

## HISTORY 154 NOTES

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### 1. The American Enlightenment: 1/7/15

Historians have sometimes divided up the Enlightenment into nations: the French Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment, or Russian or Swedish, and so on. But there was a lot of correspondence across borders (the so-called "republic of letters") and texts translated into different languages. These letters, these ideas, these issues constantly crossed borders: Franklin's scientific observations were sent to London to be assessed by the Royal Academy of Sciences, for example. Thus, the Enlightenment can be viewed as a more general European movement (though this includes the parts of North and Latin America that were settled by Europeans). People at this time wrote a lot; Franklin's correspondence has filled many volumes.

Since the French Enlightenment loomed so large, it tends to obscure the American one. Certainly, the overflow of the *ancien régime* makes it more of a contrast from beforehand. Though politics were important, Enlightenment politics were connected to other, wider worldviews: science, epistemology, and so on. And a lot of its importance was how people engaged with each others' ideas.

There are four big themes for Enlightenment thinkers; not all of them satisfied all of the themes, but all hit some or most of them.

- Rationality: a rationalist approach to the world and politics. This means offering premises and then making arguments based on those premises, highly structured and analytical. It persisted into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, though had to fight empiricism.

In America, rationality existed in the Enlightenment, but again is a little overshadowed. A theologian named Jonathan Edward was brought up reading Locke and Spinoza, and was a missionary and onetime historian. He gave a great sermon in 1741 in Connecticut, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." This memorable speech compared God's opinion of people as how

we might view a spider we hold over a fire. God is powerful, yes, but also the ultimate good and forgiving; he wanted to emphasize the intimate relationship between humans and God, even if it was couched in fiery rhetoric. He made this point in a variety of theological writings, as well.

The point with rationality was that Edwards adopted premises such as God's omnipotence and benevolence; then, one can explain and expand on a Christian theology, and concludes with the notion of God's redemption. This is highly rational, despite sounding like fire and brimstone; it reasons out the discrepancy between a good God and bad people: by pursuing God's glory, we can escape this moral and intellectual conundrum.

What's most important about Edwards is what he tells us about the Enlightenment in America; moreso than the details of his theology, it shows that the rationalist ideas of Newton and Locke were well-entrenched in America. He was an influential figure in an influential movement called the Great Awakening (to the degree that this is a different object than the American Enlightenment).

- Empiricism is usually seen as an opposing view to rationalism, especially in philosophy courses, and certainly many empiricists explicitly rejected rationalist deductions as flawed. When one moves beyond metaphysical history of philosophy, it turns out that empiricist arguments often use some reasoning, intuition, and deduction, albeit based on empirical observations rather than premises.

The example empiricist is Cadwallader Colden, who eventually became the Loyalist governor of New York after growing up in Scotland. He maintained a long correspondence with Benjamin Franklin on politics and science (e.g. theorizing the connection between the lack of sanitation in New York City with the disease there). He spent much of his life trying to correct Isaac Newton, albeit not very successfully. He also did some taxonomical biology, sending his findings to Linnaeus. Notice the categorizing and observation of the real world. Colden's big historical legacy was to write a study of the Five Nations of the Iroquois, their customs, government, history, etc. Then, he applied this (here's rigorous empiricism, to the point where historians today still rely on these documents to a degree) to European political theory, and speculation on what Europe looked like before nation-states. Colden was a political radical at the time he wrote this history, but eventually became more conservative (defending the existing political institutions over popular or radical ones, e.g. he was a Loyalist); note also that the Five Nations were key British allies in the French and Indian War.

- Another key Enlightenment doctrine is skepticism, probing at established ideas and trying to determine whether they're correct. David Hume is one of the classic European examples, but in America, the preeminent skeptic is John Winthrop,<sup>1</sup> founder of seismology, president of Harvard, et cetera. He studied the Lisbon earthquake of 1755: instead of seeing it as divine retribution (which understandingly unsettled people), he thought of it as a scientific phenomenon, and showed that the waves were undulatory. He applied some of these ideas to astronomy, and was part of one of the earliest state-supported scientific expeditions, going from Massachusetts to Newfoundland to observe the transit of Venus and calculate the distance from the Earth to the Sun.
- Finally, we have the study of the mind: if one can understand human beings and the societies that they created at the most basic level, one could create the best possible societies that are compatible with human nature, rather than just ad hoc or against it. This is the origin of fields such as sociology, and is a kind of applied empiricism. Franklin is a huge exponent of this, as is John Witherspoon; he was a sort of university reformer, turning them from ministry training to places of study of the liberal arts, sciences, history, and philosophy. He really encouraged the clergy to become liberally educated and have a broader understanding of human society.

How did these things differ in America? Europeans might think of Americans in this era as country bumpkins, on the periphery of society, but there are different things to observe: Native American societies, new politics or less corrupt societies, and more room for experimentation; Europe was maybe more stratified. Thus, American thinkers really could and did think of themselves as part of the European trend.

So, who was Benjamin Franklin? He's a great example of these aspects of the Enlightenment, and his life traces the transformation of America in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. He was born in Boston in 1706, one of ten

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<sup>1</sup>Not the "City on a Hill" speech-giver John Winthrop; this man was his great-grandson.

children (which was common at the time). He learned printing from his brother, who made one of the first independent newspapers.

Then, he ran away from home to Philadelphia, a big, booming city. He was in the right time and the right place; it was more in tune with European politics and more general information. In 1729, he took over the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and quickly turns it into the best and most complete newspaper in colonial America. It's a huge pastiche of information, politicking, business advice, news, and so on. In 1733, he adds *Poor Richard's Almanack*, with lots of useful information (e.g. planting dates, astrological or astronomical information, lists of moralizing aphorisms).

Franklin was a constant organizer and fixer; he was trying to bring people together to solve problems. This is a key characteristic of some Enlightenment thinkers. Franklin organized an American lending library, a philosophical society, and more practical institutions, too, such as a Philadelphia fire department and hospital company (now Penn's Hospital, one of the best in the nation). He organized colonial defense, and so on: voluntary organization to solve problems, often very practical, and sometimes knowledge-based.

In addition to being a publisher, he literally printed money (for the colonies, under contract); he became rich and was able to retire young (at age 40), because printing in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was hard labor, part of why he always was so solidly built. He helps found a college (later the University of Pennsylvania), focused on training people at practical professions rather than the liberal arts (medicine, law, and theology): lectures were in English. This is a very similar kind of essence as Stanford was set up with, as it happens.

In his retirement, Franklin does a lot of scientific experiments, initially for the purpose of strengthening the British Empire. We think of him as quintessentially American, but he spent a lot of time abroad, e.g. in Britain or France. He made a campaign to Parliament to argue on behalf of the colony, and became sort of the elder statesman or ambassador of America in London. He's the best known American in Europe, both because of the scientific experiment and because he is a distinguished American intellectual and political figure.

In London, he wrote a lot of political commentary in newspapers, where he pleaded the colonial case, which is where some of our readings. Some of this was clever satire, some more straightforward; but the point is, he communicated with European Enlightenment intellectuals about politics and science and such.

It's not at all clear what Franklin's religious beliefs were; he was a Deist, maybe? A Sunday morning Christian? Deism is arguably the most accurate.

Enlightenment mattered greatly in colonial (and newly independent) America, because there was a lot of debate about how to govern and run societies, and of course this could be put into practice after the Revolution (and sometimes before). These discussions, part of the Enlightenment, were a crucial precipitator of the independence movement. But it also relates to the notion of republicanism, the *res publica*: for the people, by the people, and so on. This was tossed around as a central Enlightenment idea, along with the notion of liberty and so forth. This led to a lot of the rhetoric that surrounded the Revolutionary War.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, one assumes that republics can only work in small countries (even England was too large!) of mostly homogeneous people, such as the Netherlands or Swiss cantons. Too many conflicting interests would cause instability or even violence, e.g. in Britain. Selfishness can cause conflict; republicanism is seen as not always a good thing.

A related idea, "republicanism lite" or the radical Whig ideology, tried to argue that Parliament must be checked by the people in order for liberty to be preserved. It still preserved the notion of a king and an elite Parliament for stability, and so moderated the extreme ideas. Franklin can be considered part of this; there's a fine line between republicanism and radical Whiggery (which is more important: that they like the king or that he's accountable to the people?).

Cadwallader Colden is a good example of someone who can engage in the Enlightenment without being a republican or even a radical Whig; the Enlightenment is not entirely associated with radical politics. It promoted them, yes, but some Enlightened thinkers didn't subscribe to them. Challenging established government institutions is a very Enlightenment thing to do, even on low levels, e.g. people in town meetings having strong opinions on natural law theory. This is part of the reason that when Britain tries to tax its colonies, there's a lot of resistance.

Maybe ten years ago, the Enlightenment had a bad reputation amongst some modern intellectuals, as promoting empire, genocide, and naked individualism; setting European societies above others. This was a movement amongst postmodernists, and was from a liberal side, and seems to be a bit less prevalent

today. Since Edmund Burke, conservatives have argued that the Enlightenment was too eager to dismantle reasonable, centuries-old traditions. The Enlightenment was very varied, and therefore different thinkers had different sins, but even modern ideas like critical theory came out of Enlightenment roots such as Rousseau.

## 2. Imagining the New Republic: 1/12/15

Today is Hamilton, Madison, and Brutus day; the goal is to illustrate some of the key intellectual issues at the heart of the debate over the U.S. Constitution. This goes hand in hand with the next lecture, about whether America was set up to be a republican empire. The lecture will give background for the readings.

In all of these parts, the open-ended notions of the Enlightenment and republicanism should be kept in mind, but they're very broad, and can have different instantiations. Also, think about how the events connect to the political context and to the documents that we have read.

**The Articles of Confederation.** To start: the postwar period and the Articles of Confederation.

We have this image of the American Revolution as a resounding success. Bunker Hill, then Georgetown, and so on. Yay America! But we have to remember that this revolution was very, very expensive, and America had to rely on the French and Spanish (collections even came from the missions in faraway California!) help. This weighs really heavily on the young America; it's very hard to see how it could have won without their help.

The war debt leads to a depression, worse than 2008: people are out of work, lots of people are in debt, and the government struggles to pay its bills. Income falls by maybe 20%. The existing political structures, the state governments and the government formed under the Articles of Confederation (which is really a diplomatic league akin to the EU; people thought of themselves as Virginians rather than Americans. The term is *semi-sovereignty*) tried to address these issues.

In the unicameral legislature, each state got one vote, and there was no executive. The states' laws retained supremacy, and each state maintained its own police force. Each state was expected to tax and make money. Congress couldn't tax, but just request (requisition) money. Obviously, this doesn't work all that nicely. The Congress is given control over foreign relations, and must approve state relations with other states or nations, and declarations of war. But even that states can make trade regulations with other states says a lot about sovereignty. Economically, Congress could borrow or print money, but couldn't tax; in retrospect, the depreciation of the Continental dollar isn't so surprising.

The Articles of Confederation still are controversial; they take four years to ratify, and mostly pass in order to show people (i.e. the French and Spanish) that America is a serious nation. Many people thought the republic was too strong.

The ultimate question is: *how can one ensure that the people rule, even if they are not directly the rulers?* This is a political and philosophical question, and a difficult one.

The general idea was that to maintain power in the people's hands, one needs a weak executive, so that it's deferential to the more directly elected legislators; the legislators should represent a small number of people, so that they may do so more accurately.

There's also a real fear that individual avarice will lead people to sacrifice the public good for their own individual good, which is the notion of "corruption and influence." The Articles of Confederation are shaped by this and other republican ideas; e.g. the notion that the government should be beholden to the people, and that this is hard to do in a large nation.

Certainly, this perception is reinforced by the colonists' view of the British Parliament; it started out for the public good, but fell into corruption, taxing fellow citizens in an unjust way, leading to other unjust tyrannies. So there were all kinds of relatively academic concerns, such as how to structure the government prevent corruption, at the same time as the more down-to-earth concerns of repayment the war debts and the economy, state trade blockages, soldiers not being paid, etc. To address these debts, they need to tax the citizens more (which will worsen the poor and middle-class), or print more money (which soaks the elite creditors, who more or less control the colonial government, and also diminishes capital within the economy, which is no fun either). This leads Madison to call paper money "a mortal disease," and Washington felt similarly: if I loan you money and you do something to make that money worthless, have you not defrauded me?

And if the states start to raise taxes really severely, and people are too poor to pay those taxes, then the state takes them to court and seizes their property; for example, this happens in Massachusetts. This, unsurprisingly, leads to protests such as Shay's Rebellion (a bunch of farmers in central Massachusetts rebel against the state for what they perceive as excess taxation followed by property seizure, which seems to be corruption favoring the bankers and speculators). The workings of 18<sup>th</sup>-century bond markets may be opaque, but the feelings that there's no clear solution, class strife, etc. should be noted.

In summary, we have a weak government, economic depression, and no clear way out. It feels that in this moment of crisis, the state and national governments aren't working. Commanding officers from the war, remembering the difficulties in coordinating things during the war (e.g. supplies not arriving on time) and seeing potential enemies of America in the world, would want a stronger central government. Thus, a small meeting to discuss interstate trade meets in Annapolis. . .

But the New Jersey delegation was instructed to discuss "trade and other matters," and they (esp. Alexander Hamilton) took the liberty (hah) to complain about the Articles of Confederation and make plans for reforming it in Philadelphia the following year.

In general, it's not that everybody thought that the Articles needed to be strengthened, but many of the key people, especially at the Constitutional Convention, do.

**The Constitutional Convention: What and Why.** The delegates showed up with the conviction that the Articles are too weak, and intended to strengthen them. This is especially true of a young Virginian, James Madison, though he plans to show up to architect a different Constitution, with a bicameral legislature of elected people to pass laws where the states couldn't or wouldn't. This Virginia Plan outright rejected the idea that small states and large states deserved the same representation, and explicitly and implicitly was a national government for the United States.

When Madison presented this, it quickly shifted the convention from a plan to revise the Articles to a Constitutional Convention, albeit with some hand-wringing by the smaller states (e.g. New Jersey provides a more conservative plan, called the New Jersey Plan, with a unicameral legislature in which one state has one vote). The smaller states are more worried that they'll be overwhelmed by the larger ones, which sets up the central question of the convention: *how do you create a national government while maintaining a confederacy?* How do we balance the rights of the states with the rights of the people? Similarly, they wanted to know whether a nation the size of the United States could function as a republic, or was too large and needed to remain a confederation.

On one side is the nationalist view, by Madison and even more so, Hamilton: his plan was more akin to provinces than states, as, for example, state governors were appointed by his national executive. There were no state militias, the powers of state trade agreements were reduced, and so on.

This is noteworthy because it shows the unapologetic nationalism of Hamilton, and also what Brutus is really afraid of: that you buy Madison and get Hamilton. Hamilton is a very adept politician, though sometimes his emotions get the better of him; but this time, by putting all of his cards on the table, the New Jersey and Hamilton plans seem like extremes, with the Madison plan falling in the middle.

The Constitution was the outcome of a debate and compromise trying to create a large republic. One of the big debates, of course, was slavery: the South Carolinians in particular draw the line in the sand and insist that their national government should be compatible with, and even defend, slavery. For just one example, they disliked the Three-Fifths Compromise because it reduced their representation in the legislature. Some Northern states believe that slaves shouldn't be represented at all, but Virginia's solution of the Three-Fifths Compromise is accepted.<sup>2</sup> The anti-slavery advocates aren't happy, of course, and South Carolina isn't too happy, but it gets a little of a tax break, since the census is used to determine taxes. But they kind of had to do this to get anywhere, because South Carolina threatened to leave the delegation over the issue.<sup>3</sup>

One reason slavery was suddenly much more of an issue here than in the Articles: in a stronger, national government, anti-slavery advocates are more strongly chained to states that do support slavery, and slavery advocates feel that their local institution is under threat (though the promise to suppress runaway states is written into the Constitution). At this point, anti-slavery views are becoming more and

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<sup>2</sup>Note that this compromise makes the difference of the Election of 1800.

<sup>3</sup>This is some nice foreshadowing, of course. . .

more popular, with more people believing that slavery is incompatible with republicanism and a gradual (not instantly abolitionist!) solution for ending slavery over time.

These are among many other compromises (e.g. the Connecticut compromise), made because of the notion that the nation is in crisis, and since the people at the convention tended to be nationalists. Some of these compromises really frustrated Madison, who began to hate the Constitution he had architected.

**The Ratification Debate.** This debate gets less attention, but in some ways is a more profound debate about what the Constitution was and what, if anything, it would mean.

So now the Constitution has been signed, yay. You can see it at the National Archives, and so forth. But the Convention was extra-legal, and moreover, it has far exceeded its original task (to revise the Articles of Confederation). Thus, how does this become law? The (Articles of Confederation) Congress has a debate about this; does the statement that 9 of 13 states have to ratify it mean anything? What matters is whether people are going to buy into it. Congress does eventually agree to send the Constitution out to the states for ratification, at least partly because it shifts the burden from the weak Congress to the people themselves.

Each state ratifies the Constitution differently; Rhode Island holds a plebiscite, which promptly fails. Most places come up with plans for sending delegates to ratify. However, it seems dubious that this would pass.

