

American Social & Cultural History

Class 1

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What We Will Cover in this Course

- The characteristics and contributions of the cultures that settled America
 - The England and Europe they left behind
- Discuss each of the Founding Cultures
 - New England
 - The South
 - Virginia/Tidewater
 - The Deep South
 - The Middle Colonies
 - New Netherlands
 - Pennsylvania

What We Will Cover in this Course - 2

- The Frontier/Borderland Culture
- Spanish America
- The American Revolution
 - Preceding Events
 - Impacts
- How Four Cultures Became Two Sections
 - Cotton & Slavery
 - Industrialization & Diverging Economies
 - Westward Movement

What We Will Cover in this Course - 3

- Some of the changes in everyday life and culture that took place between 1800 and 1860
- Impact of the Civil War
- The Emergence of two new cultures
 - The ‘Wild West’ and its settlement
- The Rise of “Jim Crow”

What We Will Cover in this Course - 4

- Two innovations that began before the Civil War but reached their zenith in the later-19th Century
 - Railroads
 - Western Union and the telegraph
- New Communication innovations
 - The Post Office and the mail
 - Cheap mass-circulation newspapers and magazines
 - The typewriter
 - The telephone

What We Will Cover in this Course - 5

- Immigration
- New Cultural Nations
- America in 1900
 - Changes in the home from 1865-1900
 - Changes in the office from 1865-1900
- Electricity and its impacts
- The skyscraper city
- The automobile and its impacts

What We Will Cover in this Course - 6

- Radio and its impacts
- Movies and their impacts
- A Note about the Roaring 20s and the Great Depression
 - Prohibition and Culture Wars
- World War II and its impacts
- Television

What We Will Cover in this Course - 7

- America in the 1950s
 - Changes in the home from 1900-1950
 - Changes in the office from 1900-1950
- The changes brought about by the 1960s and 1970s
 - The Culture Wars
- The impact of the computer & digital media

Five Founding Cultures

- The Puritans
- The South
 - Virginia/Tidewater
 - Deep South
- The Middle Colonies
 - The Dutch
 - The Quakers & German Pietists
- The Frontier
- Spanish America

Key Ideas – First Class

- English Settlement of the New World Led to the Creation of 4 Distinct Founding Cultures
- These 4 Cultures reflected differences in:
 - The different religions that dominated
 - The different reasons for emigration to the New World
 - The demographic characteristics of the early settlers
 - The distinct geographic and cultural regions from which they came
 - The different geography and climate of the regions in which they settle

The England They Left

- The English Class Structure
 - Monarch
 - Major Nobility
 - Minor Nobility – Knights, Esquires & Gentlemen
 - Learned Professions – Lawyers, Clergy & Academics
 - Prominent Citizens – alderman, burgesses & wealthy merchants
 - Yeomanry – landowning farmers & skilled artisans
 - Laborers & Cottagers – tenant farmers & day laborers
 - Beggars

The England They Left

– The Political-Religious Situation

- The English Reformation left a spectrum of religious groupings which differed on their theology, their concepts of church polity, and the role of the church ministry
- The Religious Factions
 - Anglicans
 - Presbyterians
 - Congregationalists
 - Separatists
 - Anabaptists
 - Quakers

The Anglicans

- The Anglicans favored
 - an inclusive national church,
 - a hierarchy of bishops and priests,
 - compulsory church taxes,
 - a union of church and crown,
 - a creed defined by the Book of Common Prayer, and
 - a liturgy and ritual that retained much of Catholic practice
- The Anglicans were strongest in the south and west of England

Calvinism

- Five Calvinist doctrines had a vital impact on the culture of Puritan New England and later on revivalist and fundamentalist Protestantism
 - Depravity – man is corrupted by original sin
 - Covenant – the Christian had a contractual covenant relationship with God
 - Election – Christ died only for the elect
 - Grace – God’s gift to the elect and the instrument of their salvation.
 - Love – Puritans were bound to love one another in a godly way

The Presbyterians

- The Presbyterians favored
 - A broad national church, but one ruled by synods of ministers and elders rather than bishops and priests
 - Calvinist theology
 - Worship centered on preaching
- The Presbyterians were dominant in Scotland and numerous in North Britain and Ulster

The Congregationalists

- The Congregationalists favored
 - A church government in the form of a confederacy of independent congregations
 - Accepted the Five Points of Calvinism
 - Wanted to capture the Anglican Church in order to complete its Reformation
- Strong in East Anglia and the eastern counties of England
- Became the Puritans of New England

