

Historical Foundations of Civics

- The history of civics, or civic education, is a long and evolving one that can be traced back to ancient civilizations.
- We can trace the roots of civic education in ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece.
- While it's true that many ancient civilizations often had rulers who were considered representatives of the divine or had kings with authority, this doesn't mean that elements of civic education didn't exist.
- In fact, these early societies still had community participation, decision-making processes, and the transfer of authority
- Ancient Mesopotamia had elements of democracy. In these early cities, free men formed a general assembly to handle public matters. This assembly resolved disputes, made decisions about war and peace, and could appoint one of its members as a temporary king if necessary. A council of elders was in charge of the general assembly, but it didn't have ultimate authority.
- While it might not be a perfect match for our current democratic systems, it's a testament to the enduring importance of civic engagement and education throughout history.
- So, we can appreciate the roots of civic education even in societies that may not have had full-fledged democracies as we know them today.
- The formal history of civics unfolds through three pivotal eras:
 - 1. **Ancient Greek civilization.**
 2. **The Enlightenment period.**
 3. **19th-20th century transformations.**
- These three eras are the foundation of our knowledge about civic involvement, each adding to the diverse history of democratic ideas and actions that have influenced our modern world. They highlight how civics has been vital throughout human history.

Ancient Greek Civilization and Civic Education.

- Ancient Greece was made up of numerous city-states, also known as "polis" (plural: "poleis"). These city-states were independent and self-governing entities, each with its own government, laws, and customs.
- Ancient Greece has a significant connection with civic education because it is often considered the birthplace of the concept of citizenship and democratic governance. Here's how ancient Greece is connected to civic education:

Development of Democracy:

Ancient Greece, particularly the city-state of Athens, is credited with the development of one of the earliest forms of democracy. **Cleisthenes**, an ancient Athenian statesman and political reformer, also known as “Father of Athenian Democracy”, introduced a series of political reforms that expanded the role of ordinary citizens in the government.

His reforms laid the groundwork for the democratic principles and institutions that Athens is renowned for in the history of political thought.

Greek Education:

In Greece, the education of young boys included elements of civic education. They were taught about their roles as future citizens, including how to participate in the democratic process and the importance of civic virtues like courage and justice

Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, made significant contributions to political thought and education. They explored ideas about ethics, justice, and the role of citizens in the political process. Their works, like Plato's "The Republic," are still studied as part of civic education. Moreover, in ancient Greece, morality and virtue was an integral part of daily life, people were taught to build a strong moral foundation to guide their behaviour as responsible citizens.

Enlightenment

During the middle Ages in Europe, education was primarily focused on religious and philosophical matters. However, civic education continued in various forms, often guided by religious institutions and monarchies. The Age of Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries brought about a resurgence of interest in civic education. Various thinkers started to emphasize on the importance of informed citizens and social contracts, contributing to the development of modern democratic ideas.

Major Developments

In England the people forced the ‘King’ to Sign the “**Magna Carta**”, thus demanding more rights for people and less power for kings. While in 1787 AD, in the United States, people wrote up a **new constitution** for their new country. In France people rebelled against the king and started a revolution known as “**French Revolution**”. This revolution gave the power and rights back to people.

19th-20th century and Civic Education

In the 19th and 20th centuries, as democracies and republics spread, the need for civic education became more apparent. Public schools and educational institutions began to include civics as a formal part of the curriculum, teaching students about government, rights, and responsibilities.

The details of Modernity, Emergence of Modern Societies, and European Enlightenment will be discussed in Week-2 in the course outlines.