Unlike the secret, elite atmosphere of the Constitutional Convention, the ratification debate is public, and by people from all walks of life. There are pamphlets and newspaper articles, and so forth. Everybody is reading and thinking (including seeing original sources!), not just rich white guys; maybe not everyone's opinions are heard.

The debate over the national Constitution is stepped in fear in both sides. It started soon after the Constitution was released, e.g. by Brutus, who was probably Robert Gates. He was on a New York Committee of Public Safety (which was like the ones from the French Revolution, but not quite as terrifying; if people didn't swear loyalty to the new regime, their assets might be seized), as kind of an enforcer. He helped draft the New York Constitution and attended the Philadelphia Convention, checking Hamilton (or trying to) at every turn. He was an important New York politician, but also somewhat of a radical.

Brutus may not have influenced too many anti-Federalists outside of New York, but he's a particularly articulate expresser of opinions that many Americans held. For example, in New York, anti-Federalists outnumber Federalists by about two-to-one. Thus, the Federalists feel that they have to make a strong case for selling the Constitution to the public, e.g. the Federalist essays. These are the tip of the iceberg of Federalist writing, not as much about clarification of intent, but rather polemics to convince people.

In the ratification conventions, the Federalists tend to be well-educated lawyers, and the anti-Federalists more like merchants (though, not always). The latter tend to propose revisions to the Constitutions, and most conventions agree to ratify, with certain revisions that were eventually crystallized into the Bill of Rights (though New York requested thirty-two others, e.g. limiting the number of Presidential terms to two, a separate court for impeachments, and so forth). This happened primarily because the Federalists promised that they would add the reforms if the Constitution were passed.

Why would the anti-Federalists go along with that kind of non-binding promise? Well, the Constitution wasn't nearly as sacred as it is now; they were in the middle of replacing another one, for example, and everyone knew the *status quo* was soon to be anarchy.

### 3. Empire of Liberty? 1/14/15

For this period, some questions:

- Why was the size of the republic so important in this era?
- Why was Thomas Jefferson so adamantly in favor of expansion?

We'll start by looking at the American West of the end of the Eighteenth Century. It's diverse, and far from empty: filled with American Indians and European empire and conflict. Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural speech, does not envision the place as empty, but tries to imagine how America will fit into the preexisting environment there.

The political geography after the American Revolution is a result of the Treaty of Paris, which took a long time to negotiate because it fit into a huge geopolitical puzzle involving England, France, and so on.

So the country has the territory to the Mississippi, but is surrounded by European powers, and thought of as a new, small, poor, factious republic. See Figure 1 for a picture.



Figure 1. The United States and surrounding areas in 1790. This map is the traditional one from textbooks, etc, though borders aren't always as clear as in the picture. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial\\_evolution\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_United_States).

Like all maps, the political map from the era is misleading: the boundaries are hazy, and there are lots of Native American groups and tribes. Everything is layered on top of everything else, and shaped by European colonization, disease, warfare, and economic exchange. Clear lines don't give you the whole picture.

Of course, these interactions weren't all nice: there was the series of conflicts called the Northwest Indian War, or Little Turtle's War: these are conflicts spilling after the big regrouping of various Native American groups after the Revolution. America and Britain both had Native American allies, and America was particularly savage to the British allied groups. Groups like the Shawnee, the Huron, and the Miami are all negotiating, along with several U.S. states, to get control of the Ohio River; a bunch of Native American tribes form a confederacy north of the Ohio River to preserve their territorial integrity and prevent encroachment (which in the end didn't work out so well).

Little Turtle, a Miami leader, refuses to support American territorial claims, and asks to Britain for help. At this period, Britain still has forts and supplies weapons, and many want a buffer zone to contain America, so for Britain it makes perfect sense to help out. Thus, in the 1780s, there are a bunch of really violent conflicts over this between America and British-supported Native American tribes.

For a lot of people, this is an argument for a stronger government: not only could we use a government that can negotiate with these kinds of opponents in a unified way, but some people want to raise an army for defensive or offensive purposes. The federal government does end up taking control of foreign policy and Native American relations (is this a subset of foreign policy? Sort of), and this allows it to be

more unified than whoever went out to negotiate with people. This doesn't mean people didn't try to take matters into their own hands, but that the federal government tried to balance these actors.

Many Americans wanted to avoid outright violence with Native Americans; this could be expensive or dangerous, or provoke European powers, and many Northeasterners were pretty skeptical of the settlers; nonetheless, violence did happen, and is evidence for the strong government. There isn't yet the Manifest Destiny that was so popular later. All told, people would prefer a negotiation, e.g. selling territory, to some sort of violence. . . but in the aggregate, this is not what happened. However, Native Americans definitely participated in the American economy; getting European goods tended to be a great way to gain power over other Native societies.

We also want some more context for the notion of small republics and large empires: they key player for the notion that republics must be small to survive was Montesquieu, but the story goes back (as the people at the time understood it; it's different now) to Rome.

As all of these empires grow, they tend to become more unequal: the elites profit from war, or the workings of Incans in the silver mines (Imperial Spain), and this leads to a decline in virtue or in political efficacy. For example, Edward Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which is a big book about the decline of virtue in empires. The book isn't super influential, but it represents an important and influential view.

Montesquieu holds the opinion that in a big state, there has to be a monarchy or despotic government, because otherwise there are too many voices, and republicanism just won't work: it depends on public virtue, which doesn't work in a big country. There's a little bit of irony here, because Montesquieu is a monarchist: as long as the king doesn't corrupt the monarchy, he's totally fine with it. Of course, the Americans have no desire to mimic the French or British monarchies, but his political theory is worth thinking about, and along with Locke was one of the most important influential thinkers for early Americans (even if they disagreed, and were trying to build a larger republic).

These early Americans also thought about how to reconcile this republicanism with American expansion west; how can it be both a republic and an empire? Franklin postulated a correlation of cheap land, good morals, and industriousness and population growth, and this view doesn't go away after the Revolution; Jefferson also thinks about it. Stagnation, on the other hand, can lead to stagnation, conspicuous consumption, and a lack of public virtue, especially among the rich. Because of this, in the second context, republican government seems impossible.

Thus, Franklin's thesis is that expansion across space is the solution to increased population growth and preserving a republic, and Jefferson holds very similar beliefs. This is the novelty of the American republic: it's not that we're the oldest or best or whatever else you hear on cable news, but that America was novel and modern because it was large and designed to expand, explicitly rejecting the Montesquienne view that large republics or territorial expansion lead to loss of virtue of republicanism. The founders know they would run out of room eventually, but knew it would take a long time (they may have thought centuries, though it took only about 100 years).

Interestingly, the federal government was most important in the West; this may seem strange, when we think of it as more rugged or lawless. But the idea is that in Massachusetts a city may have a post office and a court and no other federal presence, but in the west, the government defined and administered territories, ran their defense and infrastructure and so on, before they are converted into states. This is a long-lasting relationship, to the point where about 45% of California is outright owned by the federal government; in Nevada it is 84.5%, and in Arizona it is 48.1%. This is the legacy of a federal government that has owned Western territory, and has done so even before the Constitutional Convention. Dealing with land claims was one of the only things that the Confederation Congress did efficiently, correctly, and on their own; part of the reason the states give up their land claims is to fix boundaries, and to stay small (the idea of small republics is influential on the state level too).

Over the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the federal government sells lots and lots of land to settlers; maybe it was cheap, but there was so much of it that in the late 1860s, about half of U.S. government revenue was from land sales (and the other half was tariffs or excise taxes).

Jefferson imagined that the territories would be eventually converted into states, but he envisioned them as being divided by lines of latitude and longitude. This motivated the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which divided up the region into six-mile by six-mile townships. This is great, except that the Earth is



round (which they did know at this point!). It's a great example of a Rationalist solution that has to defer to geographical reality.

Jefferson's ideas weren't taken so seriously, but the Northwest Ordinance was taken quite seriously; it gave a very straightforward process for a territory transitioning from a temporary quasi-military federal, territorial government to a state. Americans, looking back at their own experience, didn't want a large-scale colonial relationship (except, well, for Native Americans), and wanted a path to civic equality. This is explicitly rejecting the British colonial model, with colonies that would support the mother country and be dependent in perpetuity.

The other important part of the ordinance was that it banned slavery north of the Ohio River; Jefferson had wanted this for a while, and finally got it.

So we can view the American country as a republican empire; expansionist and increasing, but clearly based on republican principles such as popular sovereignty, civic equality, and so on. Though they add up to a distinctly American republicanism, they do have some tension between them, especially in how they imply the displacement or coerced assimilation of Native Americans.

#### 4. Science and Race in the New Republic: 1/21/15

As Europeans explored and met many peoples unlike themselves, they tried to understand their physical and physiological differences, both on the local level of how, e.g. Native Americans were so well-adapted to living in cold Northern winters, or even how we can be so different and yet all human?

A lot of the initial observations are of course very civilizational, chauvinistic assumptions (e.g. comfort with nakedness, notions of savagery, and so forth), but a lot of this came from notions of original sin. For example, the notion of painless birth subverts the notion that pain in childbirth is punishment for original sin — as is feeling cold without clothing, or needing to work hard (which, well, people tend to do, but hard work looks like laziness sometimes upon first glance). Thus, some intellectuals concluded that they weren't actually descended from Adam and Eve, but came about separately.

This is what Smith responds to: Biblically, it's problematic, and isn't really supported in Scripture. Another proposed option was that different groups were members of the Lost Tribes of Israel, but any explanation has theological concerns, and there were inevitably hoops to jump through.

So people have the idea that the races are separate, and sometimes unequal by God's will. This is in the 17<sup>th</sup> more a debate about philosophy and theology; later, it will be used in arguments over slavery, but the origin of the debate is different over time (even though the two are always intertwined).

Another thing we should mention about polygenesis is that there's nothing necessarily European about it. It causes issues in Christian theology, but is actually adapted by some Native American theologians trying to make a more unified response to the American expansion after the revolution. These were attempts to build a Native identity, bigger than the notion of Huron or Mohawk or Creek, and united against the notion of European or American (which sometimes was the enemy).

In summary, when Europeans traveled outside Europe, they met people unlike themselves, which challenged their empirical experience and their Christian theology. It raised troubling questions: were people who seemed so different really descended from the same common ancestor? Did God really create multiple human races?

The background on Samuel Stanhope Smith provides a lot of information on his contemporary America, in the twilight of the Enlightenment. Smith was born in 1751 to a Presbyterian clergyman, and was sent to Princeton at age 16 (when his Latin and Greek hit a ceiling). It was primarily for Presbyterian ministry training, but Smith also developed a keen interest in mathematics and the natural sciences. However, he goes into the family business, ministry (which really is about educational and moral reform, to a degree); eventually, he will go on to found a college. Eventually, he returns to Princeton, and becomes a professor of moral philosophy. Here, he has a lot of latitude, because the president, John Witherspoon, is away at the Continental Congress; thus, Smith is the acting practice.

The title "Professor of Moral Philosophy" gives one a lot of latitude to theorize and write about a lot of different topics (Adam Smith held the same position, albeit at a different university). Thus, he was able to do things like write long reports to the American Philosophical Society. This was one of the many societies started by Ben Franklin, modeled after the British Royal Society.<sup>4</sup> The goal is to bring together intellectuals

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<sup>4</sup>The American Philosophical Society still exists, right across the street from Constitutional Hall in Philadelphia, PA.

from different disciplines, and direct its intellectual actions (the Franklinesque idea of “useful knowledge”) to the broader society.

Intellectuals trying to explain the differences between races led to a growing sense that differences in place might be equivalent to differences in time. That is, Native Americans might be equivalent to early Celtic tribesmen. An analogy might be how differences in latitude are similar to differences in altitude when determining climate (as well as anagrams!). This drives a real interest in comparative sociology, anthropology, and history: on the one hand, Smith’s essay is kind of clinical and anthropological, but at the same time, touches on lots of historical points. This might also be called comparative history; though it’s rooted in social science, there’s plenty of theology and even prejudice.

And it’s in this context where Lord Kames published *Sketches on the History of Man*. He offers a conjectural history or a four-stages theory, the idea that civilizations followed four stages, from hunting to pastorage to farming to an urbanized society. This was the basis of Adam Smith’s political economy. The idea was that human beings had a progressive tendency towards refinement and improvement.

So, then, why did some societies develop in these directions (Europeans, Chinese, Mughals), and others (Native Americans) didn’t? This is a simple question, in some sense, but is still discussed at Stanford’s economics and political science departments: why do some societies develop differently than others?

Kames, though, uses more biblical methods, invoking the disaster of the Tower of Babel, after which humanity was scattered to the far ends of the earth. Those fit to live in Lapland ended up in Lapland, and those fit to live in Guinea lived in Guinea, and so on. It is not a terribly convincing argument, and probably wasn’t even that convincing at its time, but it serves as an example of using the Bible to justify these differences between races.<sup>5</sup>

Observations of so-called primitive societies were often used to analyze or criticize corruption or indecency in European societies. This is more than just the notion of the “Noble Savage,” but attempts to see what humans could be like in the absence of our society: if we strip away everything that has been built up around human beings, we can understand human nature, which makes for all sorts of societal theories, but this time actually backed by prescriptive arguments which can be applied to discussions of politics, empire, slavery, etc., and why these are or aren’t compatible with human nature.

Smith’s argument was extremely influential in the first few decades of the 1800s; it was republished in Britain, read by leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, and so on. Smith was a well-known intellectual, so this isn’t too much of a surprise. It will begin to be challenged by the scientific-racial thinkers (who argue for separate creations) a little later into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but for a while, there is both scientific and religious consensus that racial differences are inherently environmental. There are ideas of superiority and inferiority at play, which often play into (sometimes violent) colonialism and paternalism, but the idea was that all people are human and were descended from Adam and Eve. Nonetheless, it led to the idea that people could change in their environments, and were not slaves beholden to their biology.

Thomas Jefferson also talked about this; he’s not as convinced on the connection between the environment and people, and his *Notes on the State of Virginia* are an attempt to wade into a wider Enlightenment debate over environment and biology, even though he still cares about the relationship between climate, society, and biology.

Jefferson is writing in response to a bunch of French thinkers who are critical of the environmental and political health of the New World and European empire. These included the Encyclopedist Diderot, another man, one of Europe’s leading naturalists, and similar people. This led to the idea of degeneracy: that people who go to places such as North America or Asia, whether the natives or Europeans, degenerate (biologically or morally/socially, depending on the author). They would point to moral failures of, say, the Spanish conquistadores, and argue that in these places, such as the Americas, there is a moral decline. They (e.g. Bufont) argue that the environment has a significant effect on not just humans, but all species: the idea that the moisture and cold of North America fosters degeneracy. He bases this on a number of

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<sup>5</sup>Reactions within the Christian world differ: in France, full on in the Catholic Counter-Enlightenment, there is a lot of hand-wringing about the use of Scripture to justify these sorts of things, but in Britain, which has less authoritative religion, it’s seen more acceptably. The idea of playing fast-and-loose with the Bible is not generally all right, but Kames was on solid theological ground. David Hume is a little shakier, and might not have believed in God.

observations,<sup>6</sup> such as North American animals being smaller than European ones, including domesticated ones, or there being more diversity in Europe.

The idea of degeneracy is actually fairly widespread in America itself. Jefferson somehow got the nickname “the Mammoth President,” not just because of some weight gain, but also because he was obsessed with finding woolly mammoths to prove Bufont wrong, to find bigger American animals than Eurasian ones. Thus, this debate was pretty well-known. A town in New England sends Jefferson a mammoth cheese (which says a little more about early American political culture<sup>7</sup>) to celebrate his winning the presidency.

Anyways, *Notes on the State of Virginia* is designed to refute the idea of degeneracy. It was first published in Paris, in English, and was quickly translated into French. Jefferson’s examples were both natural and human; he talked about the natural bounty of the United States, and the health of the Native Americans; he thinks they are less developed, socially and culturally, than Europeans. This leads to the question: why did they develop less quickly than Europeans? Certainly, though, we can explain why one country is richer than another without invoking ethnicity or race. Thus, we’re witnessing the birth of social science, albeit with a great influence from theology and even straight-up prejudice.

Despite Jefferson’s criticisms, he believe there is a lot to recommend from them, and he believes America should be expansionist into a large republic, including Native Americans (though on his terms, not theirs). He collected many Native American artifacts, and displayed them at Monticello, arguing they (and by extension North America) are capable of interesting and amazing things. Yet Jefferson is much more committed to biological or racial determinism when it comes to Africans; he seems to believe, though is not completely certain, that blacks are inferior to whites, and that there is definitely a racial difference.

Of course, Jefferson’s views on race are clearly related to his views on slavery. His views on the inferiority of blacks stands to a stark contrast to his famous statement “We hold these views to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . ” (from, of course, the Declaration of Independence). He seems to have some belief in the idea of multiple creations, in the context of multiple catastrophes, and believed blacks in America to be a people apart (which is very significant for his views on slavery); he believed they were intellectually and morally inferior, and, even though he owned slaves and profited from their labor, he opposed the institution of slavery. In this way, Jefferson was not unusual among enlightened Virginians, who often believed blacks were inferior, owned slaves, and were anti-slavery.