The Separatists

- The Separatists favored
 - A church of fully autonomous congregations
 - Accepted the Five Points of Calvinism
 - Separation from the Church of England on the grounds that it was incapable of reform
- Became the Pilgrims of Plymouth

The Anabaptists

- The Anabaptists favored
 - The Five Points of Calvinism
 - Restriction of baptism to regenerate adult Christians
 - Separation of Church and State
- Became the founders of Rhode Island and the Baptists

The Quakers

- The Quakers
 - Rejected the legitimacy of established churches, ordained clergy, and formal liturgy
 - Believed that a holy spirit called the Inner Light dwelled within all people
 - Did not accept the Calvinist concepts of depravity and predestination
- Centered on the English Midlands

Political Implications

- Crown used the Anglican Church to promote political and religious conformity
 - Equated religious dissent with treason as well as heresy
 - Gave political significance to every religious issue
 - Led people with social and political grievances to express them using religious rhetoric

Puritan New England

The Puritans

- The England They Left
 - Most from East Anglia and to some extent London
 - Area of villages and hamlets with isolated farms being rare
 - Center of the English textile industry, which during the 1620s was in a depressed state
 - Region with a high rate of literacy
 - Stronghold of English Puritanism

The Puritans

- What they wanted
 - To purge the Church of its Catholic remnants
 - A reformed church that consisted of autonomous congregations that focused on Bible-reading, prayer groups, and sermons delivered by learned and zealous ministers
- Puritanism appealed to many pious and propertied people who were weary of the economic upheaval, crime, and poverty of an England undergoing a rural 'enclosure' movement

The Puritans

- Puritanism, however, alienated most Englishmen who preferred Anglicanism, ceremonial religious services, traditional culture, and deference to the monarch
- Puritanism alarmed the 17th Century English Kings who:
 - Wanted a united realm whose citizens were loyal to both the king and the Anglican Church
 - Believed that the Puritan insistence on the spiritual equality of all godly men and the superiority of the godly to all ungodly individuals was subversive

The Puritans

- In 1628, Charles I and Bishop Laud began purging Puritan ministers from the Anglican Church for refusing to conduct the high church liturgy.
- In 1629, Charles I dissolved Parliament and proceeded to rule arbitrarily. This led to the Great Migration

The Puritans

- In 1630, under the leadership of John Winthrop, a syndicate of wealthy Puritans obtained a royal charter as the Massachusetts Bay Company
- The leaders of the company relocated to Massachusetts with their capital, charter, and records
 - This converted a commercial charter into a self-governing colony
 - In Massachusetts, the company leaders established a republic, with an elected governor, deputy governor, and a legislature (known as the General Court)

The Puritans

- About 14,000 Puritans participated in the Great Migration.
- Some key facts:
 - Most Puritans stayed in England
 - Only 30% of emigrants in the 1630s went to New England
 - Post-1640 emigration to New England was minimal
 - Most paid their own way and emigrated in family groups
 - There were 150 males for every 100 females

The Puritans

- Unlike the Chesapeake and the West Indies, the healthier and more sex-balanced New England population had a rapid growth through natural increase
- During the 17th century, New England received 21,000 immigrants. Yet by 1700, the population had grown to 91,000

“A City on a Hill”

- The Puritans came to New England with the idea of creating a new religious utopia - a “city on a hill” that would serve as a model for the rest of the world
 - The Puritans favored self-governing communities and were opposed to the creation of a landed aristocracy
 - Consequently, they allocated land to townships which then divided the land among individual families in a largely egalitarian way

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

The Puritans

- Fishing and the carrying trade demanded ships
- Demand for ships and abundant & cheap timber led to New England becoming a major shipbuilding center
- Shipyards stimulated a host of related enterprises
 - Sawmills
 - Iron foundries
 - Barrel makers
 - Sail makers

The Puritans

- While fishing, shipbuilding, and the carrying trade were important, largely subsistence agriculture was the mainstay of the New England economy
 - 80% of Massachusetts towns were farming towns
 - 80%-90% of adult males engaged in agriculture
- The lack of a plantation staple meant that New England avoided the development of a plantation economy

The Puritans

- Without a profitable plantation export crop, there was no demand for, or ability to finance, the importation of indentured servants or slaves
 - By 1700, indentured servants were only 5% of the population
 - By 1700, slaves were only 2% of the population

Government

- Colonial Government – Governor, Lt Gov & an elected assembly – the General Court
- Township –
 - Governed by the annual town meeting which set the tax rates and enacted town laws and policies
 - A board of selectmen together with other elected officials (constable, militia officers, fence viewers, highway overseers) carried out town policies and ran the town on a day-to-day basis.

