

## The Origins of American Government:

1. The Enlightenment:
  - a. A movement of ideas in Europe and America in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - b. European Thinkers- i.e. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Montesquieu
  - c. Enlightenment thinkers attacked the divine right of kings, and hereditary privileges
  
2. Enlightenment Thinkers:
  - a. Thomas Hobbes:
    - i. Monarchy is the best form of government
    - ii. Social Contract Theory- people gave up all rights for protection by a king
  - b. John Locke:
    - i. Believed that people enjoyed natural rights
      1. Life, Liberty, and Property
    - ii. Social Contract Theory- people came together to form a community
      1. The community gives power to a ruler, who it promises to obey
        - a. (i.e. the laws we have to follow)
      2. If the king breaks his promise to respect the rights, we can rebel
  - c. Baron de Montesquieu:
    - i. Separation of Powers Theory- divide government into equal parts
      1. Legislative- the power to make the laws
      2. Executive- the power to carry and enforce the laws
      3. Judicial- the power to interpret and apply the law
  
3. Historical Documents:
  - a. The Magna Carta (1215):
    - i. 1<sup>st</sup> document to limit a king's power (Principle of limited government)
      1. Basis for the formation of Parliament
      2. Right to trial by jury
    - ii. Forced onto the king by the nobles
  
  - b. The Mayflower Compact (1620):
    - i. The Pilgrims came to America to establish their own colony and worship God in their own way

- ii. Landed at Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts
  - iii. Before leaving the Mayflower all the men signed an agreement to form its own community and to obey its rules (Principle of Self Government)
- c. The English Bill of Rights (1689):
  - i. Several kings attempted to impose absolute rule on their subjects
  - ii. Members of Parliament would enjoy the following rights
    1. Freedom of speech
    2. No armies raised in peacetime
    3. No taxes imposed without approval of Parliament
    4. Citizens could petition the government
    5. No excessive or cruel and unusual punishment
- d. Thomas Paine's Common Sense (1776):
  - i. American colonists came into conflict with the British government
  - ii. Argued it made no sense for colonies to be governed by a distant king
  - iii. Colonists should rebel and seek independence

### **Americans Declare Their Independence:**

- 4. French and Indian War:
  - a. Britain and Colonies versus the French and Native Americans
  - b. British won, put in to debt
    - i. British placed new taxes on the colonists
- 5. Taxation Without Representation:
  - a. Taxes raised on the colonists without seeking consents
  - b. Stamp Act (1765)
    - i. Must buy a stamp for every official document
    - ii. Colonists reacted by signing petitions and boycotting
    - iii. Repealed
  - c. Townshend Duty Acts
    - i. Replaced the Stamp Act and taxed common British goods
      1. Paper, glass, and etc.
  - d. Quartering Act
    - i. To prevent rioting in the colonies
    - ii. British sent extra troops and required them to live in homes with the colonists
  - e. Tea Act

- i. Tax on Tea → Boston Tea Party
    - 1. Colonists (Sons' of Liberty) dressed up as Native Americans and snuck onto a British merchant ship
    - 2. Threw the tea into Boston Harbor
  - f. Intolerable Acts
    - i. Designed to punish the colonists (specifically Massachusetts)
    - ii. Closed Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Legislature
    - iii. British government appointed own officials
- 6. Outbreak of Revolution:
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Continental Congress
    - i. 12 out of 13 colonies sent representatives
    - ii. Boycott goods and meet again later
  - b. Shots fired at Lexington and Concord
  - c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress (More Important)
    - i. Continental Army created
    - ii. Created Declaration of Independence
- 7. The Declaration of Independence:
  - a. More people began to agree with Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*
  - b. People have unalienable rights (natural rights)
    - i. Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness
  - c. Government must protect these rights
    - i. Government fails to protect these rights, can be overthrown
  - d. List of grievances
    - i. List of issues with the king, and justified the Colonists actions
  - e. Colonists declared Independence