This seems like a lot of cognitive dissonance, but these responses are often incredibly racist and incredibly anti-slavery at the same time. The idea that America’s black population was a nation within a nation, a wound or corruption — which is why Jefferson was in favor of a recolonization, to emancipate blacks and then send them somewhere else (e.g. Africa). Since slavery required violence to enforce, he argued it caused a perpetual civil war. Thus, Jefferson’s seemingly contradictory beliefs are informed by these opinions and desires. For example, Jefferson has an assimilationist vision for Native Americans, but does not believe such a plan would work for African-Americans.

And, of course, this gets only more complicated when we consider Jefferson’s romantic relationship with his slave Sally Hemmings. . .

Unlike many of the people we study, whose views are inevitably chained to their times, Jefferson’s are more morally troubling; he appears to argue racial cleansing. Yet he is an important example that racism doesn’t go hand-in-hand with slavery, and anti-racism with anti-slavery; for indeed he was very racist, but anti-slavery.

## 5. Changing Ideas About Gender Roles: 1/26/15

There’s a tendency for people to view early American gender roles as, well, *Downton Abbey* with perhaps more powdered wigs. But gender roles were very different than they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and even later. Most gender roles were organized in the notion of a household, where a husband and a wife were a team, even though women were subordinate to fathers and then husbands, though they were also understood to be an integral and essential ingredient in this unit. This took place in both the northern and southern states.

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<sup>6</sup>None of which are true, by the way; they were based on an incomplete knowledge of American flora and fauna, definitely a selective reading, and has never been to North America. Nonetheless, he sets himself up as the more elite synthesizer/philosopher, who is doing better work than the naturalists actually collecting data; this is an approach that many Europeans take.

<sup>7</sup>No pun intended.

Women lacked a legal identity separate from their family, and then husband (with an exception made for widows). This entailed certain responsibilities, e.g. a man could be prosecuted for his wife's behavior. The idea was that the man should run an orderly household.

This was clearly a patriarchal way to organize domestic life and productive relations, but there's a flipside: women have a lot of say in domestic responsibilities, not just in traditionally maternal roles, but also the role sometimes called "deputy husband," managing household accounts, supervising any servants, employees, and slaves, signing contracts in the husband's absence, and so forth. The notion of a team, with the wife subordinate to some degree, is important. It's hierarchical: sons subordinate to fathers, subjects to monarchs, and so on. Gender roles were extremely powerful, though wealth and hierarchy is more important, e.g. a wife would order a male servant around (though her power in the household flows from her husband).

On the household level, this didn't differ greatly between American and Britain. Thanks to a longstanding labor shortage and therefore less nuclear families, the patriarchy is somewhat stronger in the colonies, but there are definitely a lot of similarities. Eventually, arguments against this (e.g. by Locke) are influential in both America and Britain. But the notion of the centrality of the household was similar on both sides of the ocean. The fact that people are critical of the notion of absolute monarchy in the 1700s and later led to a weakness of the analogous patriarchy: people reevaluate what the woman's role in society is, and what it ought to be.

Thus, increasingly in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, one hears the idea that the measure of a society is how well it treats its women: Hume, Montesquieu, and many more wrote for this. But they tended to do this while still advocating gender roles or gender differences. There was some radical feminism, though not as much in the United States. The general tack of their arguments was a desire for better treatment and more respect, but not yet full political equality.

Hume's opinions are typical on both sides of the Atlantic: he outlines the idea that divine power gave men the power over women, and mature societies demonstrate civility and respect by treating women nicely, and displaying gallantry. The idea is that there is authority, which he believes to be good, but the absolute power is not acceptable (Hume gave the example of the French and English, who treated their women better than Russians). The idea is that progress, or a more moral society, comes from checking our baser impulses, e.g. respecting women.

Virtue and its sources were definitely on people's minds, especially in an era where a war was fought, and people had to set aside immediate personal gain to do what was right. As women helped a lot in the war, people thought more about this. There was also more "sociability," i.e. men and women interacting in mixed company (drinking tea, usually, not alcohol) more than before. It's a little different than the French *salon* culture, but men and women are really interacting in mixed company more. And as women read more, they write more, which leads to the origin of the feminist literature that came from this increasingly sociable world.

This also comes in hand with women being educated in the liberal arts more; it's connected to a gradual, yet very substantial, increase in literacy. There was a general correlation between social level and degree that a wife would manage people; in a large household with many servants, for example, there is that much more to do. There's lots of hospitality to do, and keeping track of food and entertaining, and a social calendar. . . in some ways, an elite woman's job was somewhat like the social role of a public face within society, with a fairly substantial skillset.

One of the results of these changes, with women coming into social, literary, and even political spheres, was the phenomenon of women making choices for themselves, e.g. deciding to have fewer children on their own (and the era did have falling birthrates, from 10 or so to 5 or so). So we see lots of opportunities and choices; even though there are many social constraints, the characters in *The Coquette* are able to make many of their own decisions, and often the biggest choices were right before marriage, which was really a choice for a woman here.

Let's talk about morality and the Enlightenment in this context; we saw it in the context of race, but here, it plays into gender roles. There was a Biblical issue in Genesis; gender roles are marked from the beginning, and it's often downhill from there. The notion of women as a source of temptation, responsible for the Fall, was common, as was a sense of moral frailty. This will have implications on politics, but for now let's talk about the impact of morality on a source of social stability. Instead of just thinking of the state as the source of social stability, we also have interpersonal interactions seen as playing a role. But this

means we have to somehow avert the Hobbesian war of all against all, and so people must act virtuous to others. The idea is that power in itself isn't sufficient to hold together a society, and could lead to tyranny if unchecked.

Thus, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the notion of women as responsible for temptation loses ground to the idea that women are the moral underpinning of society, as moral or even moreso than men. This led to a somewhat imprecise notion of "sensibility," ways of reacting emotionally to certain things (e.g. how does a dead animal on the side of the road affect you psychologically?). Adam Smith theorized a lot about this. We might call this emotional intelligence today, but the concept back then was also closely related to the idea of reason and empirical perspective. It could be summarized as, "why do humans respond in certain ways to certain things, and can we build moral theories around that?" Rousseau also thought about this, though his entire moral theory was based on pity, with the notion that humans are otherwise absolutely irredeemable, doing terrible things to each other.

In any case, people spent lots of time trying to find the sources of good morals, sensibility, and sympathy, psychological or physiological, and since women were seen as more sympathetic, then they would be considered more moral, more in tune with the moral senses of their actions. Maybe it's seen on a lower level: women are nicer, maybe, and more moral, but also live more in the domestic scope, and wouldn't be citizens of the world.

This had interesting interactions with the theory of races: people tended to believe in a universal morality, but that some races may not have all of the same moral faculties. Jefferson reflects this, but other people were more likely to try to find universal systems of morality. These are not arguments for women to participate in politics; this is an important antecedent to the later notion of separate spheres.

It's not just men who contribute to this ideology; many female authors make arguments about what sexual differences mean for morality and women's interactions with the world. We have changing social and cultural roles, and women are seen as increasingly important for the moral successes, moreso than moral failings, of society.

So, how is this related to novels? These were somewhat novel ideas; timeless today, they only really took off in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. An early example would be *Robinson Crusoe*. Novels were unique in that they focused on everyday lives, everyday concerns, and the feelings that came out of those concerns. These novels emerged out of a broader, popular culture. They differed from romances (the other common literary form preceding the novel): novels were about the present, and tended to tell stories in which people behaved in ordinary and human ways. They tried to avoid traditional and hackneyed plots, as well as traditional or overly literary language, so that more people could read them; they emphasized individualism and subjectivity, empathy and vicariousness. And they tended to tell a coherent, unified story, with an ideological edge (usually about the circumstances of the present).

Novels were often, but not exclusively, read by women, often all over Europe. Authors became popular; novels spoke to people, often on a deeply emotional level (since the characters are designed to be empathized with, even if they're different from us). Rousseau was inundated with fan mail, and people reacted very strongly to events in the novels. Some historians have even suggested that the idea of human rights emerged from the power of empathy placed by one person in another thanks to reading more novels.

Epistolary novels, which we don't read as much today, are popular back then because they reflect how people often communicated then (they wrote lots of letters), and allowed readers to enter the emotional and interior lives of their subjects.

Hannah Webster Foster, author of *The Coquette*, was from a clergy family and married a clergyman in Massachusetts. She had five children and then pursued her literary career. Her novel was ripped from the headlines (sort of like *Law and Order*), based on a story of a woman who had a child after wedlock and died under suspicious circumstances shortly thereafter. But the victim was someone many of her readers could sympathize with, even though she was related to great New England families such as the Trumbulls, and to Aaron Burr. Thus, the story was huge in the newspapers, since she was so elite, and some used it as a story with a moral against sexual immorality.

We should ask why people, especially women, found so much emotional resonance in this book. This will require looking past the sensationalist aspects of the story, and also seeing how Foster changed the story (the name went from Elizabeth to Eliza); more than just "names changed to protect the innocent," it

creates a character in Eliza that is different from her inspiration. People certainly noticed how it exposed moral decisions and troubles in women.

## 6. Republicanism and the Family: 1/28/15

Note: next Monday, we're in the Barcus room in Green Library, which should be an interesting journey through original sources of our readings.

**Women in the American Revolution.** The events leading up to the American Revolution, as well as the revolution itself, were large opportunities for women to take political roles; not in the sense of official office, which was hard, but unofficial roles such as leading boycotts, organizing revolutionaries, and so on. They were thinking a lot about what was or wasn't legitimate in public life, e.g. Mercy Otis Warren, who thought in a very sophisticated way about politics. She writes propaganda that goes in Bostonian newspapers, and is every bit as capable as John Winthrop.

Women's accomplishments were lauded in the war, and provided a sense of accomplishment and empowerment; the upshot is that women's virtue, and virtue more generally, were considered important for the survival of the society, as seen in Montesquieu and Locke, but also in personal experience, where women's virtue was needed for America to succeed against Britain. Loyalist women definitely helped their side in the war; however, they tended to be more conservative, and so this didn't translate as well into the emerging feminism that revolutionaries' movements led to.

Though the term "natural rights" is generally seen to apply to only rich white guys in this era, it's a little more nuanced. This idea was framed in the context of a war, where cities are captured and recaptured, lives are ended or upended, and so on, and war makes no prejudices. Though people certainly don't use them to argue for gender equality (which some people argue) or political equality (almost nobody argued this), the idea that women should be protected by rights was still part of the package.

Nonetheless, there was some genuine feminism going on, as early as 1792, with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. This argued for the intellectual equality of women, but also went further, to the political representation and quality of women. This was widely read, and connected women's liberation with the notion of republicanism and equality against absolute monarchy. She moved in republican circles, e.g. with Thomas Paine, and the republican argument for the importance of virtue was also brought into the idea of women's political participation.

At this time, the idea that women should participate in democracy by voting for their representatives is a radical idea, but not so radical as to be impossible: New Jersey's state constitution allowed them to vote, and this was well-known (and controversial), though there was no great effort to get them to vote. Women's suffrage was an extension of taxation without representation: certainly, they paid taxes (especially property taxes, and especially widows), so some argued they should be represented. Voting was a bit different, though: voting stations were often very far away, and often social occasions with alcohol around. Thus, a single woman traveling a far distance to hang out with a bunch of drunk men... suddenly sounds a lot less fun.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, though explicit participation in elections was small, women were considered intelligent, and to be politically active indirectly. Even Wollstonecraft argued that men and women are different (though still considered as equally capable). But there are many people who think that women participating in politics is unnatural, which comes from perhaps a reading of Genesis (or, well, the entire Old Testament), which sounds like religious or even scientific conclusions. There is debate, both on this and how men and women differ and the implications thereof. We know about this debate because of, for example, poetry in the newspapers referencing it! Another source of pushback was stories of men cross-dressing to submit multiple ballots... but more significant for the counterargument was the fear that allowing women to participate politically would lead to a dramatic change in the social order.

In any case, whether or not people believed women should participate politically, they were considered protected under the Bill of Rights, and often people didn't consider the government the most important aspect of life anyways. Women claimed a voice as republican citizens.

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<sup>8</sup>Taverns, as gathering places for people, were a common place for politics. Vermont's first constitution was written in one.

**Connecting this to Education.** After Locke, whose treatise was very well-read on both sides of the Atlantic, people began to think that the purpose of education is to get the right kinds of people to participate in a republican society. This replaced an earlier attitude of education as a way to make the best king (e.g. Macchiavelli).

This vision of education as virtue, as in the Weems reading, is a much more populist view of what education is and why it is necessary. Washington is seen as an American Cincinnatus (the extremely virtuous republican Roman, and unambitiously returns to his farm, renouncing power and achieving “true fame”). Thus, people advocated for women’s education, including reading and much more, in order to secure happiness for present and the future, for republicanism, etc.

This came at the same time as Americans occasionally wondered whether people were virtuous enough to make republicanism work, e.g. in Mercy Otis Warren’s letters to John Adams. This reinforced ideas that men and women were different (e.g. she thought of women as liking the finer things in life, which could make it more difficult for republicanism to succeed); there are passions and impulses such as greed in American society, which aren’t limited to women but were seen to be stronger there, and this was considered to make republicanism a little weaker.

Thus, the education of women was with the goal of producing good citizens and maintaining social order. Even the people who thought that women shouldn’t participate that much in government tended to believe that women should be educated. Education was thought to be a way to emancipate American culture from British customs, and to make American society run more smoothly, and so educating women was therefore a good idea. Of course, people might differ on what should be taught to women (e.g. more practical? More based in the household? More abstract?). And some reformers or even for republicans like Warren banned novels, as they were a distraction from important tasks, and taught things that weren’t very virtuous.

Related to this was the idea that women’s education allowed them to educate their sons, too, which was the pervasive notion of “republican motherhood.” But this notion doesn’t include all of the (above) reasons to educate women. There was in essence a “republican womanhood,” in which motherhood was only a small part. The idea was morality, and the ways in which women acted as moral examples and participated in conversations in morality, which was more than just the mother-child relationship.

So there is this focus on moral education, leading to the idea that education will lead educated men to believe in moral equality in women, and lift the moral standards of an entire society; an analogy was made between the tyranny of an absolute government and the petty tyrannies of everyday inequalities.

The means of this were subjects such as history, geography, grammar, needlework, dancing, and so on. These were helpful for filling certain social circles, for elite but also middle-class women, and a women’s understanding of political or social relationships can help her husband do well (e.g. Dolly Madison was very helpful to her husband James Madison, who was not so good at being assertive on his own). The fact that these women’s academies trumpeted their achievements in a very public way meant there was a growing sense that women benefited from public education, and society benefited broadly. There was a smaller backlash, yes, but it is significant that despite the perceptions of differences between men and women and the induced legal or political differences, people broadly believed in the education of women and that women can take a role in their community.

Better educated women could make their voices better heard (also partly because of the increase in technology in spreading information), and since the 1790s were seen as some of the most tumultuous times in American history (e.g. the crazy Election of 1800; only the 1850s and 1860s are worse), there’s this notion that we need all of the virtue we can get. There’s a real fear of factionalism, which was addressed to a degree by Madison in the Constitution, but was considered addressed in a more societal fashion by the growth in virtue and education.

## 7. Lewis and Clark’s Voyage: 2/4/15

*“In two years, we won’t even have to have this class; you can just watch the show.”*

Today’s lecture, and really, this whole week, is sort of a fulcrum: many of our discussions were centered around the Enlightenment and the long American Revolution; but now, we will start to turn our attention to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and moving from an earlier colonial or post-colonial period to a period about Romanticism,

industrialization, etc., and questions about the nature of revolutions recede, and questions such as the West or the future of slavery take much more of a role.

The story of Lewis and Clark is a story about the Enlightenment, but also about how to make sense of the West and how it fits into a Romantic view of the sublime, for example. This post-Enlightenment figures into debates over economic inequality, etc., which will pop up next week.

One important thing to emphasize is what's at stake in the West; we've already talked about arguments on degeneracy in America and similar things, but there's more. Manifest destiny is much later in history, but these events may be its origin, and that's certainly a useful thing to debate. At the beginning of the 1800s, the idea of a republic from sea to shining sea is strange, and many people think expansionism is a terrible idea, and a lot of people dislike it (some going as far as to suggest secession).

Lewis and Clark's voyage had the twin aims of science and empire (reinforcing America's claim to the territory), and said a lot about how Americans viewed themselves and the world. This voyage changes the West from an unknown place to a much better known place.

As we talked about earlier, Jefferson was obsessed with the West, so today's story is very much a Jefferson story. Even before the Louisiana Purchase, he had obtained permission from Congress to organize a voyage (that would eventually become Lewis and Clark's voyage). But he also believed that, like Madison but more so, a republic has to expand to be stable. Expansion means relatively high equality, virtue, and attachment to the public good or the republic itself. If a republic stops expanding, population density will increase, and with it inequality, lack of virtue, and instability. A republic must expand or die. There's an idea (a dramatic series of five paintings) of the "Cycle of Empires;" this is an analogy with republics. Obviously, at some point, America would run out of territory, but that was so far in the future that it wasn't worth worrying about.