Town Meetings

- Members consisted of all male heads of a household in the town
- Usually characterized by a low level of turnout – normally 10% to 30% of the adult males unless there was a controversial question in which case participation surged
- Object was not rule by a majority, but the achievement of an overwhelming consensus
- Vote counts were very rarely recorded, but merely noted as the ‘will of the town’

Lifestyles

- In contrast to Virginia, rural New England had an overwhelmingly middle-class lifestyle
 - Houses tended to be Cape Cod box style, but later the salt-box house became common as the colony prospered
 - Both of these house styles were common in East Anglia
 - Simple clothing that reflected the customary folk costumes of 17th century East Anglia
 - To discourage excessive display, strict sumptuary laws existed

Lifestyles - Diet

- Baked beans, brown bread (mixed whole wheat & corn meal), vegetables, and field peas were a dietary mainstay along with meat and fish
- Boiled dinners with vegetable and meat or fish submerged in water and boiled without seasoning
- The common beverages was beer in the 17th century and fermented apple cider in the 18th

Lifestyles – Diet - 2

- The East Anglia tradition of baking became an important part of the New England culinary tradition.
 - The Thanksgiving dinner was largely baked – turkey, beans, bread, squash, and pies
 - The Pie in its various forms – pumpkin, apple, cherry, plum, custard, mince – became a vital part of the New England and later the American culinary tradition

Key Cultural Ideas

- God was continually intervening in the world through various happenings and phenomena which Puritans saw as ‘God’s remarkable providences in the world’
 - A instance of good luck or good fortune was seen as a sign of God’s favor
 - No such thing as a random or chance event

Key Cultural Ideas - 2

- Fear of witchcraft
 - At least 344 individuals were formally accused of witchcraft in New England
 - Of the 344, 35 were executed
 - More than 95% of the formal accusations and more than 90% of the executions in British America occurred in New England

Key Cultural Ideas - 2

- Rigorous observation of the Sabbath
 - Work, play, & unnecessary travel forbidden
- The idea that the state should criminalize and punish sin, lest the colony provoke the wrath of God
 - Led to the idea that if it was immoral, it should be illegal
- Every person should be able to read the Bible
 - Led to public grammar schools and near universal literacy

The Puritans and Sex

- Saw sex between a husband and wife as an important and necessary part of marriage
 - Sexual love and sensual bonds were strongly encouraged
- Strongly condemned sex outside of marriage
 - Adultery was theoretically a capital crime
 - Homosexuality, Bestiality, and Masturbation condemned
 - Strong taboo against contraception
 - Fornication was also condemned.
 - Couples guilty of premarital sex could not have their children baptized unless they made a full public confession before the congregation.
- Very low rates of illegitimacy and prenuptial pregnancy

Childrearing

- Due to depravity, children had a propensity to evil
- Result – a need for strict discipline and rigorous supervision
- Disciplinary focus on precept, parental example, reward, and exhortation
 - Dislike of corporal punishment
- Routine placing out of children into other homes

The Puritans

- Puritans rejected the traditional liturgical calendar retained by the Anglican Church
- Puritans had four major holidays
 - Election Day
 - Commencement Day
 - Thanksgiving
 - Training Day

The Puritans

- Crime
 - Homicide rates in 17th century New England were less than half those of the Chesapeake colonies. Likewise with assaults
 - Most crimes were crimes against order
 - Small Sabbath violations
 - Minor cases of disturbing the peace
 - Domestic disturbances
 - Drunkenness

The Puritans

- Sources of Cultural Strain & Subsequent Change
 - Initially, the Puritans restricted full formal church membership to “visible saints”
 - Declining religious fervor led to the “Halfway Covenant” in 1662
 - In the 18th century, the issue of church membership led to formal schism between the rationalist Old Lights and the revivalist New Lights

Puritanism & Politics

- Puritanism (and Calvinism) contributed four major ideas – all with political implications:
 - First, the idea of “the city upon the hill”
 - This introduced an idealist and utopian strain of thinking into American politics
 - It carried implications for the role of the State
 - Second, the idea that every person should be able to read the Bible
 - This led to public grammar schools and near universal literacy
 - It also made a high level of education a mark of status

Puritanism & 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 and educated populace necessary for godliness to flourish
- Fourth, the ideas of American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny