

A. Colonial and Revolutionary America

3. The American colonies up to 1754

i. **Purpose:** This unit provides students with the intellectual, religious, social, and political background to the French and Indian War. Specifically, students will be exposed to the changing nature of religious expression and practice, the tensions and resistance involved with the institutionalization of slavery, and the set of circumstances precipitating the French and Indian War.

ii. **Background websites:**

1. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=683
2. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=681
3. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=684
4. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=685

iii. **Key terms:**

1. The Enlightenment
2. The Great Awakening
3. The Middle Passage
4. Gullah
5. The Stono Rebellion

iv. **Key Concepts:**

1. How did the changing nature of religious expression and practice shape the colonies?
2. What tensions arose from the institutionalization of slavery? What kinds of resistance strategies were implemented?
3. What were the global and colonial factors that contributed to the coming of the "French and Indian War"?

v. **Primary Documents:**

1. The Maryland Toleration Act, 1649:
<http://odur.let.rug.nl/%7Eusa/D/1601-1650/maryland/mta.htm>
2. Gottlieb Mittelberger on the Misfortune of Indentured Servants:
<http://odur.let.rug.nl/%7Eusa/D/1601-1650/mittelberger/servan.htm>
3. The Selling of Joseph:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h301t.html>

Lecture on the American Colonies to 1754

I. The Growing Colonial Population and an Ever-Expanding Economy

The most important fact about 18th century colonial America was its phenomenal population growth

i. Vast increase in Colonial population in 1700 compared to 1770

In 1700, the colonists barely numbered 250,000, while by 1770, there were well over 2 million

ii. Dramatic change in number of colonists to Englishmen, 1700-1770

A comparison to England was that in 1700 there were 19 people in England for every American colonist, in 1770, there were only 3

iii. Natural increase and immigration

Derived from natural increase (3/4) and immigration (1/4)
About 800,000 immigrants streamed in from places such as England, Scotland, Ireland, modern day Germany, Africa

iv. Abundance of land

But the colonies didn't suffer from mass overpopulation and starvation due to too many people...b/c of the abundance of land.
The abundance of land in the colonies made labor precious, and the colonists always needed more. The colonists' insatiable labor demand was the fundamental economic environment that sustained the mushrooming population

II. New England: From Puritans to Yankee Traders

By the mid to late 17th century, ministers still enjoyed high status in New England, but the Yankee trader had replaced the Puritan minister as the symbolic New Englander

i. Natural population increase

The population of New England increased six fold b/w 1700 and 1770, but it still lagged behind the other areas b/c immigrants tended to steer clear—b/c they were too religiously intolerant
Much more “English” in character

ii. Land Distribution

They had a limited amount of land (bounded by the Hudson River on the west and the St. Lawrence River to the north)
They had powerful peoples around them, too (Indians, such as the Iroquois and the Mohicans, also the colony of Quebec)
The main reason they were pinched for land, though was that they chose to work with what they had

iii. Farms, trade, and consumerism

The New Englanders' farms were agriculturally diverse; they didn't just rely on one crop. As consumers, New England farmers made up the foundation of a diversified commercial economy that linked remote farms to markets throughout the world. Merchants dominated the commercial economy of New England, so much so that by 1770, the population, wealth and commercial activity of New England differed from what they had been in 1700. Ministers still enjoyed high status in New England, but the Yankee trader had replaced the Puritan minister as the symbolic New Englander.

III. The Middle Colonies: Immigrants, Wheat, and Work

In 1700, Pennsylvania was the sixth largest colony in British North America; by 1770, Pennsylvania's population surpassed that of every colony but Virginia

i. William Penn (1644-1718)

William Penn is known, of course, as the founder of Pennsylvania. He is also known as a famous Quaker and for his 'Great Treaty' with the Delaware. He saw the establishment of Pennsylvania as a Holy Experiment because he had seen the turmoil that had besieged the Southern and Northern colonies with Bacon's Rebellion and King Phillip's War, so wanted to do things differently and provide a safe haven for Quakers. Although, the province became prosperous and quite successful as a tolerant diverse society, Penn reckoned it a failure (only visiting it twice and getting into some serious debt).

ii. The not-so-English character of the middle colonies

In fact, immigrants made the middle colonies a uniquely diverse society. By the end of the 18th century, barely 1/3 of Pennsylvanians and less than 1/2 the population of the middle colonies traced their ancestry to England.

iii. German and Scots-Irish immigrants

Many German immigrants came over for religious freedom (Protestants) and the opportunities that colonial life in America could offer (Pennsylvania Dutch = corruption of word they used to describe themselves, the Deutsch). The Scots-Irish outnumbered the German immigrants two to one, also came for similar reasons to the Germans...also was determined by deteriorating economic conditions in northern Ireland, Scotland, and England.

iv. Pennsylvania: "The Best Poor [White] Man's Country"

Hired workers could make 3 or 4 times what they could in Europe. For that reason, not many slaves in the middle colonies (by 1770, there were 30,000 people of African descent, which amounted to about 7% of the total population). The reason that more slaves were not brought to the middle colonies was that farmers, the vast majority of the population, had little use for them. Most farms operated with family labor. Wheat, the most widely grown crop, did not require more labor than farmers could typically muster from relatives, neighbors, and a hired hand or two. Farmers made the middle colonies the breadbasket of North America – wheat being the main crop (their number one export).

v. Prosperity

The standard of living in rural Pennsylvania was probably higher than in any other agricultural region of the 18th century world

Philadelphia was the prime example of the middle colonies' flourishing – by 1776, it had a population of 75,000 – which dwarfed all other cities in the British Empire, except London. Merchants, many of whom were Quakers, were also in the ascendancy here too

The widespread conviction that good things come from work underscored the reputation of the middle colonies as the best poor man's country in the world. The promise of a worldly payoff made work the secular faith in the middle colonies

IV. The Southern Colonies: Land of Slavery

English, Scots-Irish and German immigrants came to the South, but it was the involuntary immigrants—the slaves—who made the most striking contribution to the booming population of the southern colonies. Slaves streamed into the Southern colonies during the 18th century, transforming the racial and ethnic composition of the population and shaping the region's economy, society, and politics.

i. The populous nature of the southern colonies

From 1700-1770, more colonists lived in the Southern colonies (Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia): about twice as many people lived in the South as in either the middle colonies or New England.

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The southern colonists clustered in two main areas:

1. Upper South (area surrounding the Chesapeake Bay) where tobacco was planted and most white southerners and most black southerners lived.
2. Lower South (specialized in rice and indigo production). Blacks in South Carolina outnumbered whites 2-1

ii. James Oglethorpe (1696-1785)

An Englishman who rose to prominence as both a general and a member of parliament, it was Oglethorpe's vision to have a colony free of society's evils, such as slavery, hard liquor, and a large landowning class!

He didn't want Georgia (named in honor of George II) to become another South Carolina—a few wealthy people, lots of slaves, and lots of tension = Stono Rebellion would prove him right in 1739)

He wanted small farmers who would defend the southern frontier of England's colonies as part of the bargain (one of the rules was landholdings be limited to 500 acres)

By 1754 (20 years on from colony's founding), Georgians had repealed Oglethorpe's laws and got themselves an elected assembly

iii. The African slave trade and the growth of slavery

Africans were "imported" from Africa, having to endure the infamous Middle Passage (about 15% of the slaves came from the Caribbean, but most came straight from Africa on ships that specialized in the slave trade and could bring about 200 across at a time)

Most people enslaved in Africa were young male adults, children formed about 10% and the mortality rate on board the ships was typically 15%
Estimated slave imports stand at around 10 million souls.

iv. The “Middle Passage”

Brutal. Described the journey from Africa to the New World.

v. Slave demographics

Differences b/w the slaves – planters preferred some types over others i.e. in the Upper South, planters preferred slaves from Senegambia, the Gold Coast, or bight of Biafra; in the Lower South, planters favored slaves from the central African Congo and Angola regions
The products of slave labor made the southern colonies by far the richest in North America.
The per capita wealth of free whites in the South was four times greater than that in New England and three times that in the middle colonies

V. Unifying Experiences

Although the societies of New England, the middle colonies, and the southern colonies became more sharply differentiated during the 18th century, colonists throughout British North America shared certain unifying experiences based on economics, religion, and their subjection to royal rule

i. Economics

The economies of all three regions had their roots in agriculture. The seasonal rhythms of plant life marked time for nearly everyone.

ii. Religion

A decline in the importance of religion marked another unifying experience, partly owing to the increase in religious diversity and also because matters of this world became more important, in general

iii. Royal rule

The fact that all of the 13 colonies’ governments answered directly to the British monarchy was a unifying experience for the colonists. Enemies the colonists perceived around them—the French to the north and west, Spaniards to the south, Indians almost everywhere—strengthened the colonists’ allegiance to England.

iv. Commerce and consumption

Colonial goods brought into focus an important lesson of 18th century commerce. Ordinary people, not just the wealthy elite, would buy things they desired, not only what they absolutely needed.

Because consumption so often arose from desire rather than necessity, it presented colonists—both women and men—with a novel array of choices. In many respects the choices were small, seemingly trivial: whether to buy knives and forks, teacups, or a clock. But such small choices confronted 18th century consumers with a big question: “what do you want?” That question did not simply ask about desires; it also identified who defined those desires: each person. As colonial consumers defined and expressed those desires with greater frequency during the 18th century, they became accustomed to thinking for themselves as individuals who had the power to make decisions that influenced the quality of their lives.

v. Enlightenment and revival

- a.** 18th century colonists could choose from almost as many religions as consumer goods. The bickering and dissension that often tore at 18th century churches grew out of the fundamental convictions of Protestantism (priesthood of all believers – lots of different interpretations of the Way). This strife engendered by the core of Protestant belief led many colonists to favor toleration of religious differences and peaceful coexistence among disputing churches
- b. Deism** – more educated colonists – believed in the general principles of Xianity, but avoided the hair-splitting arguments about whether it was the Presbyterians’ God, the Anglicans’ God, the Congregationalists’ God, or the Quakers’ God...
Deists shared the ideas of 18th century European Enlightenment thinkers, who believed that science and reason could disclose God’s laws in the natural order. Deists believed God was more like a watchmaker who assembled a watch from sprockets, gears, and springs and then let it run
- c.** As the Enlightenment influenced religion (above!), some ministers/Christians believed this Christian Rationalism was heretical, for it rejected the Calvinist belief that salvation came from grace, as the gift of God and that people must be saved to be full members of the church. Between 1720-1760s, ministers from a variety of denominations called for a renewal of these beliefs in a series of revivals
- d.** The Great Awakening shattered the existing church structure of the colonies, as congregations wakened to the teachings and vigorous preaching style of revivalist, or New Light, ministers (vs. Old Light i.e. Anglican ministers)
- e.** Thus, to combat Deism, some preachers, such as Jonathan Edwards, appealed to the masses with fiery messages aimed at the heart and not the head. Edwards reaped a harvest of souls by reemphasizing traditional Puritan doctrines of humanity’s utter depravity and God’s vengeful omnipotence. The title of his most famous sermon, “Sinners in the hands of an Angry God,” conveys the flavor of his message
You’re going to hell if you don’t change NOW!
Another example would be George Whitfield
There wasn’t a massive upsurge in church membership; however, the revivals expressed in religious terms many of the same democratic and egalitarian values expressed in economic terms by colonists’ patterns of consumption
Like consumption, revivals contributed to a set of common experiences that bridged colonial divides of faith, region, class, and status

VII. Intellectual Trends in the 18th Century

Freedom of men under government is to have a standing rule to live by, common to everyone of that society, and made by the legislative power vested in it; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, when the rule prescribes not, and not to be subject to the inconstant, unknown, arbitrary will of another man.
John Locke

i. Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Isaac Newton was an English scientist and mathematician. He had one of the most brilliant minds the world has ever known. Newton developed several laws which help us understand the movement of any object. In doing so, he directly challenged many traditional

interpretations concerning “science,” but also indirectly challenged the notion that humans had no control over their own lives

ii. John Locke (1632-1704)

English philosopher, founder of British empiricism, Locke’s work in philosophy and political theory complemented what Newton was doing in science and took Enlightenment ideas to new heights.

Locke argued in his 1690 work, “Essay Concerning Human Understanding” that humans are born with the ability to learn, to use their acquired knowledge to benefit society. Like, other Enlightenment thinkers, he believed in freedom, and the possibility of human progress, in the right of people to improve the conditions in which they live

In his “Two Treatises on Civil Government” (1690), Locke laid the theoretical framework for the American Revolution (still almost a century away), when he wrote that humans, according to natural law, had rights to life, liberty, and property. By social contract, they formed governments to guarantee those rights. If a state failed in its obligation, the people had a duty to rebel and establish a new government

VIII. Bonds of Empire

The policies of the British Empire provided the colonists a common framework of political expectations and experiences

i. Trade

During this period of consumer flourishing and trade the British restricted colonial trade to British goods and British-controlled markets

ii. Protection

The details of relations between Indians and the colonists differed from colony to colony and from year to year. But the colonists’ nagging perception of menace on the frontier kept them continually hoping for help from the British in keeping the Indians at bay and in maintaining the continual flow of goods.

iii. Lessons of political struggle

The heated political struggles b/w royal governors and colonial assemblies that occurred throughout the 18th century taught colonists a common set of political lessons:

1. Colonists learned to employ traditionally British ideas of representative government to defend their own interests
2. They learned to resist the definition of colonial interests issued by colonial governors and other royal officials. They learned that power in the British colonies rarely belonged to the British government

IX. The Dual Identity of British North American Colonists

- During the 18th century a distinctive society developed in British North America
 - Distinctly colonial and British
 - The bonds of the British Empire required colonists to think of themselves as British subjects and, at the same time, to consider their status as colonists
 - By the 1750s, colonists could not imagine that their distinctly dual identity—as British and as colonists—would soon become a source of intense conflict.
 - But by 1776, colonists in British North America had to choose whether they were British or American