That is, there are high stakes in expanding the republic, in Jefferson's mind. Not expanding, staying locked in east of the Appalachians, with bigger cities and more inequality and self-interest, is playing with fire. This is the Jeffersonian background to the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1800, Napoléon wrests Louisiana away from Spain, as part of the Napoleonic Wars. At this time, France controlled New Orleans, so they have a lot of latitude for controlling when and how Americans can use the Mississippi River. Thus, Jefferson wanted to purchase New Orleans from France, so that it could use the whole river, but at the time, Napoléon has his hands full: there's a rebellion in Haiti, and the French troops are suffering from yellow fever, and so on.

This is one of those strokes of diplomatic luck: Jefferson sends Robert Livingston, who is arrogant and partially deaf, and moreover doesn't speak a word of French! His counterpart, Talleyrand, is also arrogant. But after several months of stagnation, Talleyrand asked Livingston how much the United States would pay for *all* of Louisiana!

This illustrated how little was known about the territory: nobody knew precisely how much territory France had gotten back from Spain, or what was in it; it was almost untouched by humankind, and contained lots of untapped natural resources. Nobody's really quite sure what's being brought, though the port of New Orleans and safe navigation of the Mississippi are the biggest prizes.

Nonetheless, in one fell swoop, Jefferson establishes the United States as a continental power, doubling America's size.

The Federalists scream bloody murder, arguing this is far and beyond the powers of the President. Thus, Jefferson calls a session of Congress to ratify the treaty. The Federalists have a stronghold in New England, and the new territory would weaken their power and radically tilt the balance of the country (e.g. what if Obama bought Canada?) at a time when American politics was extremely polarized, and negotiating the expansion of America was not explicitly part of the Presidential powers in the Constitution.

But there's another reason Federalists objected to it, which illustrates how different this time was from the time of Manifest Destiny. There's an idea that expansion of the United States leads to entropy of power, both political and social; they believed that if people were disrespectful of government and authority, especially by social and intellectual betters, then one would end up with anarchy. They believed expansion had precisely the opposite effect as Jefferson did. Some even suggested that New England leave the union over the issue; they really believed this would cause anarchy. Imagine throngs of people, especially not genteel ones, the drunken rabble, suddenly rushing to a lawless West, with nobody to show them or make them behave in a way in the self-interest of the United States. They might start wars with Indians, or make separate treaties with Britain or Spain, and so on. And moreover, this territory could cause the



expansion of slavery (which, well, it did for a while). After the careful balancing of American politics in the Constitution in 1787, everything would become unbalanced again. Their goal is something like the mercantile Dutch republic on the other side of the Atlantic.

Jefferson does not want slavery to expand into the Louisiana Territory, but he was pretty naïve; he tries to prevent it, but fails, and is pretty mad about it. If one looks closely, the votes are pretty close. In some sense, a few votes in the Senate could have caused a very different story, and it didn't have to go the way it did.

Yeah, so for most people the West is a vast unknown; even the Federalists are willing to entertain the opportunities for commerce and natural resources. But people don't know what's there, or what effect this will have on the votes or regional interests or even culture of a new, small, fragile republic. Culture and virtue are particularly important in the ideas of republicanism. This is the context in which Lewis and Clark figure into a discussion on American intellectualism.<sup>9</sup>

Americans knew very little about the West; not as bad as imagining California is an island, but European Americans had only the vaguest idea of the West; they knew, more or less, the contour of California and Oregon, but there's still Jefferson's hope of finding a Northwest Passage, which would greatly facilitate American commerce by ship (this is somewhat of an esoteric view by this time period, though).

And it's not just unknown territory, but scary territory. The Ohio territory (between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River) is getting better explored, but west of the Mississippi might as well be the moon, so Jefferson figures knowledge of the interior might be quite useful, especially maps, so that people can understand what it is they're looking at. With the Louisiana Purchase, a water route to the Pacific makes more sense; British Canada is starting to expand the fur trade in the Canadian Southwest (our Pacific Northwest), and making relations with the local Native Americans. So there's a little bit of a contest for empire, too.

There is also the scientific interest, including Jefferson's intent to defend America to Europeans, such as trying to refute Bufont's degeneracy hypothesis. Additionally, the goal is to document flora and fauna, and see if any are useful for the American economy.

That brings us to the expedition itself; following the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson puts Meriwether Lewis at the head of his "Corps of Discovery." It sounds like a name straight out of NASA (I mean, he could have called it "Heroes Squad"), and really does illustrate what they're doing. Jefferson takes an active interest in the preparation, providing training materials and such. Much of the preparation was at Monticello, though the medical training was done under Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was a cutting-edge medical scientist at the time.

... that meant he believed in humeric theory, the idea of purging the body of bad elements using, e.g. heavy metal laxatives such as mercury chloride. He supplies the expedition with over five hundred of these pills, colloquially known as "Dr. Rush's Thunderclappers." They were intended as a treatment for syphilis, but they're quite effective on a low-fiber diet (which the explorers had, eating a lot of elk meat, with the associated digestive difficulties). But the need for these miracle cures and cure-all pills illustrates just how isolated the expedition was, and how cutting-edge everything is: this is the early 1800s' version of the Apollo program.

Lewis recruits Clark to be his second in command, the Art Garfunkel of Western exploration. They leave Illinois in May 1804, only a month after France formally transferred the Louisiana Territory to the United States. They follow the Missouri River, which is relatively well-known thanks to earlier efforts by traders and explorers, especially French ones. They were ordered to take very specific notes of their observations, both for the diplomatic and scientific purposes, and they did. They carried gifts for the Native Americans they met along the way, which is part of the diplomatic mission; these included specially made medals from the U.S. mint, and were meant both as a token<sup>10</sup> of friendship, but also as an assertion of sovereignty.

Nonetheless, Jefferson, Lewis, and Clark saw this as primarily a peaceful, friendly gesture; in North Dakota, the United States' power is pretty negligible, so having the goodwill of the Native American tribes was a very useful thing to have.

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<sup>9</sup>As popular as it is to talk about Lewis and Clark in elementary-school history classes, they don't figure that much in AP US history, etc., or in intellectual history courses like this one; both are self-taught, and made their names as military commanders, "men of action" in wars in the Northwest Territory at and after the Revolution. They're smart, yes, but not the typical intellectual.

<sup>10</sup>No pun intended.

They make it to Fort Mandan, in modern-day South Dakota, a ways up the Missouri, and spend the winter of 1804-05 there. They want to negotiate to cross Mandan territory, which requires some linguistic adventure; Charbonneau and his wife Sacagawea (who was a Shoshone Indian) volunteered their linguistic skills as translators and made a huge difference, both diplomatically and logistically (making the expedition work).

Then, they have a harder time: they want to follow the Missouri to the Columbia; there are reports that this is possible, but they don't necessarily believe them, and are unsure how. After eighteen months of very difficult travel, they do reach the mouth of the Columbia River, and do spend the winter there, at Ft. Clatsop, in what is effectively a large log cabin.

On the way back overland, Lewis and Clark split up to cover more ground, and there's a famous story about the difficult return home: Lewis gets shot on the way back while hunting, and gets a three-inch gash in the hip. The moral of the story, I guess, is don't go hunting with someone blind in one eye and nearsighted in the other. Lewis's response was reportedly, "Damn you, you have shot me!"

Despite being shot, gone for years, taken for dead by most of the Eastern United States, they do make it back in one piece, and with them a wealth of scientific knowledge, including seven species of mammals, including grizzly bears, identified twenty species of plants, and more, establishing the biodiversity of the continent. They also learned just how big North America is. This seems obvious now, but was less so back then, since they were some of the first people to explore. Even in the 1840s geographers placed the Rockies in Kansas, so there was a lot to learn.

Let's talk about art. Lewis is good at sketching the plants and animals they identify, but there was no artist on the trip, and nobody was painting grand canvases. These sketches, documenting the species, are very Enlightenment, even if they're bureaucratic, compiling a big dataset. But our reading on the American sublime illustrates that we're heading to a Romantic period in art, and the West is a big part of that, including how it's described in journals. By getting knowledge about these landscapes, people can get control mentally over them, mentally place themselves in them, and get control over the idea that the West is terrifying.

Niagara Falls is a common example of what people used to highlight the majesty of the American continent, especially by the Hudson River school.<sup>11</sup> Artists mentally placed themselves into the West in their paintings, and even later capture the dramatic, powerful, sublime landscape.

## 8. Revival and Reform: 2/9/15

*"My wife went to Dartmouth and Yale, so I know this can be a place where strange ideas come from."*

Today's lecture will be about the Second Great Awakening, an increase in religiosity in the 1800s. It's the beginning of a series of lectures where America moves away from the Enlightenment and towards the post-Enlightenment thought of the Nineteenth Century.

This was related to the idea of societal reform, with many thinking that one couldn't serve God without driving social reform, too. It's somewhat chicken-and-egg: did religious revival lead people to want to help society? Did societal problems turn people to religion? And maybe there was a little of both, or a third factor. Nonetheless, there's a big movement, as millions of Americans participated in this movement, and it is a big reason for the change in the American intellectual climate.

One common phrase here is "the democratization of American Christianity," especially (but not entirely) Protestantism. Recall that in the first Great Awakening, Edwards' theology stressed predestination, a very Calvinist idea. Because of this, your fate at the end of your life was dictated, so people were encouraged to look for signs that you might be saved (paradoxically, belief that you were saved is a good sign you probably weren't). This seems weird to us now, which indicates that something significant happened in American theology between then and now.

The emphasis on a religious experience, which is a reasonably powerful sign (albeit for a small, small minority) that one was saved, is a powerful, comforting, strong connection between these people and the Holy Spirit, even though we think of the idea of no free will as quite discomfoting. In fact, this philosophy is quite demanding to people, and so it ends up losing a lot of ground in the 1800s to more comforting religions. Moreover, this doctrine teaches that everyone is a sinner, everyone is fallen, which is supposed

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<sup>11</sup>... which one friend of the professor unfairly called, "steakhouse art."

to lead to the religious epiphany of trying to understand and accept. It's a bit tricky, very different from what we generally grew up with, along with many people at the time of the Second Great Awakening; this approach doesn't seem like a good way to get people to embrace religious practices or even faith in general. For most people, why would they even bother with religion if they know they can't control anything, and are likely going directly to Hell — and believing that faith is at all helpful is a rejected doctrine.

It's tricky to punish people within a philosophy that doesn't advocate free will, but, well, they don't reject free will *per se*; instead, they believe that salvation is predestined, rejecting only things like Catholicism's doctrine of works, i.e. good deeds can get one into heaven. At the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there's a providential mindset, where God might warn a community of its impiety through hurricanes, storms, etc.

Finally, this is a doctrine that really depends on Church leadership, e.g. congregationalism in New England. Most churches had lots of people involved in the religious process, but the congregationalist Calvinists tended to be hyper-intellectual, studying for hours, and the framework was top-down, rather than bottom-up.

Thus, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there wasn't a whole lot of religious diversity, though more than before. But religious fervor is about to get more interesting — churchgoers double between 1800 and 1830, and there's a huge number of diverse religious factions, especially amongst those who reject Calvinism. These include those that just call themselves Christian, independent of sect.

This is in some way a revolt against Calvinism, but also a revolt against theology itself: the idea that you don't need to embrace the Church to be virtuous, just God. The way to do this is to read the Bible, especially the New Testament, and ministerial interpretations don't have to get in the way. Thus, this was a little bit of a religious free-for-all.

The idea of going back to the Bible is as old as Protestantism, but this time around, the idea is that the word of God is plain and obvious: you don't need to go to Yale to understand it, nor need a whole Church structure. Thus, there's a lot of room here for religious innovation, and for breaking away from older religious structures, with ministers imposing religious ideas upon their parishioners.

Some of these, e.g. Elias Smith, also argued in favor of a stronger separation of church and state, e.g. wanting to disallow tax breaks to churches. But he went farther, and wanted people to be free to decide what religion means to themselves, irrelevant to orthodoxy or established churches. This leads to the idea of Arminianism, where one can be saved for one's good deeds: Christ died for everyone's sins, not just some elect.

Guys like Smith were brilliant theological debaters, but they ignored the established rules of Church discourse: humor, coarse language, and other things that appealed to the less educated. This is a very bottom-up set of religious views. It also leads to the idea that persecution is wrong, and the focus is on cutting down the religious establishment, rather than imposing their own views about the Bible.

In some ways, this brave new world of religious philosophy is a big effect of the American and French revolutions, which represented a new order, the ending of kingly government, and therefore impelling a need for a new, less hierarchical religion. The separation of church and state meant that there could be a free market of religion, with ministers as "religious entrepreneurs" that advocated for their religions on their merits only.

The Calvinists responded with a religious reformulation that was much more like Arminianism, more focused on the here-and-now, and marketed more aggressively towards their congregations. But there is still the idea that one should put God over the daily concerns of man, which has a powerful egalitarianism to it: God is either not too happy with any human, or the one true republican, and in either way there's some sort of baked-in equality; even Calvinists embrace the idea of *post-millennialism*, which dictated that the Apocalypse would happen reasonably soon, after the 1000-year age of Christianity. This is a movement that a lot of people have a purpose for, both on a smaller-scale and a larger-scale level.

This is scary to many, especially those who are more conservative or tepid in their religious views, but many appreciated these new changes, especially the Sunday-morning-type Christians who found these practices more appealing. Now, a lot more people feel that they have a deep emotional connection to God, and this is a big difference between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

The upshot is a very competitive religious environment, with stories such as the traveling preacher who brings the Word on a horse from town to town in the rain (with a lantern, etc.) reinforcing the idea that the religious are really bringing it to the people.

Charles Finney is a good example of this phenomenon. Born in 1792, he grew up in the “Burned-Over District,” the hotbed of religious fervor, in western New York. He was converted in a religious experience, and therefore he became a Presbyterian minister in 1823, and like the revivalists he experienced in his youth, his sermons were fiery and revivalist. He ended up in the Ohio territory, which was a hotbed of industrial development (an analogue of Silicon Valley today, if ever there were one). He preached in these towns, stressing the importance of free will and demanding that people embrace Christ, but in a way that leads to a decline in sinfulness and an increase in benevolence. This is sort of a “socially oriented individualism,” even though that sounds like an oxymoron.

This appealed to business leaders, who bring it to their workers (somewhat, but not entirely, voluntarily). But the idea of personal salvation resonated with a lot of people, and was a reason it was so popular and meaningful.

The notions of religious revival and Western expansion are definitely related; some consider it as a frontier phenomenon, but this ignores the revivals in England and in the Erie Canal territory, both in regions that are quickly industrializing. The notion that cities were hotbeds of sin meant they were also hotbeds of evangelical activity, and it certainly helped that they had more pamphlet presses and such. Thus, this movement, in addition to perhaps being a frontier movement, is also an extremely urban movement. A preacher could just set up a stage or a tent and begin preaching. Though this is more than just a frontier movement, Western expansion drives a lot of it: the intellectual activity relating to it definitely helps drive the revival. (But it's also how striking how many of the people involved were associated with Yale.)

Thus, it may be more reasonable to think of the revival movement as a reaction to great uncertainty: from 1770 to 1830, one would have seen a close battle in the Revolutionary War, an economic depression, the massive expansion of America to the West and the beginning of colonization, and the tenfold expansion of New York City (from maybe the size of Stanford to a metropolis!). These were good and bad changes, but the radical uncertainty they induced combined with the new incentives for religious entrepreneurialism hand-in-hand with economic entrepreneurialism led to this revival taking center stage in American culture.

**Impact on Social Reform.** A lot of this wasn't just about getting more people into pews, but also trying to eliminate sin from the area or the world, and therefore to hasten the Second Coming (relating to the golden age that would cause the Second Coming). Their goal is to bring about the conclusion of the cosmic drama, where Satan is defeated, and so on. Calvinists even begin to embrace post-millennialism, even though they reject the idea of works.

Thus, this idea of reducing sin led to a proliferation of reform movements in the 1800s. This most notably included abolitionism; though we'll discuss it more later, the point is that there are religious roots that are more than just Quakerism. The idea here is that slavery is a sinful institution and should be eliminated. Another powerful idea here was the role of women in society. Temperance also had religious roots, though it also came from some stereotypes about immigrants (e.g. the Irish). The idea was that alcohol is a distraction from God, but also how alcohol sends even the virtuous into a downward spiral into debauchery, health problems (which they genuinely cared about) and lack of function in society.

Of course, temperance activists used fiery language too, e.g. drinking literally sucking the lifeblood out of America. They advocated blue laws for prohibiting alcohol on Sundays, not selling alcohol on Sundays, and in some cases complete abolition of alcohol sales, with the goal of modeling it after gradual abolition in the North. There's some tension here, between the very inclusive revival movement and the somewhat less inclusive temperance movement (e.g. the tension against immigrants who drink more).

There are also the Sabbatarians, who wanted to keep people from working on Sundays. They would boycott or protest shops open on Sundays, and so forth. But their campaigns largely failed — Sunday mail delivery only stopped in the early 1900s, after teaming up with organized labor. This is a recurring theme, where these moral activists were most successful when teaming up with nonreligious activists.

On the fringe of these movements are the Utopian societies, e.g. Oneida. This was founded by John Noyes, who declared himself free of sin (which got him booted both from Yale and the church) and got involved in communist and religious experiments, e.g. “complex marriage,” the idea that in a perfectionist community, all of the men considered all of the women as their wives, and all women considered all men as belonging to them as their husbands. Basically, there was a lot of wife-swapping. As a result of this, Noyes is convicted of adultery and fornication, so he flees to Oneida, New York, where he sets up this community.

The related philosophy is perfectionism, the idea that the kingdom of God can be set up with a small community of dedicated, perfection-seeking individuals. Noyes coined the term “free love,” but the community voted on all pairings, and sex was solely for procreation. Thus, it’s not exactly Woodstock.<sup>12</sup> Another interesting communal activity was the sharing of unpleasant tasks, as well as the fruits of labor. And thus, the community was fairly successful, lasting until the 1880s (and people still sell Oneida silverware).

Brook Farms was a more transcendental community, less about free love. The farm followed the principles of a French socialist, who tried to solve problems of poverty and such by rewarding workers in proportion to their work, by creating sealed-off socialist communes where people are incentivized to cooperate, and ought to have time left over for intellectual and moral discussions; the goal is an egalitarian one, where everyone has the time to pursue learning. This does fail, but this has more to say about the intellectual and religious aspirations of people at the time than as an indictment of socialism or communism.

So, in closing, how far have we left the Enlightenment behind? It was much more Deist, and today’s discussion focused on a very emotional, anti-intellectual religion, with the goal of people who treat each other well and the intention of promoting good to hasten the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

## 9. Early American Radicalism: 2/11/15

Though AP US History courses and their equivalents usually only talk about American radicalism post-Marx, there was definitely unemployment and wage stagnation beforehand, e.g. in the 1820s to 1840s, which we will discuss today.

In the Enlightenment, one key assumption about republics was that there was generally low income inequality, especially if there was high virtue; inequality came hand-in-hand with decline in virtue or a decrease in political stability, and many disaffected poor would lead to a demagogue using them to gain too much power.

But the first five decades of the American republic were definitely characterized by increasing income inequality. One transformation was sometimes called the “market revolution,” a radical transformation of the American economy and daily life between 1800 to 1850, where the country changes from being overwhelmingly agrarian to more urban and industrial; even though most Americans were still farmers in 1850, but the changes around them still affected everyone: finance, urban blooms, etc. This also happens at about the same time in Britain and France, though somewhat less dramatically slow.

The biggest changes are on the level of commercial changes, rather than industrial changes, though the industrial revolution is happening, especially in places like southern New England, balanced between water, coal, and universal education, which is good because at this point it’s mostly deforested of trees (burned to stave off the notorious cold). Cities in the area experience dramatic growth, and even more dramatically, communications networks grow: post roads, newspapers, and so on. This even precedes the telegraph by a few years; the country feels much closer and much more connected. And at the same time there are canals being built, and steamboats traversing rivers, and so on. By the 1840s, canal-building means the great inland waterways of the eastern United States are part of a unified highway of goods, and integrated into the national economy. In 1770, what happened in South Carolina had little effect on New York, but by 1840, this is no longer true; this is more like today.

This is also the great age of the expansion of American banking, from almost nothing to enormous proliferation of state-chartered banks, which are often quite profitable (which meant political connections were involved. . . ), adding sorely needed liquidity to the economy, so people can take loans and stuff. And where there are banks there are lawyers, and (even though the Continental Congress seems to suggest differently) Colonial America had relatively few lawyers, but soon enough more and more were needed to help navigate the commercial economy.

This isn’t always good: speculation drives price booms in some cases, e.g. cotton. This leads to more than one financial panic, and people develop the impression that the financial system is both corrupt and unstable. This is much like American public opinion of the 2007-08 financial crisis. By the 1830s, many large business owners grew wealthy as their workers’ wages stagnated, and it’s amidst these changes one sees the development of a workers’ movement, e.g. Thomas Skidmore’s demonstrations for a ten-hour day.

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<sup>12</sup>Though they’re both in upstate New York, so there’s that.

They have some electoral success in New York, almost upsetting the Tammany Democratic machine, and campaigning against monopolies. An 1824 strike did succeed in New York to overcome a wage rollback, and in Pawtucket, RI, workers pooled their resources to build a town clock, so that they were compensated properly for time worked, and so on. This gives an idea of the conflict between the owners and the workers, who feel that they're being exploited.

Thus, there is a popular movement for reform, though not all workers joined it; it in some ways dovetails with the movement for social and religious reform that we talked about on Monday, but is more focused on worldly concerns, and the (micro- and macro-scale) concerns over an unstable economy.

In addition to the radical thoughts espoused in this lecture, there was a more moderate approach towards social welfare and equality; we'll talk about it next week.

Let's also talk about the political economy, near and dear to the professor's heart. People often turn to the language of *political economy* to propose solutions or understand the problem, though the arguments relating society, the economy, and government was due to the increasing complexity of stuff, e.g. wars, politics, economics, and so on. This is really an Enlightenment story, e.g. Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. The point is, economic and moral political thinking are very intertwined. For another example, Adam Smith's title was Professor of Moral Philosophy: see the connections between economics and philosophy and ethics or morals. It's not that they don't want to think of the economy in a systematic way, but they want to do so in a broader way, with its links to behavioral economics, institutional economics, and so on. The current trend in econ and political science departments is actually sort of in that direction, which is interesting.

Anyways, economics after Smith, and after economic changes, particularly mechanization. There's this kind of sense that Smith is outmoded, a sentiment that persists today, with technology superseding it. The big name here in the context of classical political economy is David Ricardo, who tries to improve on Smith and place him in the context of more modern technology. Ricardo is the father of comparative advantage, the idea that even if a country is good at producing all goods, it should specialize in those that it is relatively the best at; the best way to maximize everybody's wealth is for everyone to specialize in what they do best, and for there to be free trade.

But he also adopts the goal of tearing down legislation that benefits merely a small elite; this leads into a more moderate approach to income inequality, though the goal is still to maximize production of all commodities in aggregate. Ricardo followed Smith in considering gross product, but also net product, subtracting inputs and wages. Ricardo argued Smith overinflated the advantages of having a large gross income; the real goal was to maximize net income, he argued.

This is connected to Ricardo's idea of rent: the difference between a market value of something and the perceived actual value, e.g. a piece of land protected by regulation may be worth more on the market than its actual intrinsic value, or a trade barrier might inflate the market value of a good, while keeping the actual value the same. The goal was to minimize rent, and therefore he was an opponent of trade barriers, etc. The goal is to maximize the productivity of the economy, rather than enriching particular individuals; Smith was critical of mercantilism's goal of enriching individuals, and Ricardo finessed this.

Yet Ricardo lay opposed to Hamilton's model of creating protections for developing economies, and in fact all economic powers were built under Hamilton's model, with their own trade barriers while they were forming; the theory is all very elegant, but it hasn't worked anywhere. But it does have a social thrust to it, which appeals to the political climate; people are worried about aristocrats (well, banking interests in America) and the passing of great wealth down generations, and the regressive taxes of the era (due to wars, etc.).

Though the cry for lower taxes and free trade is conservative today, it was quite a liberal argument at the time, to prevent the governments from creating rules that benefit small elites. This combines with Ricardo's belief (the *labor theory of value*) that labor is the sole generator of wealth; this was used to reinforce socialist arguments, or just even arguments in favor of better worker's rights. Why should the worker who makes the cloth or harvests the apple go without clothing or without food?

Within this context, mechanization seemed a good target. Ricardo was the mainstream liberal view for much of Britain and the United States in the 1800s. But there are even more radical views on the consequences of mechanization, e.g. Sismond de Sismondi,<sup>13</sup> who argued further, that Smith was

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<sup>13</sup>Notice that his name is fun to pronounce (and the professor agrees).

wrong: overproduction was not just possible, but quite probable in the world of the time. The idea is that technology increases production, so producers look up farther and farther markets to soak up that production (e.g. industrialization of British textiles, which is a very nice empirical example; England went from importing Indian cloth to exporting to India). Then, this destroys productive capacity, because small producers in these new markets suffer market collapse, because they can't compete with new technology and lower prices. There is a small increase in productive capacity in England, but much more loss in the rest of the world. This is based on the important idea that there's a finite amount of consumption possible. Yet the destruction of technology isn't creative; it's just destruction.

This relates to reasonably modern questions, too: when more and more work is automated, will this really lead to rising wages? People have taken up this discussion in recent years, though nobody has suggested villages of industry à la Owen.

So this is some of the intellectual and social context for today, so let's flesh out the authors we read. Owen comes first chronologically, and inspired the others. His father bought a business in New Harmony, Indiana, and tried to make it into a productive, profitable place... which didn't work. But Owen Jr. relocates to lower Manhattan, and moves around freethinking, Deist, vaguely atheistic political and radical communities. A lot of these people react against the (anti-intellectual) Second Great Awakening, trying to overcome divisions of sect and class, small-scale and educationally focused (sort of like these industrial villages, but in NYC and more based in education). Owen was a radical, certainly, and an influential one. He created the idea of founding cooperative businesses, though to his critics it seems like holding hands and singing kumbayah in the face of economic disaster: useless and not helpful enough. Owen grew up in privilege, certainly.

Skidmore was one of Owen's harshest critics, though he agreed with the labor theory of value and that employers were exploiting employees. He believed the solution wasn't to improve education, it was a larger-scale socialist movement. He was also a leader in New York's burgeoning radical movement. He argued that, unlike Paine, resolving political inequality isn't enough to resolve economic inequality. Most radicals of the time focus on economic inequality or inequality of property (resolving the social question), whereas before they might just care about political inequality. It comes against criticism of the sharply commercial nature of American society, the emphasis of money in American commercial culture. The idea was that the elite was manipulating politics to better itself.

This does have political connections, and Skidmore comes closest to seeing this economic inequality as connected to a failure of political democracy, e.g. appointed judges, limited suffrage (of and to white men); all of these led to greater economic inequality. He attacked measures that restricted rights of women, Native Americans, African Americans, and so on. Many people influenced by Skidmore don't go that far, however. For him, though, someone like Owen wasn't radical enough; Skidmore wanted radical redistribution of property. His issue was inequality of property, but also the tendency of people to live off of the labor of others.

Brownson is a sort of intellectual pinball; his intellectual and religious trajectory is definitely influenced by the Second Great Awakening, but converts back and forth between religions often (ordained as a Unitarian, but eventually converts to Catholicism). He's interesting in the context of today's discussion because he encouraged Democrats to worry about the Northern white working class, rather than slaves, because of the worries with the wage gap and so on. But he has a catastrophic view: if this doesn't happen in the elections, it will happen violently. He's a little uninformed, in the sense that he looks around the North and writes about the slaves already emancipated. But Brownson's piece was in the context of the election, attacked by the Whigs as an attack on property or the hard-working man with honest profits, and so on. This fight got dirty: the idea that monopolies, etc. were a real danger had really influenced Democratic thinking at this point. Brownson was a radical, certainly; but he was able to move in the context of the establishment, even if his views were much further out there than van Buren's (yet the Whigs attacked him using Brownson's views. Oops).

Nonetheless, he's a little bit of a political elitist, unlike some of his comrades (wow, that sounds like a term in algebraic geometry), and so he took the loss of van Buren's election pretty hard. His response was to turn to Calhoun and take up a correspondence with him; Calhoun believed government was necessary to restrain the masses, and that the elite could dupe the working class into voting for who they wanted. Brownson, already distrustful of democracy, liked these ideas, and even settled in favor of the Southern

slaveowners. I can't handle the irony here. Ultimately, he doesn't think that Calhoun has all the answers, so he turns to religion to find them.

## 10. The Whigs and The Jacksonians: 2/18/15

A major purpose of today's lecture is to highlight the major political and intellectual conflict between the Whigs and Jacksonians.

**Fifty Years in Fifteen Minutes.** First, though, a quick summary of the fifty years before the American Civil War in American political history. There was a very significant political party struggle, to a major degree about what the American society should and could look like.

The 1790s were extremely polarized times for America; there were two sides (Federalists and anti-Federalists or Republicans, called the First Party System), which had very different beliefs in what republicanism should look like, and therefore each believed the other would destroy the nation. Modern politics, though vitriolic, simply can't compare. And in that era, American government and politics were untested, and the shadow of the Terror of the French Revolution was on everyone's minds, so there's more pressure to do well, more rhetoric, and more genuine fear that the American experiment would fail. The Federalists in particular were worried that mob rule would cause things to fail.

The Federalists had a hard time with this; just after a revolution in favor of people's popular rights, the Federalist notion of a government by one's betters falls out of popular standing. Jefferson and his folks managed to very effectively rally the electorate, and, as Mitt Romney learned in 2012, insulting large portions of the electorate, as the Federalists tended to do, is not a great way to get votes.

Meanwhile, the trend towards universal white male suffrage (and even free blacks in New York) cuts against the Federalists. By 1812, they don't even officially field a presidential candidate, at the end of a decline started by a modest loss to Jefferson. Even Monroe won by a huge margin in the middle of a huge depression that his department probably caused, which says something about how alien the Federalists were, elitist in a democratic era. Though they're not completely irrelevant, supporting universal education and abolitionism; they argue for a national bank, which is eventually supported by the Republicans as well. The Federalists are influential, but in an institutional or structural, rather than electoral, sense.

Thus, the First Party System is short-lived and asymmetric. The death of the Federalist institution is the Hartford convention, where they try to consider constitutional reform, but they discuss New England seceding right as news of Andrew Jackson's victory reaches the East Coast, which is the wrong discussion at the wrong time.

Thus, until about 1824, it's hard to even call this a party system, dominated as it is by Virginians of a Jeffersonian stance, thinking of themselves as his successors. The Federalists have a more institutional influence, and if they want to get into electoral politics, they work within the Republican party. Though a minority nationwide, they are majorities at Harvard and Yale.

This is a period in which a lot of people perceive a more democratic and more political America. "The social state," said de Tocqueville, "is eminently democratic." Most white Americans were reasonably well off, and saw themselves as equal in the public eye. This relative equality in public life was a very characteristically American thing: questions such as income, place of origin, who your parents were, and so on, were much less preeminent than in Europe. Thus, wealth couldn't get away with public arrogance, and the poor could be proud, with the same rights to comment on society as the wealthy (not that they had the same power in practice, but still). Thus, a kind of middle-class equality prevailed in most of America.

One way to think about it is that if one goes to the VIP section of a 49ers game, where the tickets are thousands of dollars, the people don't look that different from you and me, at least outwardly. This surface equality is what we're getting at, even if this example is a little far.

Another way to approach this is that people across the country thought their opinions, on Plato or George Washington or anything else, were as valid as anyone else's: just because you live on the frontier doesn't mean you're stupider.

So the point is: by the 1820s, all politicians had to present themselves as servants of the public, and as men of the people. Jackson played this part the best, e.g. as a candidate against John Quincy Adams, but also as president in his own right. For example, recall how his inauguration almost broke the White House — it was a huge ceremony of all occupations, genders, races, and ages, in the street and eventually in the



White House. China crashed, furniture was damaged, upholstery torn, and so on, and Jackson himself is in danger of being crushed, until someone moves the punch bowls onto the lawn.

This is probably the most fun anybody in Washington has ever had.

Jackson wants to present himself as a man open to the people, hobnobbing with the *hoi polloi*, and so on, more than just wearing the same clothes, and he wanted to make a popular democracy, too. Part of this was making the government accountable to the people, too; not just electioneering or politicking. He wanted to clean out the corruption that was in some of the previous administrations, and was hard-working and aggressive in getting rid of corrupt officials (or just those too close to John Quincy Adams).

This is related to the spoils system: it can be seen as replacing one man's cronies with another, but it also went hand in hand with the idea of democratic accountability: Jackson was elected by the people, so he ought to bring in people he chose, in the sense that they are now more accountable to the public. One can argue as to which of these was the real source, but both were certainly there — it's a democratic ideal, against the notion of a permanent bureaucracy. It could be argued to lead to corruption and an overpowerful executive, and Jackson's opponents argued exactly that, but it is somewhat democratic, an attempt to avoid a bureaucratic elite.

But it wasn't just governmental; Jackson was a natural ally to the working men's movement, which was angry at institutions such as banks and large commercial and industrial interests. In these ways, Jackson was like Jefferson, only more so!

One major idea held by Jackson was the idea that giving subsidies to some institutions, but not others, was a form of corruption. Thus, he rejected a lot of internal improvements (e.g. infrastructure); Jackson sees them as profiting particular, local interests rather than the public at large.

The Second Bank of the United States was chartered in 1816 under Madison, and was up for renewal in 1836; this precipitated a long debate beforehand on its renewal. Jackson refused to renew it, partly because it wasn't in the Constitution, but also because it emphasized private interests rather than public ones.

In those days, arguments were generally framed in terms of constitutionality; today, even though we think about it a lot, expediency takes a higher role, and whether the Constitution allows it comes second.

The bank war created a conflict within the Democratic Party itself, between supporters of the bank and the more working-class Democrats who opposed the big bank and more broadly didn't like banks in general. The Whigs emerge out of this bank war controversy.

The Democratic Party is quite the motley crew; though they all are suspicious of large concentrations of power, they differ greatly from North to South, and east to west. Indian removal was one divisive issue, not to mention a very illustrative issue of the nasty side of Jacksonian politics. Jackson himself was a slaveowner and a racist, but there were many (e.g. Northern and Eastern) Democrats who were not happy with Indian removal, as happy as it made the frontiersmen.

