern or pub

# The Virginians/Tidewater South

- Social Structure
  - Colonial Elite of Plantation Owners – about 10%
  - Yeoman Farmers – about 20%-30%
  - Lower Classes = about 60%-70%
    - Tenant Farmers
    - Indentured Servants & Free Laborers
    - Dependent Paupers
    - Slaves

# The Virginians/Tidewater South

- Slavery began in 1619. As time went on, slavery became harsher
  - 1660s: Slaves now served *durante vita* rather than limited terms of indenture
  - 1691: Freeing of slaves forbidden unless freed slaves were exiled from the colony
  - 1705: Prohibition of interracial marriage & criminalization of interracial sex by white women
  - As skin color became the mark of slave identity, race began to obscure social class divisions

# Views with Political Implications

- A commitment to the defense of slavery
- A belief that taxes should be low
- A feeling on the part of the plantation elite that they were being economically exploited
  - Dependency on a cash-crop economy over whose selling prices they had no control
  - Belief that the English merchants to whom they sold their tobacco exploited them

# Planter Elite Concepts of Liberty

- The planter elite saw liberty as “hegemonic” liberty
  - One corollary was the idea of personal self-control
  - Another was the idea of minimal government
- This led to the following:
  - “No taxation without representation”
  - Concept of freedom as a condition of social independence
  - Concept of dominion over one’s self

# Cultural Ideas with Political Implications

- Education for Elites but not for the Common People
- A contempt for manual labor
- A sense that only governmental and military service, plantation ownership & management, and intellectual pursuits were appropriate for a gentleman
- Strong sense of “honor”
  - Honor as virtue and good conduct
  - Honor as valor, bravery & willingness to defend his manliness and good reputation

# Mid-Atlantic Colonies

# Historical Notes: New Netherlands

- The Dutch policy of religious toleration attracted a mix of Dutch Reformed, English Puritans, English and Welsh Quakers, German Protestants, Scandinavian Lutherans, French Huegenots, and Jews
  - Immigrants mostly family groups of modest means and mostly farmers or artisans
  - Dutch were a minority in their own colony with non-Dutch whites nearly half the colonists
  - 10% of the colonists were enslaved Africans



# The Middle Colonies: Pennsylvania

- Settlers

- Like the New England Puritans, most came in freedom as families of middling means. Only a third were indentured servants
- Nearly 10% were Irish.
- There were also significant numbers of Welsh, Dutch, and Germans – most of whom came from the Rhineland and spoke a mixed German-Dutch Rhenish dialect.
- The vast bulk of the English Quakers came from the North Midlands.

# Historical Notes: Pennsylvania

- In 1681, the Duke of York granted Pennsylvania to William Penn. Penn saw the new colony as a “holy experiment” and an “example to the nations”
- Unlike Massachusetts or Virginia/Tidewater South, there would be no privileged church, no tax-supported religious establishment, and equal rights for all, including non-Quakers and non-British

# Delaware & Hudson Valleys

- Settlement patterns
  - Generally small hamlets supported by market towns
- Geography
  - Rolling fertile countryside with several major navigable rivers
- Climate
  - Temperate & favorable to European settlement

# Delaware & Hudson Valley

- Economic Characteristics
  - Good grain and cattle producing area
  - Well-suited for commercial and industrial development
    - The estuaries of both the Hudson and Delaware rivers provided excellent sites for ports (e.g. New York City & Philadelphia)
  - Close to Philadelphia were large deposits of building stone, coal, copper, iron ore, and dense forests

# Notes About the Mid-Atlantic Colonies

- Unlike New England and the Tidewater South
  - They were ethnically and religiously diverse
  - They practiced religious toleration
- Unlike the Tidewater South (and much of New England)
  - They had an economy of small farms, commercial enterprises, and pre-industrial craft manufacturing
- They defined a distinctive culture and social order that precociously anticipated the American future

# Frontier Settlers

Border English, Lowland Scots & Scots-Irish

# The Borderlands

- Frontier largely settled by immigrants from the English-Scotch frontier and from Ulster
  - Northern counties of England
  - Scottish lowlands
  - Scottish and English settlers in Ulster
- War and conflict defined much of the culture of this borderlands area
  - The borderland area was a frequent theater of war
  - It was an area dominated by local warlords

# The Borderlands

- In this area of endemic violence,
  - Blood relationships loomed large. Loyalty to the family and the clan ranked far above loyalty to the crown
  - There was little trust in legal institutions. People resorted to either personal violence, clan feuds, or a powerful warlord for vengeance or protection
- Borderland culture was carried by the Scots and English settlers to Ulster – another land of endemic violence



# Notes about Borderland History

- In the 18th Century, the borderlands were finally pacified
- As a result of pacification, economic exploitation, famine, and decline of the linen industry, there was a large scale migration to America
  - Between 1717 and 1775, more than 250,000 emigrated to America

# Characteristics of Borderland Emigrants

- Most of the emigrants were tenant farmers with a minority of craftsmen and petty traders
  - Many from Ulster had worked in the linen trade, but had been thrown out of work by a major recession from 1772-1774
  - English border migrants were mostly Anglicans while the Scots and those from Ulster were mostly Presbyterian
- A small minority were landowning farmers
- About 1%-2% were members of the gentry or persons of wealth

# The American Frontier

- Because the American backcountry was occupied by strong and warlike Indian tribes, it was just as dangerous as Ulster and the British borderlands had been
- Warfare between borderers and Indians began in the late-17th century and continued until the early-19th century

# The Frontier

- Socio-economic class structure
  - A few very rich landlords.
    - The top decile of landowners owned 40% to 80% of the land in East Tennessee
  - A middle class that was small by comparison with other colonies
  - A large class of squatters who occupied the land but whose legal title to the land was not recognized
  - A large class of landless tenants
    - 1/3 to 1/2 of the taxable white males owned no land

# The Frontier

- Notes About the Backcountry Elite
  - Elite status was dependent upon one's wealth and power
    - A backcountry family that lost its property fell to a lower level of society and lost its elite state. There was no concept of genteel poverty
    - Unlike other elites, it was not distinguished by learning, breeding, intellect, or refinement
  - People who rose to positions of leadership commonly did so by bold and decisive acts
  - The politics of the backcountry consisted of charismatic leaders and personal followings

# Cultural Traits with Political Implications

- Strong tendency toward vigilantism
  - Vigilantism on the frontier reflected the tradition of retributive folk justice existing in the British borderlands
- Strong sense of personal “honor”
  - A man’s worth was based on others’ views of his courage and willingness to confront any insult or challenge
- A tradition of weak state authority combined with a popular distrust of it

# Colonial Governments

# Notes on Government - 1

- All Colonial Governments consisted of an appointed Governor and an elected Assembly
- Local governments varied
  - New England
    - Township – governed by an annual town meeting and a board of selectmen plus subordinate elected town officials
  - Virginia/Tidewater South
    - Based on the county & parish – governed by an elite of mostly plantation owners appointed by the governor



# Notes on Government - 2

## – Mid-Atlantic Colonies

- Based on the county – governed by elected county commissioners along with other subordinate elected officials

## – Frontier

- While there were official sheriffs, order-keeping was often done by ad hoc groups of self-appointed vigilantes
  - This reflected the tradition of retributive folk justice that was carried from the British borderlands to the American backcountry
  - Of 326 vigilante movements, 211 occurred in the southern highlands and the southern rim. Most of the remainder were on the fringes of that region

# Politics and the American Revolution

# Road to Revolution

- From their beginnings to the 1760s, England had largely left the American colonies on their own. This reflected:
  - English Crown's fiscal poverty
    - Colonies left to defend themselves
  - Political turmoil in 17th century England as crown battled parliament for supremacy
  - England's involvement in a succession of 18th century wars with France

# Road to Revolution

- Between 1660 and 1760, England's elite created a set of new institutions which still dominate English life
  - A Royal Navy that dominated the seas
  - The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
  - Bank of England
  - The regimental tradition of the British Army
  - The concept of the king-in-parliament and the institution of the prime minister
  - Whitehall bureaucracy

# Road to Revolution

- Despite England's military buildup, the colonies were still left to fend for themselves since
  - British military strategy was focused on protecting England and Ireland from French invasion and supporting European allies on the Continent
  - In so far as resources were diverted to the Western Hemisphere, they went to protect the sugar-producing islands of the West Indies

# Impact of the Seven Years War

- The Seven Year War brought about 25,000 British troops to the colonies -- the first time that British troops had conducted military operations on the American mainland.
  - English officers were appalled to discover that the colonists routinely ignored imperial regulations, such as the 1733 Molasses Act
  - New Englanders were shocked by the irreligion, swearing, gambling, whoring, and Sabbath-breaking of British troops

# Implications of British Victory

- The British Victory in the Seven Years War which ended in 1763
  - Permitted the large colonial population to break through the Appalachian Mountains into the vast Mississippi River Valley watershed
    - This led to major Indian wars – one with the Cherokees in the South and the other with the Indians of the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes
    - To mollify the Indians, the British barred settlement west of the Appalachians

# Implications of British Victory - 2

- The conquest of Canada deprived the colonists and the British of a common enemy that had united them in the past
  - This victory encouraged the British to restructure the Empire and make the colonists pay a greater share of the costs
  - The victory emboldened the colonists to defy the British because they no longer needed protection from the French



# Implications of British Victory - 3

- The Seven Years War doubled the British national debt from a prewar £73 million to a postwar £137 million, with interest payments consuming more than 60% of the annual budget.
  - In addition, the crown decided to maintain a 10,000 man garrison in the colonies, primarily in Canada and the Great Lakes
- This led Parliament to begin taxing the colonies

# Implications of British Victory - 4

- The Seven Years War brought American soldiers from different colonies together in various campaigns
  - The soldiers from different colonies saw that they were more alike than different and that they were all different from the British

# Implications of British Victory - 5

- The Seven Year War and the postwar years had marked the first time that large numbers of British troops had been stationed in America
  - The colonial leaders saw the new permanent army in North America as a threat rather than as a source of protection
    - The presence of troops provided a pretense for new taxes
    - The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was seen as protecting the Indians from the Colonists

# Implications of British Victory - 6

- American leaders feared that small new taxes would set precedents for future increasing levies
  - This would enrich an official elite around the royal governors while impoverishing common taxpayers and limiting social mobility
  - It would abridge both the traditional autonomy of the colonies and the property rights of the colonists

# Impact of the Stamp Act

- The Stamp Act taxes fell most heavily on newsprint and legal documents
  - this offended four groups capable of causing serious trouble for the British – newspaper printers, lawyers, merchants, & college students
    - These groups constituted the opinion makers of the colonies
  - It politicized the press by making it a forum for discussion and protest, turning protest into a coherent opposition movement

# Bringing America into Line

- Besides taxing the colonies, England tried to bring the American colonies into line with English practices
  - In 1758, the Archbishop of Canterbury tried to create a uniform Anglican religious establishment in the American colonies
  - In 1774, Governor Bernard of Massachusetts proposed the creation of an American peerage similar to that of the Irish peerage
- These constituted additional causes of colonial fear and resentment

# Road to Revolution

- British policies after 1763 threatened all four American cultures
  - \_ The Puritans resented any interference with their local autonomy
  - \_ The Tidewater gentry felt economically exploited by the debts caused by their single cash-crop dependence
  - \_ The backcountry frontiersmen resented English treatment in their native homeland and the prohibition of settlement west of the Appalachians
- Result: these cultures forgot their differences and joined together in the movement that led to the American Revolution

# Breaking Away from Great Britain

- The loyalists who opposed the Revolution tended to be groups outside the major regional cultures
  - The imperial elites in the colonial capitals
  - Ethnic groups who lived on the margins of the major cultures
    - the polyglot population of lower New York, the Highland Scots of Carolina, and the African slaves
- The Delaware Valley with its pacifist Quaker and German Pietist populations was largely neutral



# The Founding Fathers and the Constitution

# Articles of Confederation - 1

- Created by the Second Continental Congress in 1777
- Served as a provisional government during and after the Revolutionary War out of a need to have "a plan of confederacy for securing the freedom, sovereignty, and independence of the United States."