Another illustrative issue was the divisiveness between Jackson and his vice president, John C. Calhoun. He is a very educated man, and they disagreed a lot. In 1828, Congress passes the "Tariff of Abominations," which hugely favors the North and East over exporters such as the South and the West — it comes off as a real attack on the Southern economy. The irony is that Calhoun authored the bill, with the goal of making everyone hate it (it had bad things in it for New England as well); he had been hoping to blame New England for the bill, but then it passes and John Quincy Adams signs it, and oops!

Of course, Jackson is no supporter of this tariff — he holds a more states' rights view of the Constitution, the Constitution as a compact, so that (particularly Southern) states could hold a convention to nullify laws, which is a formal procedure where other states can respond to the nullification, albeit requiring a supermajority. This fundamentally alters the balance of power between the federal and state governments, and makes secession more on the table; it's pretty wild stuff, even in its time.

Calhoun represents a very different idea of what the Democratic Party could be — not immigrants and Catholics and working men and New York City, he's more of a Southern man, about slavery and states' rights and free trade, and eventually ends up resigning as vice president. As the Northern Democrats become more urban and more about equality, they still have some things in common, and the alliance is workable, yet uneasy. This is some serious foreshadowing to the 1850s, but that's not important right now.

Now, who are the Whigs, and what do they stand for? They're in reaction to Jackson's purging of the bureaucracy and war against the bank. They are very much in favor of Henry Clay's "American System,"

and united against Jackson. They names themselves after the British anti-monarchical party, arguing against the excesses of such a government.

Nonetheless, they have a bad reputation as the Federalists reborn: out of touch, elite, and in bed with slaveholders. They seemed not only weak in ideas but also politically, only winning a couple elections, including William Henry Harrison, who died after thirty days in office.

Nonetheless, they lost by close votes, and were a political movement united across classes and regions. The party wasn't as disciplined or well-organized as the Democrats, but seemed maybe a healthier political organization. And they were somewhat connected to each other.

The base of power, Yankee Protestants and British immigrants, was the same as the Federalists, though they weren't a monoculture. They were defined by their commitment to improvement, providing conscious direction to the shape of social development, emphasizing morality and duty. Both community and individual morality would reinforce each other, they thought, and they wanted the government to reinforce that. Finally, they tried to downplay social conflict (Democrats talked about haves and have-nots) and talk up the organic web in society: not just us versus them.

But remember: though they wanted the government to be involved in social and economic development and were opposed to overreaching governmental authority, they are not 20<sup>th</sup>-Century liberals: many of them were slaveowners or supporters of slavery. Both parties had slaveowners, and both had people in the North. This is not (yet) a sectional politics. The Whigs saw themselves as conservative, and sometimes were elitist. They were heavily influenced by moral philosophy and psychology, by the idea of a conscience.

Thus, both parties supported universal education: the Democrats as a way of boosting everyone up to the same level, and the Whigs as a way of balancing human passions with higher reasoning; they wanted to regulate societal passions with societal higher reasoning, too. Thus, they blend their goals of social improvement with a sharp conservatism, even if it was flavored with racial differences. Oops.

The Whigs held that a rising economy will lift all boats, and that with morals, foresight, thrift, and hard work, there doesn't have to be a split between rich and poor. These lead to a couple things, including the (somewhat uncomfortable) notion that poverty is not just a failure of society, but also a failure of the poor person to self-improve.

This mean the Whigs support things like internal improvements, a high tariff, and a national bank, as ways of supporting or helping people. Thus, they have different ideas than the Democrats on morality and the Constitution. The Democrats are worried about excesses of self-interest, and the Whigs about lack of self-control.

Thus, the Whigs saw the Democrats as a bunch of drunks and infidels, and the Democrats saw the Whigs as a lot of elites defending slaveholders. Thus, the split is between those who argue that the government should prevent (or redress) social inequality, and those who argue it should be used to help morality.

## 11. Feminism and Women's Rights: 2/23/15

Today's lecture is on the origin of feminism and women's rights in the first half of the 1800s. It can be thought of as the roadmap to the Seneca Falls convention, which is sort of perceived as more important than it actually was (and these pre-stories are possibly more significant).

Ideas on women's roles in society had changed from the 1790s to the 1840s, but most of the interesting change was after 1820s; this is really after and different from the republican family models we discussed earlier this quarter, and begins with notions such as "separate spheres." Moreover, women played a significant role in bringing in some of the major intellectual movements of the time (e.g. abolitionism), even if they were often constrained by the boundaries of the time. There were strong connections between the women's rights movements and abolitionism, but they are not the same, and understanding their somewhat nuanced differences is quite illuminating.

The takeaway from this lecture is that the movement, and the arguments for the role of women in society, was very contested; even feminist writers had different ideas that were all controversial in their own ways, even as many writers, e.g. Grimké and Beecher, were prominent and had an audience. They were better known at the time of their lives than people we think about more today (e.g. Thoreau and Emerson).

The notion of separate spheres has already come up a few times in this course. It's a set of ideology and expectations geared towards in particular middle-class women, not a list of rules that society conformed to. They didn't apply to slave families or poor ones. However, it was an important model for the middle class, and shaped women's expectations for themselves, as well as men's expectations for women.

It was also a factor in the *cult of domesticity*, a reaction to the rapidly changing world of the 1820s and 30s; it contrasts the stable home with the developing, commercialized, capitalistic outside world; the home is a refuge to this, and women, whose domain was the home, didn't deal with the fierce, warlike aspects of society. Though this can get mushy-sounding by today's standards, it's certainly more reasonable to think of the hypercompetitive outside world, with moral combat, versus the home, where men and women both can show their humanity and trust each other. Within this, the role of women is to cure the wounds given by society, but also to tame the worst impulses in men.

This is definitely still not equal: women aren't elevated to the same status as men, even if their role in the home is somewhat elevated. Women are supposed to be useful, not ornamental: they do a lot of work in the home, managing staff or caring for children, doing lots of processing of goods to consume, e.g. making preserved fruit, mending clothing (though in this period, clothing is increasingly purchased), and so on. A women's skill is to manage all of these household duties, and to be practical and domestic, rather than the elite European notion of fashion and frivolity. It rests on the idea that women are naturally passive, affectionate, etc., and therefore not really suited to the excitement of the outside world.

This idea of women is based in part on an emerging medical science determined to discover the physiological differences between men and women, and scientists of the time believed that women were frailer, with smaller skulls, had differing nervous systems, and in particular, were more subject to overstimulation. The idea was that the male body was more dominated by the brain, while the female body was moreso by the nervous system, emotions, or even the reproductive system. This is an interesting phenomenon; it was based in well-intentioned scientific methods, but of course it couldn't stand up to modern scientific scrutiny!

This also related to the idea that women could pass certain conditions on to their offspring, e.g. if they are too frivolous or too overworked in a factory, they could wreck their bodies, leading to a worse-off next generation. This ended up as a backlash against women reading; they should get more exercise, it was theorized, as too much exercising the brain would lead to sickly children. And women were able to gain more control over childbirth, since having too many children wasn't good for having healthy children, though it was also argued that contraception could also damage a women's reproductive system. And attempts to have family planning were attacked along with equal rights campaigns.

We have a tendency to think of separate spheres are fundamentally being about the roles of women, but it was at least as much about defining manhood; it was in part about getting men to compete in this frenetic public sphere of individualism and manly, self-defining fashion; and at the same time, not going overboard with excesses of ambition.

It was an ideology, not a description of reality; it was something to aspire to, and many women transgressed the boundaries suggested by separate spheres all the time, for many reasons. And some of the logic behind promoting separate spheres (by both genders) was to try to convince people to adopt it; many people weren't abiding by it, e.g. men not being breadwinners.

**Revivalism, Reform, and Women.** Women were particularly active in evangelical revival and social reform. The improvements in women's education that came about in the early American republic led to women developing an intellectual self-confidence, and at the same time that there was a great revival of religion. Most of the young people affected by religious revivals were women, though it's not clear why; perhaps because this and social reform were two ways women could make a difference (and there weren't many others), and since men were monopolizing the world outside of the home, women could connect with other women. Women could be treated as equals to or even superiors to men in their morality and piety, and they embraced this, with many moral associations booming.

These voluntary organizations, which really struck de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, weren't just the domain of men, but they were really only acceptable because they were closely tied to the notion of women as domestic and moral guardians; there's a lot of boundary policing around the social reform movements, and they need to be thought of as nonthreatening, about morals and not politics. This dovetailed with the idea that women's soft-heartedness meant they were closer to God, and so on, so

ministers preached this, though they also saw women as subservient to the men in their lives. In any case, evangelical activity made a difference in women as actors in the intellectual role, even given this. A classical role here is women as Sunday school teachers, who were often women; they had a major moral and educational role, but had to answer to the ministers.

So on the one hand, there's the notion of social reform, and it can be seen as compatible with the social expectations for women, but there are also women who are pushing against and shattering the gendered expectations of women in America, e.g. Margaret Fuller and Sarah Grimké.

The latter is a fascinating figure, a lost daughter by the standards of the day. She was born to a very wealthy South Carolina plantation family, and she had a very traditional upbringing for an elite young Southern woman (private tutors and all that), unlike most of the reformers or early feminists. Grimké spends her youth quietly teaching her slaves to read, which was illegal in South Carolina at the time. But eventually she visits Philadelphia and falls into Quakerism, and she falls into the burgeoning abolition movement. She speaks to the importance of the role of women in the abolition movement, and the significant overlap between the abolitionists and the feminists (Frederick Douglass makes a very notable speech at Seneca Falls). So the question is, do you focus on women's rights, or abolition? This says a lot about one's intellectual and political values.

Both their fights for equal rights for women and for abolitionism got the Grimké sisters in trouble, as they questioned male interpretations of the Bible, or gave speeches to partially male audiences (which was seen as lewd). They were not cowed, and continued to talk and publish, including testimonies or articles in favor of abolitionism. They continued to deliver anti-slavery lectures, at least until they decided they didn't want to deal with the angry mobs that inevitably caused a disturbance outside.

They pushed boundaries on a lot of taboos, including discussion of rape and of women's bodies. This is radical and inflammatory stuff; critics accuse them of leading women away from their roles, which could be considered to cause social instability.

Catherine Beecher was one of their sharpest critics, arguing it wasn't the place for Northern women to judge Southern slavery, and that educating women was a great thing, but not so far as to insist upon equality with men. Her father was Lyman Beecher, who founded the American Temperance Society and American Bible Society. And her sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe, famous for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Catherine Beecher followed her family to Cincinnati in 1832, and then tried to bring New England Protestantism and values to the (seen as less moral) West; she founded a school for women, which allowed her to write a bunch of popular books which discuss her views on a woman's place in society.

She argued for a domestic feminism, with women taking a strong role in the house, partially inspired by her sister's difficulty sustaining her family on her preacher husband's society. She viewed education as a dangerous blessing, though intelligent women ought to understand the advantages of submitting to the gender roles, and she sees education as a means of moral and social improvement, though also as causing them to remain subservient to men.<sup>14</sup> Many of these intellectuals were successful in book sales and lecture circuits, and made lots of money and were better-known than even some of the people we usually study in this period.

Fuller was part of the transcendentalist world of Boston, and emerged as one of the sharpest literary critics of the age. She was also one of America's first foreign correspondents, and took inspiration from Goethe, Dante, German Romantics, English Platonists, and more for her writings. Unlike Grimké and Beecher, she was very much a rebel: she never married and was sharply critical of middle-class motherhood. She published *Women in the Nineteenth Century* in 1845, combining a critique of the idea that women must be subservient to men, along with the idea that society must be reformed, as it is currently holding women back. The idea was to get men to stop preventing women from developing, and women to stop worrying about being maids. Like most of these, it was a blockbuster, sold out in two weeks, pirated in England, and so on. And it generated a huge wave of publicity and criticism (her column was moved to the front page of the leading New York newspaper, the *New York Tribune*).

Then, she ended up in Rome in 1848, and chronicled the republican revolution there; though it was pretty shaky and (like the over Revolutions of 1848) died fairly quickly, it said a lot about ideas of republicanism and equality and such, and in the same year, New York passed laws giving women more

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<sup>14</sup>Of course, the irony here is that Beecher is incredibly successful, and manages to set up her own financial independence.

control over her property, e.g. creditors couldn't seize a wife's property over her husband's death. This was a direct response to women's activism about it.

And, of course, there was also the Seneca Falls convention on women's rights, one of many, which would be distilled into the women's suffrage movement, which Grimké would play an important role in.

## 12. Anti-Slavery and Abolition: 3/2/15

The last two weeks will cover the discussions about slavery leading up to the American Civil War.

One of the biggest breaking points of American dialogue about slavery was the Compromise of 1850, which we'll talk more about on Wednesday. It colors the context of *Twelve Years a Slave*, as well as some of our readings today, but some of the earlier themes from history or even earlier in this course are helpful background for it too.

One important takeaway from this lecture is that anti-slavery is not abolition. They are often used interchangeably, but the former is about how to abolish slavery, whereas the latter is about criticism of the slavery institution. Clearly, abolitionists were generally anti-slavery, but the converse was not true (this is an LSAT-esque question, or a math one): some anti-slavery advocates weren't abolitionists.

There are also many different takes on abolitionism, e.g. Garrison's versus Douglass'. Keep in mind that though abolition wins out, and is an important position in the intellectual history of the United States, at the time period we're studying, it's very much in the minority.

**Historical Overview of American Slavery.** Slavery expanded dramatically, even relative to the dramatic expansion of the United States, in the first half of the 1800s. It expands in the West very dramatically, despite early attempts to restrict it; it was almost banned in the Louisiana Territory, but in the end it wasn't, and this has huge implications for American history, leading right up to the Civil War.

What was actually happening in the space called the American Southwest? Note that in the first half of this century, this meant Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and later, Texas. Later on, this will include California, which will be important, but at this earlier point in American history, it is more what we think of as the South or Southeast.

Way back in the world of Jefferson and the founders, people believe slavery is on the way out. There's been a significant decline in tobacco production, and Pennsylvania seems to be doing a lot better than Virginia, with a more diverse economy and free workers. It seemed that slavery was anti-republican and not so good for the Virginia economy; this was a popular opinion at dinner parties on the Potomac, even if some of its holders were slaveowners. Oops.

This decline in need for slaves in Virginia, paired with an increase in development of the Cotton Belt (Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana), leads to the development of the interstate slave trade (and forcible movement of Virginian slaves and everything else you've no doubt read about). Some of the explosion in the Cotton Belt was due to new technology, e.g. the cotton gin. This meant many more people worldwide were wearing cotton. The Mississippi could be navigable (e.g. for cotton production) with the invention of the steamship, and the power loom and industrialized textile production also helped. Thus, there was a very clear correlation between slaves imported to regions of the Southwest and cotton exported from the same regions, and the result was an explosion in the slave trade in the Southwest.

Ironically, Robert Owens, Sr., who wrote about socialism, was a cotton magnate, and no doubt owed some of his fortune to slavery, even though he didn't own slaves directly.

In any case, the cotton trade grew and grew and grew, right up to the eve of the war; this informed arguments in favor of slavery, but also leads to an expansion of the slave trade itself, as well as the fact that the Old Southwest had a huge population boom in this time.

There was that hope for the new states to be settled by yeoman farmers, independent, on small farms, and some do, but they have a hard time competing with the big plantations, and are marginalized.

One important facet of this is that the cotton trade is very interconnected with the greater American economy and the global economy. In this time, Virginia's greatest export becomes human beings; New York and New England develop textile industries, and other exports that are sold to plantations (e.g. the finance industry!). It's important to understand that, since this is such a tangled and national and international story, abolition is so controversial, especially with its fiery rhetoric.

Slavery was really, really profitable, and it interwove itself into many parts of the American economy, especially in the South. The transformation in the Southwest made a dramatic reversal of what seemed to

be the end of slavery; instead, it became absolutely essential to the economy, to the culture, and to the politics of an entire region of the United States.

This is an important backdrop to the rise of abolitionism in the United States; many abolitionist movements were couched in the ideas of the earlier ideas where slavery was going to fade out, was seen as anti-republican, and so on; then, Garrisonian abolitionism was more of a response to the newer, revitalized slave trade.

**Gradual or Recolonial Abolition.** So how should one contrast this huge financial impact of slavery with the abolition movement?

Jefferson believed slavery was morally and politically awful, not to mention economically inefficient. But he also believed in separate creations, and the inherent inferiority of Africans to Europeans. Thus, he saw slavery as a slow-burning civil war within America, so abolition, a stated goal of his, was to take place gradually, compensating slaveowners and relocating slaves to some safe, other place.

Jefferson realized that slavery was so institutionalized that even this would be socially disruptive, even revolutionary, but also that slavery requires lots of violence and coercion. Thus, it was sort of a slow, one-sided race war, so he reasoned that if one side placed down its weapons, the response would not be kind.

Crucial to his ideas (and those of other colonial abolitionists) is that black and white can't be united; they are too different, or not compatible, or free blacks would cause economic stress (lower wages, lead to more unemployment of whites or of blacks, leading to crime). Gradual abolition is actually enacted in the North, e.g. in New York, and these ideas inform those laws.

Thus, gradual abolitionists have the goal of purchasing the ownership of slaves, and returning them to Africa, where they can hopefully lead freer, happier lives. But there's a genuine worry that slavery is expanding too quickly, and this could lead to slave rebellions; thus, another goal of some of the colonialists was to buttress slavery while it expands, stabilize it as it expands or even as they are trying to wind it down.

And there are slave revolts throughout the South in the 1820s and 1830s, which make slavery seem more violent; slave codes are made stronger, and the institution of slavery is made more extractive and more violent. But it also makes colonization seem like a better strategy, even if only as an escape valve rather than complete abolition.

The American Colonization Society (ACS) is an example of this. It's very well connected (e.g. James Monroe and Henry Clay), and asks Congress, etc. for money. They manage to send 1,500 freed slaves to Liberia (in West Africa), though out of a population of 2 million slaves. This is somewhat small. Liberia did exist, though, and was initially led by whites, eventually replaced with African leaders.

History has not been kind to the colonialists, for their anti-slavery movement (was it abolition? That is an interesting question) was rooted in the superiority of whites over blacks, and their fundamental immiscibility. There's no need for us to rehabilitate the ACS, and indeed they were racist relative to our times and even relative to the Garrisonians of their own times. But they serve as an example of the differences in views on anti-slavery. The Garrisonians movement, while not perfect, ended up being more successful, intellectually and politically; colonization always felt half-hearted, for even as it detests slavery, it's based on Enlightenment ideals that were somewhat out of date by the 1830s, as the nature of slavery in the United States changed. It became untenable in the face of stronger pro-slavery advocates.

**Garrisonian Abolition.** Colonization eventually fell against a stronger anti-slavery movement, which treated slavery as a moral wrong, and therefore found no need to compensate slaveholders. Colonization persists, more weakly, for a while, and even Lincoln was a fan of Henry Clay and thought about it, but Garrisonian abolition became stronger, explicitly trying to root out the common ideas of racial inferiority and the institution of slavery, so tied to the American economy.

William Lloyd Garrison is, of course, the foremost Garrisonian. He attacked the ACS on moral grounds, which were an outgrowth of the Second Great Awakening (which harkens back to the beginning of the course), like many other movements. Temperance was the most widespread movement prior to the Civil War, and Garrison's own trajectory intersected with that. But the 1830s were a time when a lot of people decided to be reformers (as careers, etc.), as they saw society radically transform, and as they embraced new forms of religiosity, especially evangelical Christianity.

Garrison decided to be a reformer, and if you recall Lyman Beecher (whose daughters include Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, also reformers), Garrison comes under his sway, and in a few years, begins publishing magazine called *The Liberator*, as well as starting societies such as the New York Anti-Slavery Society and the American Anti-Slavery Society, which were his mouthpieces for this kind of abolitionism.

He articulates a very radical view of abolition, which is very much a minority view, but will still blow open abolitionism in the United States. Here are his seven principles.

- (1) Moral perfectionism: a sort-of stern, demanding call for abolitionists to remove themselves from corrupt complicity with slaveowners and slave institutions. It may require withdrawal from society, and arises from the very evangelical notion that moral order is being spurned for personal gain, an idea that is related to the cult of domesticity and other responses to mercantile hypercapitalism in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Just like speculators in real estate, one could view slaveholders as abandoning virtue in favor of worldly gain.
- (2) A kind of pacifism or nonresistance: Garrison rejected all acts of violence, at least until the Civil War broke out.
- (3) Anti-clericism: he was opposed to hypocrisy in American churches. The Protestant church was one of his biggest targets.
- (4) Anti-unionism: he was opposed to union with the slaveholders, including a sort of personal secession with the union, or even encouraging the northern states to break away from the slave states.
- (5) He actually advocated not voting in a union where slavery was allowed, since this is a kind of compliance. Basically, this would require rewriting the Constitution, which raises all sorts of interesting questions; many abolitionists at once want no part with the Constitution, but want to reform it.
- (6) Garrison was an early supporter of women's rights; this made him some enemies, but there were some clear overlaps between these two movements.
- (7) He was in favor of civil rights for blacks, e.g. in courts. In conjunction with that, he advocated for immediate abolition.

He also rejects colonialism: he believes blacks and whites can live in equality and harmony. This is very much the antithesis of Jefferson and the colonialists, and rejects a lot of established thinking, e.g. separate creations; it's quite radical.

So in the 1830s and 1840s, there's a huge growth in American abolitionist newspapers, modeled after Garrison's, and they really want to change the American soul and conscience, even the slaveholder's. As they withhold political movement, they saw themselves as separate or above the other arguments, and this formed a platform from which they could discuss the moral indictment of slavery. This eventually provoked a violent response from anti-abolitionists, who didn't share this view of a moral high ground, which I guess is little surprise.

Even Lincoln cited Garrison and his movement as the "Great Emancipators," more so than himself.

Frederick Douglass also became a Garrisonian: Garrison noticed his incredible oratory skills, even as a young man, and becomes a mentor or even father figure for Douglass for about five or six years. Douglass writes a narrative of his life in 1845, which is actually quite brave given that it could lead people to try and bring him back into slavery. At this point, he's somewhat protected by state laws (until 1850, which is a huge controversy, but we'll talk about that on Wednesday), but it is still absolutely a real risk. This was part of the background of his intellectual and political development leading to his incredible speeches including his speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"

Interestingly, Douglass' power as a writer and a speaker became a problem to abolitionists. Initially, his simplicity and power were exactly what they needed: statements about what happened, in his own experiences, and in his own words. But when he becomes more eloquent, leading some Northerners to question whether he had ever been a slave, and when he does critical analysis of slavery or of Northern racial inequality, people aren't so pleased. There's an expectation of how a slave is supposed to talk, and Douglass doesn't talk that way, as seen in his Fourth of July speech.

And at around this time (that is, 1852), Douglass is distancing himself from Garrison's ideals a little bit.

In his speech, he starts by praising America and its Declaration of Independence, but quickly moves into lambasting slavery and the institution that support it, even to this friendly audience. He quotes Psalm 137, very familiar to his learned listeners:

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”

He is calling out people on their hypocrisy; Garrison is all about turning the other cheek and avoiding politics, but Douglass is much more confrontational — and controversial. He believes it’s not enough to just talk about how evil slavery is; you have to do something about it. This is where Douglass embraces free-soil and the Liberty party.

Douglass is also confronting the privileges and hypocrisy of northern, white abolitionists: they were happy to make society morally better by working on abolition, and accepted the help of blacks, but took this from too abstract of a viewpoint: there are, every day, people living in a sort of hell, day to day. The white abolitionists, worried for the souls of the slaveholders, seem a bit quaint, with Douglass’ goal to actually make life better for the slaves. This was also important as pro-slavery arguments solidified and became more mobilized.

Nonetheless, the Garrisonians were most okay with the idea of black civil liberties, even though they were minorities (I mean, the Garrisonians), out of all anti-slavery groups. But there were tensions between white and black abolitionists.

This is where Martin Delany walks in. He suggests a mirror to colonization, that blacks might have the best luck getting to Canada or the West Indies. This is well-received by many blacks, and is attacked by white abolitionists; Delany was quite adamant about his beliefs; like Douglass, he had a goal of black empowerment, but not all abolitionists (to say nothing of anti-slavery advocates) were really comfortable with this. There were many, many different views on the relations of slavery, race, and economics in this time.

Nonetheless, it’s probably important to remember that abolitionism was really both a minority movement, and a regional (Northern) one. They came against an increasingly well-organized and violent pro-slavery campaign, which does make sense in that abolition asked, no, demanded a radical transformation of American society, calling the Constitution a pact with the devil and calling evil an institution that many white Americans talked about.

And what this mean is that Garrison, Douglass, and Delany are facing not just the violence of the mob, but also a powerful pro-slavery movement that was willing to write about racial theory and felt threatened by the abolitionists. Therefore, it was willing to answer their calls with violence. Part of the reason abolitionism grows as a movement is because these pro-slavery Southerners are so violent, so aggressive, so chauvinistic that other whites who aren’t all about black civil rights are alienated by the pro-slavery advocates and become radicalized.

Nonetheless, abolitionists broadly called for a political and social revolution in a country that didn’t really want one.

### 13. Slave Narratives: 3/4/15

There are many slave narratives, so why did we read *Twelve Years a Slave*? It’s not just because the film recently won an Academy Award; the context, sometimes forgotten, is what sets it apart. It was written in the 1850s, in the context of the Fugitive Slave Act and a very charged attitude towards slavery.

Today’s lecture focuses on the expansion of the American West during the 1840s and 1850s, when the narrative itself takes place. The narrative itself is also deeply political, a reflection on the meaning of freedom and what it means to lack freedom, but it’s also (big surprise here) a polemic about slavery. It happens to also be extremely descriptive of the institution itself, which may or may not make it more effective.

**Free Soil, American Expansion, and the Compromise of 1850.** In the 1820s through 40s, the South was expanding, and slaveholding territory was increasing. There was this sense that further expansion



was inevitable; this is really the American idea of “manifest destiny,” more so than before: Whigs and Democrats, Northerners and Southerners, black and white, did speak of this expansion as inevitable, as something that needed to and should be done (Native Americans notwithstanding. Oops), and with it the huge expansion of slavery into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, with the idea that further expansion of slavery is inevitable. Most white people believe this is a good thing, but more importantly, the language is one of inevitability

No more so is this expansion than in Texas, where white Southerners stream in with their slaves. The Texan declaration of independence from Mexico has a lot to do with the legality of slavery, and its appearance as a seemingly limitless Western territory, with an unclear border. This border is clarified by Polk starting an expansionist war with Mexico, which is actually pretty popular in the South and West, but in the rest of the country too.

This war is actually a really good way of understanding the growing sectional tension in the country in this era; though abolitionism does exist, the debate over slavery quickly turns from whether it is good or bad to what place it has in the republic. What happens to the republic when the part of the republic that depends on it grows larger than the part that depends on free labor? What is the place of slavery to be in economy, in society, and in American culture? This war with Mexico becomes a proxy for the place of empire and slavery in America; to wit, many abolitionists see it as a war started to conquer Mexico and institute slavery in its territories. Some saw it as poisonous to the nation (and indeed, it was a factor in the Civil War).

Nonetheless, the United States marched through (Alta) California, through Veracruz, and into “the Halls of Montezuma” (i.e. Mexico City), and the war ended, with massive Mexican territorial concessions to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This set in motion a train of events that lead to sectional conflict —

But first, gold is discovered in California. This forces the question of whether this new West, the Southwest that we think of, will have slavery. Southerners go ahead and assume that these new territories will have slavery, and the Northerners are a little concerned with this; they see the West as a spot of hope for small-scale, white farmers. This is a Jeffersonian idea, so populist, but still a little racist, and ultimately the expansion of slavery, which is bad for small farmers, is against what Northerners want to see there. It’s basically a concern about oligarchies and concentrations of power.

Slaveholders, who appear to be dominating several branches of the federal government, form one such oligarchy, but what happens when they start tipping the balance of power in Congress? These concerns led people to wonder what would happen as more and more people are enslaved and if slaveowning interests dominate the United States. This induces a movement known as the “free-soil movement,” which believes that there’s no need or use to touch slavery in existing slave states (protected by the Constitution!), but that in newer territories, it should be stopped, gradually or quickly, and also stopping a future dominated by slavery, to be replaced with one that is freer for the little man.

This Free-Soil movement (and political party) is a direct response to the Mexican-American War, and is the first successful anti-slavery party, arising in the early 1850s (absorbing a previous abolitionist attempt at forming a party, the Liberty Party). It will eventually become the Republican Party of Lincoln, but for now, it’s a single-issue party: to keep the West free for labor and free for men. This is very different from Garrison’s approach: it’s much more directly political, as with Douglass. But the Free-Soil party is not necessarily an abolitionist party; clearly, it is anti-slavery, and it had some abolitionists, but as anti-slavery gains more momentum (e.g. Martin van Buren is onboard), the abolitionist impulse becomes diluted.

Thus, a growing number of white voters, independent of their thoughts on equality or blacks, advocate for slavery to end somewhere around west Texas and at Maryland, and no further. What this does is bring the issue forward; even before the end of the war, there are bills to make slave states out of these new territories. And Northerners fear these bills as ways of cementing political power in slaveowners’ hands; this is the period when slavery really comes into the forefront.

And then right after the treaty is signed, gold is discovered, and people are forced to confront the question of what terms would bring California into the union. At the same time, Washington, D.C. had a huge slave trade and a slave jail; a growing number of Northerners realized there would be a compromise about slavery in California and in the West. At the same time, Southerners are worried about the increase in slave runaways due to the Underground Railroad, and, even though they often hated federal power or

the overreach of the federal government (until it benefited them, whoops), they called for a much more powerful Fugitive Slave Act.<sup>15</sup>

This is how we get to the Compromise of 1850, which is the start of the ball rolling down the hill, inevitably, to the Civil War.

It has five or six major points, and is a real piece of legislative sausage.

- (1) California is admitted to the union, as a free state.
- (2) The slave trade is banned in Washington, D.C.
- (3) Texas gives up some territory in the far west (giving its current borders), and is paid \$10 million to absolve its debts.
- (4) This new territory is organized into Utah and New Mexico Territories, where slavery is to be determined by popular vote (which means slavery).
- (5) A much stronger Fugitive Slave Act is passed, allowing more effective recovery of runaways.

The first two are good for the North, and the last three for the South; the Fugitive Slave Act ends up being the most destructive and controversial.<sup>16</sup> This is a nice example of how bipartisanship isn't always a good thing. . .

It's quite possible that the Compromise of 1850 would have effectively postponed or resolved the sectional tensions arising from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, if not for the Fugitive Slave Act.

The Fugitive Slave Act quickly led to huge protests in New York; even though the South was generally in favor of states' rights over the federal government, it was really a massive expansion of federal power over states that thought they had abolished slavery. It sets up a system of federal magistrates that can hunt down runaway slaves in the North. They set up courts for runaway slaves, and were paid more for guilty verdicts, which I'm sure led to impartial decisions. In particular, many free Northerners were convicted as runaway slaves, and even where there weren't, the idea that a federal magistrate could come in and remove members of the community was incredibly upsetting to New Yorkers and New Englanders, causing protests, and 20,000 free blacks move to Canada, with the very reasonable assumption that they're not safe in the United States. Some fugitive slaves are famously rescued from jails, with all the rioting and violence that entails.

In short, there's a lot of violence and anger: people who had seen slavery as a Western or Southern issue now see it as invading their home, and they radicalize accordingly. It's seen as infecting the broader republic. And this reinforces the belief many have that slavery is not about God or about human rights or anything that is why religion or America exists, just about money.

**Slave Narratives and Abolition.** Before 1850, slave narratives are mostly confined to the minority of abolitionists in upstate New York, but the Compromise of 1850 and the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* lead antislavery literature to find a much larger audience in the United States.

Much of this literature follows a common abolitionist technique: have former slaves talk about what slave life was on the Southern plantations, either as writers or as speakers. Frederick Douglass is the most prominent of dozens and dozens who traveled and told their stories. Slave narratives were a powerful way to show the horrors and cruelty of slavery, but also how much it undermines the morality of slaveholders themselves (thus fitting into the abolitionist narrative).

Sometimes, white abolitionists help write narratives, though not always (evidence suggests, for example, Douglass wrote his own work, and Northup had a little help); certainly, they helped them publish. And these narratives are very successful from a publication standpoint. Even if the first round of sales was to a sympathetic audience, and were targeted to the white middle class of the North (these novels have a definite political purpose, and are told with a mind to influence), these were still very successful.

But what changes the landscape so dramatically isn't a slave narrative at all, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She lived in Cincinnati, on the border of a free state and a slave state, and definitely interacted a lot with fugitive slaves (she may have even helped some run away). As a result, she ended up writing one of the greatest, if not the greatest, American novels of the 1800s, and even more, one of the bestselling works; this is a publishing phenomenon unheard of in America at the time.

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<sup>15</sup>The idea that runaways are a threat to slavery is, well, rather overblown, but the pro-slavery advocates do whip it into a hysteria, where they feel that their way of life is constantly under threat.

<sup>16</sup>The story goes that Henry Clay and Daniel Webster argued back and forth about whether they could include the Federal Slave Act, and Clay asks Webster to have more brandy until they agree to include it!

The story is a somewhat sugarcoated anti-slavery narrative, with a light-skinned protagonist jumping from iceberg to iceberg across the Ohio River, and with Uncle Tom, famously a Christ figure. Everyone was complicit in the story, even a racist anti-slavery advocate from Vermont, and the most evil character in the book, Simon Legree, who embodies all of the terrible stereotypes associated with brutal slaveowners, is a New Englander!

This carries the subtext that slavery is infecting the entire Union, not just the South. It sold 300,000 copies in its first year, which shattered every sales record of its time! Within five years, it was a stage show, and had been translated into twenty languages. But its impact was as bringing the whole country to read about slavery, its moral consequences, and its brutality.

This is why Solomon Northup dedicates *Twelve Years a Slave* to Beecher, who has become a sort of abolitionist hero. But his story is well-timed too; as people worry about free people captured into slavery after the Fugitive Slave Act is passed, he provides an example of just that, and the terrors that endure as a result.