# Articles of Confederation - 2

- Key Provisions
  - Each state had one vote
    - A state could have from 2 to 7 members in its delegation
    - Delegates appointed by state legislatures in its delegation
  - Could declare war, set weights and measures, and adjudicate disputes between states
  - Could request that states provide funds, but could not tax citizens directly
  - Declared the confederation to be “a perpetual union”

# Articles of Confederation - 3

- Weaknesses
  - Could not enforce its edicts or decisions
  - Could not tax
  - Could not regulate interstate commerce or foreign trade
  - Lacked both an executive and a national court
  - Was unable to pay Revolutionary War debts
  - Amending the Articles required the consent of all the states

# The Constitutional Convention

- Called to address the following issues
  - The Debt Question
  - Creating a system of public credit (i.e public debt)
  - Shay’s Rebellion & Domestic Dissention within the states
    - Aggravated by the post-Revolutionary War recession
  - Reconciling a belief in popular sovereignty with a fear of popular democracy and the tyranny of a majority
  - Weakness of the Confederation Government

# The Constitutional Convention - 2

- While addressing the issues noted above, the Convention decided to:
  - Scrap the Articles of Confederation
  - Create a new Constitution
- The Convention:
  - Lasted from May 14th to September 17th 1787
  - Was presided over by George Washington
  - Conducted its deliberations in secret

## Some Notes about the Constitution - 1

- The Constitution embodied the concept of “federalism” as a compromise between the idea of a loose confederation and a strong unitary state
- One purpose of the Constitution was to create an institutional consensus in which the four regional cultures could interact while mutually agreeing to respect their various differences

## Some Notes About the Constitution - 2

- The Constitution was a product of the elites of New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Tidewater South
- Over time, the Constitution's framers came to be seen as visionaries and venerated as "founding fathers."
  - They came to be seen as wiser than current generations
    - This gave rise to "Originalism" and the belief that we have strayed from the intentions of the founding fathers and that we need to return to their principles and ideas



# Problematical Aspects of the Constitution - 1

- Ambiguity regarding slavery
  - Status of slavery in the territories
  - Power of Congress over slavery in the District of Columbia
  - Whether the power of Congress to regulate commerce extended to the interstate slave trade
  - Whether Congress could impose conditions on a new state
- Provision for Amendment

# Problematical Aspects of the Constitution - 2

- The Electoral College
  - Created to provide an indirect process for choosing a president
    - The Founding Fathers distrusted the capability of the citizenry to choose a president
      - There was no way the people could know the various candidates and thus be able to judge their qualifications
    - The Founding Fathers saw the Electoral College as essentially a nominating committee with the election of the president actually being done by the House of Representatives
  - Represented a compromise between big and small states
    - Enabled the Convention to finesse the slavery issue

# Problematical Aspects of the Constitution - 3

- The creation of the electoral college
  - The initial provision that each presidential elector cast two votes – with the two top vote-getters becoming president and vice-president – laid the groundwork for the 1800 election debacle
  - The combination of the electoral college and “winner-take-all” magnified the importance of the most heavily populated states and made sectional parties feasible
  - Made it possible for the loser of the popular vote to still become president
    - This happened in 1876, 1888, and 2000

## Problematical Aspects of the Constitution - 4

- While the Articles of Confederation said that the union was perpetual, the Constitution said nothing concerning perpetuity
- Office of the Vice President
- Did not define citizenship
  - Left the definition of citizenship to the states