Northup was precariously middle-class; he was a carpenter and a violinist, but he wouldn't have joined the circus to play violin in D.C. if he were better off. This economic disadvantage is typical for blacks in the North; they do have legal rights (though less so after 1857, with the Dred Scott case), though there is also institutional racism, and in general they were struggling to get by. This will be important to remember when one reads the narrative of the man who lost his freedom.

Though this narrative sold fewer copies than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it succeeded on the scale of Douglass' narrative, and certainly Northup enjoyed telling his story on the lecture circuit. He becomes, in effect, a professional abolitionist.

#### 14. Pro-slavery Ideology: 3/9/15

Though today's lecture isn't explicitly about the path to the Civil War, it is pretty related, and explains much of the radicalization of the debate.

Note that arguments in favor of slavery are as old as civilization itself; there are eerie commonalities between Calhoun and Aristotle. But in this lecture, "pro-slavery" means the arguments put forth in favor of the style of slavery practiced in the American South. In this era, attitudes towards slavery were changing and evolving, and the pro-slavery advocates argued, on economic, racial, and other grounds, that it should be preserved or even expanded, against its critics.

Another change from previous arguments against slavery is their aggressiveness; it's forceful and centers around the idea that the expansion of slavery is a good thing (compare to Jefferson and the slaveowners like him, who weren't so convinced that slavery was a good thing). Previous arguments in favor of slavery were more apologetic or rooted in tradition, and these are more expansionist. This leads to slaveowners in Congress passing things like the Gag Rule, forbidding pro-abolition arguments in Congress.

There are three aspects to this sort of pro-slavery arguments: social, racial, and economic. By contrast, Northern arguments tend to be more agnostic, arguing that it's not our thing and we don't understand it as much, and it would take a lot of effort to uproot it.

**The Social Vision of Pro-Slavery Ideology.** This pro-slavery argument, though almost hysterically defensive, was more than just defensive against abolition; it was also quite aggressive in favor of the expansion of slavery into the West. Rather than just arguing for the Southern "peculiar institution" to be left alone, they argued that it was a progressive institution, for the good of humanity. While this is and was extremely racist and bonkers,<sup>17</sup> it was very influential, and since it justified the Southern social and economic system, it ties the white Southerners together into a group, even with some intellectual community, focused on Charleston, SC. Thus, by 1850, one could buy anthologies that compile pro-slavery arguments together, like a canon.

And in this society, it's not just that there are slaves, but that slavery is very important to the Southern society, culture, image, and economics. So what is this pro-slavery argument that arises to defend this society?

Defenders of slavery had a very specific view of what society ought to look like. This "organic" view of society holds that there are natural hierarchies of ability, talent, and experience, and therefore that an Aristotelian sense of master-slave relationship is desirable and inevitable. But in the South, this also feeds

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<sup>17</sup>The professor's word; I might have used a stronger one.

into the view that the racial and class order of the South is the ideal society. And this society is coming under attack intellectually.

Thus, they start attacking the social and intellectual ideas of liberalism, e.g. John Locke. They argue that this society of equals is kind of backwards, and that a political and social structure is needed first, in order to be able to govern the lazy or corrupt individuals present in humanity. This is a bit of a dark view. Edward Brown, in his *Notes on the Origin and Necessity of Slavery*, quotes a Shakespeare character's belief that only hierarchies separate men from beasts. This is a clear rejection of the Jeffersonian idea that all men are created equal; instead, they use inequality as their basis for social theory and political development. They claim from anyone's experience that not all are created equal, and that violence and anarchy will be the inevitable result if one ignores this, if one gives the lower groups the freedom of self-control.

When people pointed out that the South had many violent slaveowners, they responded that the North had lots of violence towards its workers too. Now, which was worse, hm? Eventually, Christian arguments made it in: slavery is part of a patriarchal tradition, and was all over the Old Testament. There is lots of the idea that fathers rule because God intended them to, and so forth, and this related to their ideas about gender roles, and so on.

These arguments are exactly intended to justify racial supremacy, but it doesn't just stop there, defending hierarchies of all kinds, even those amongst white people. Interestingly, and perhaps sadly unsurprisingly, almost no consideration is given to the slaves as people, but this is after all a rejection of hyper-individualism and so forth.

This led to another paternalistic idea, viewing slaves not as people, but as "warrantees," who are lesser and weaker and have to be protected from the world, as if children. So, how should one protect them in a hypercapitalistic, expanding society? Of course, their answer, the isolated tranquil of the cotton plantations, is a fantasy; it's totally a part of the hypercapitalistic world, and isn't, you know, all that protective of its slaves.

Of these people, Fitzhugh takes this to a somewhat uncommon extreme, drawing on socialist ideas (including the French socialists who came before Marx). But he was no socialist, just a sentimentalist, viewing the master as this kindly man in control of a family, and enmeshed in a system of graceful obligations. Perhaps, in a world where we are naturally weak, and women, children, and slaves require protection from the world, what is needed is not a workers' revolution, but indeed a loving patriarchy.

And of course, this is nothing like what slavery actually looked like; it was a fundamentally violent institution. Fitzhugh had the excuse (and others did not) that he was more isolated from plantation slavery, and more understood the gentler, domestic kind.

This celebration of domesticity as a complement to slavery is part of the arguments of Louisa McCord; interestingly, even though she wrote about the woman's place being in the home, she grew up with, and also somewhat supported, the idea that the women's place is the library. She was very much part of the Charleston intellectual and political elite; she is well learned and well placed. These seem like a little bit of a contradiction, but not too much, and even in her own time had a slight reputation for masculinity. During the Civil War, she volunteered as a nurse.

She wrote lots of arguments in favor of slavery, in some of the best-known pro-slavery periodicals. These would also attack Northern ideas such as the protective tariff, though also defended slavery on religious and political grounds. She reviewed *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and did so in a completely unbiased manner! Not really; she harshly criticized it.

So the essence of this section is that defenses of slavery and patriarchy (related to McCord's defense of domesticity) are intertwined; both are portrayed as defenses against the outside world, in which excessive capitalism has been undermining the natural order of society that had persisted for millenia.

**Racial Theory.** Depending on one's intellectual place, that could have all been sufficient, but some, especially in the North, also argued from the perspective of a "scientific racism," the notion that some races were biologically inferior, but rooted in physiological differences, especially cranial ones. This went often so far as to argue that blacks and whites, while closely related, were actually different species. Thus, defenders of slavery argued it was only natural for defenders of slavery to argue for their different treatment.

This connects to polygenesis, as we talked about earlier, but this time around, the goal is to downplay the Biblical arguments, and instead rely on empirical, scientific evidence.

Charles Caldwell was an important intellectual in this context, a well-known physician who published a treatise in phrenology, the study of cranial structure. He really wrote against Daniel Stanhope Smith's argument for equality; instead, he had the idea that racial differences persisted from antiquity, and that these can explain the relative successes of races over time. He argued that the Caucasians, being the superior race, don't need to worry about being unfair to the other races, since they're inferior and might have gone extinct soon anyways. While not really defending slavery, he claimed that these innate differences were what made slavery possible.

Caldwell worked hard to make phrenology a respectable science (hmmm. . .), and his treatise *Crania Americana* tried to make a rigorous analysis, and divide humans into five races, including one race for all indigenous North and South Americans. His argument is that the physical differences between races is intrinsic, fundamental, and scientific, unrelated to external causes.

These arguments gave others in the South the ability to use this to defend their arguments in favor of slavery. But there were connections to Northern intellectuals at this time as well, who also wrote about racial theory. There is no scientific consensus between polygenesis and monogenesis at the time, but lots of discussion, and one common Southerner view was that there were indeed innate differences between races, and these were most extreme in the case of black and white, and therefore that blacks could not persist, except in the care of whites.

At this point (the 1850s), these views are getting less popular, and people are beginning to favor monogenesis, in opposition to phrenology. It does persist past the Civil War, and so these people don't look like global warming denialists quite yet, but the point is it's not as front-and-center as we might expect.

In summary, slavery isn't just a defense against the problems of capitalism, but is a way of preserving the natural order of society, which had racial differences.

Not all pro-slavery advocates agreed with all defenses of it, but these are pretty broad opinions.

**Economic Arguments.** These include ideas that slavery is property, and has been around since the beginning of civilization.

One of these defenders was James Henry Hammond, who was somewhat cynical and had many mixed-race children. He was not much for morality, and argued that slavery is amoral. But it is something that has always been and therefore always will be; this is how the economy worked.

There were more sophisticated arguments for slavery, e.g. Edward Brown's argument that it maintained social order by keeping wages low; if wages increased, then the lower class would rise and challenge their betters, and thus culture would be diluted. These people saw universal equality as synonymous with barbarism, and had a view of a genteel, unequal world. Slavery preserves inequality, not just in terms of whites and blacks, but also between whites themselves.

In addition to the cultural arguments (great art and culture come from inequality), there is the more conspiratorial argument that the North is trying to conspire against the South's way of life. These include virulent arguments in favor of free trade (which makes sense, since they wanted a market for as much cotton as they could sell) against the more North-favored protective tariff.

It's a bit hard to get into their heads (e.g., who fulminates against an import tariff?) — but they see cotton as this great, worldwide commodity, that the South “should” be the richest part of the world, even though it seems to be doing less well.

Modern developmental economists would argue this is in large part due to the South's slavery not being the most economically reasonable institution, but the South often saw this as the North profiting off them, e.g. with the tariff, artificially expanding their economy. They looked to the North, which they depended on for capital.

Thus, they felt hemmed in, and so they wanted to expand slavery, in number of slaves and slaveowners, in territory (expansion into Mexico and Cuba was often suggested), and to balance power against the North. There was this idea that if slavery stood still, it would die (funny enough, that is sort of what happened).

For example, the Panic of 1837 happened in part because people produced too much cotton, and the price collapsed, but the rhetoric in the South was that they feel more colonial to the North, and if they had freer trade, then all of the cotton profits would center on the North, not to New York.

It's harder to say what the connection to the truth is; it's probably wrong, and there's lots of economic literature to support the idea that societies with large underclasses who don't have the capital to consume (through slavery, land tenure, or other means) tend to have slower growth than countries that are more equal — and though the North is an increasingly unequal society, it has nothing on the South, and is growing noticeably faster. Furthermore, the South specializes in an agricultural economy, which means there aren't quite as many industrial investments as in the North (e.g. steamboats with out-of-date technology). This anti-innovation economy wasn't therefore super fast-growing.

In summary, these arguments are much more about white-to-white interactions than white-to-black interactions, and about defining the image of the slaveholder. But also there was the expansion idea, of more land and more cotton markets, against the scary abolitionists from the North.

But the dogma of these arguments against the North, along with things like the Fugitive Slave Act and kind of intimidating expansion into Utah, New Mexico, and even SoCal and Cuba, leads Northern agnostics to become more driven against the South, and the division of opinions that led to the tensions that became realized in the Civil War.

#### 15. Lincoln & Darwin: 3/11/15

*"That's one advantage of going to Stanford over Berkeley, though there are others."*

In case you hadn't seen yet, the final exam will be on Thursday, 3/19, from 12:15 pm – 3:15 pm, in room 200-201. There will be a reminder email.

The exam will be in two parts: quotations and citations from the readings: what you need to know is what a given document is about in a particular sense; then, write a short essay (two to three paragraphs, and about as many pages) about the significance of the quotation, including the who/what/where/why, but also the intellectual significance of that particular statement, within the themes of the course. Then, there will be an essay, mostly designed to test the ability to make an argument based on material from the course; not just stating themes, but making an argument in response to the prompt. Simple, straightforward essays with specific examples are probably the best. It doesn't have to be super creative, but making a clear, focused argument using examples from the source material is an A essay. Lots of details are good, though not crucial; try not to claim that the Civil War happened in the 1830s. It is also possible to cite lecture (e.g. for background).

Well, Lincoln and Darwin. These two are very different, both at first and when you think about it for a little bit, but they do both illustrate an intellectual and political paradigm shift in the middle of the 1800s. It also happens that they were both born on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1809.

**Darwin.** Charles Darwin's world included a conservatism of religion — the idea that great or sudden social or religious change is a bad thing. Yet many people saw an evolutionary approach to nature as appealing because of its metaphysical implications: the truth itself could change, as could institutions. Evolutionary thinking has an appeal to people who want to pull down a barrier.

Darwin helps pull down that barrier in the natural sciences by answering the "species question:" do species change over time, and if so, how does that change take place?

If you remember Bufont, Jefferson's nemesis, he was interested in a number of related questions, though he rejected the concept itself. He, along with many other natural scientists, began discovering extinct species, and since he was prestigious, this allowed evolution to become part of a respectable scientific dialogue, even though it raised lots of difficult questions on reconciling it with Genesis, etc.

Bufont had an *essentialist* concept of species, that there was something essential within each species as a fundamental part of nature. Extinction is incompatible with this idea, and was a growing question. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed the idea that organisms react to their environmental stimuli, and change in response to their stimuli (sort of like Stanhope Smith's ideas). This is not what Darwin believed: he believed there was random variation between individuals, and some variations were passed on because they are better suited for the environment, but the environment is not intentionally doing anything, and the organisms themselves do not respond to this; they do not adapt themselves by changing themselves.

Darwin grew up in an intellectually prominent family in Shropshire. He picked up a naturalistic theory of social evolution that was quite popular in the early 1800s, an economic/social theory in which an "invisible hand" guides social relations and social revolution. Darwin then studied under clergymen, who saw no friction between their practice of science and their role of clergymen. He read Malthus, and was impressed

with the fierce competitiveness and waste of nature; so many eggs not hatched, &c. Darwin was quite moved by that analysis, and by reading this, he was putting himself somewhat at odds to his more pious superiors at Cambridge; this Malthusian point of view is more mechanistic and less Biblical, on explaining nature by looking at nature.

Darwin's teachers and father help him get a position on the *Beagle*,<sup>18</sup> where he is the naturalist on their five-year journey. A lot of his best collection was at the Galápagos Islands, and he began studying them when he got back. Specifically, there were lots of different species of finches there: too many to really be explained by the existing theories of biology. In particular, it seemed that transmutation of species did occur.

In 1837, Darwin begins writing the notebook *On the Transformation of Species*, which over the next five years would advocate that species are not fixed, discrete particles, but changing categories that flow into each other. In 1842, he begins *On the Origin of Species*, which is eventually published in 1859. That's a long time after the finches were collected. . .

Between 1844 and 1859, Darwin spent lots of time collecting materials to support his hypothesis: he formulated his hypothesis pretty quickly, and then wanted it to be absolutely watertight, which is to some degree the consequence of his time at Cambridge, which was known for its meticulousness, though also from his Christian view of the perfection (and therefore stasis) of nature and the fixedness of species. This is a scientific question, but also a philosophical or theological one. In summary, Darwin is so careful because of potential religious opposition to his work; much milder versions of his ideas, published by other people, were widely condemned by the scientific and religious communities in Britain.

In 1858, he received a letter from Alfred Wallace, a naturalist of working-class origin, containing some of Darwin's ideas, and this forces his hand. Thus, he publishes, and makes six editions, with heavy revisions in each. The book uses the language of economics throughout, as a result of his influence from his original social influences.

This leads to social Darwinism, which lifts the Malthusian ideas out of Darwin's work to provide scientific legitimacy to their ideas. They're not making stuff up (e.g. Sumner, who was in our readings, draws ideas fairly clearly to Darwin), but they're also definitely recasting Malthus, Ricardo, and other classic political economists. In retrospect, this is little surprise, since Darwin modeled himself after economic ideas.

There's the impressive irony that by the end of the 1800s, social Darwinism takes in many Americans, even as they reject natural selection in biology. The idea of the war of all against all, the quest for survival, was fairly prominent.

Asa Gray was a preeminent American naturalist, who in collaboration with others publishes works on flora of North America, but eventually gets into a long correspondence with Darwin and tries to understand why different (but similar) species appear in different places. He had Darwin's back, and Darwin was happy for it, because they both knew it would be an uphill battle. Gray was a fair reason that Darwin's book was taken seriously and evaluated on its scientific merit, to a degree; this support included publishing essays of support in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and helped prevent his book being pirated.

Though at least 42% of Americans still don't believe in evolution, it became established in the scientific community over time. Unlike Huxley, Gray did not present Darwin's natural selection as a triumph over religion; he was Protestant, and was quite happy to see them as compatible (as did Darwin). In fact, Gray saw this as evidence of an intelligent designer, as more reason to believe in God. Yet even though Darwin greatly respects Gray, and even dedicates later books to him, he doesn't believe in Gray's design argument. Darwin doesn't intend to argue against religion, so he's sort of trapped in the middle.

Darwin's approach to natural selection and religion is that natural selection is making organisms more perfect, and this is an approach towards perfection. This also cleanly answers the question of how humans are morally corrupt despite the perfection of God; rather, they are on the way towards perfection (though usually the Fall is used to explain this). This is a controversial position, and a few people call him an atheist.

In any case, Darwin's theory of evolution was a radical change in how we perceived the natural (and also sometimes social) world. It is *not* a big triumph of secularism or whatnot. But the idea of change not just as possible, but as the essence of existence, fit quite well into the experiences people had at that part of the century, including the issue of slavery.

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<sup>18</sup>Darwin was a "gentleman scientist," as were many at the time, i.e. he was supported by his family's fortune. This was a respectable thing for one to do.

**Lincoln.** Lincoln really fits into anti-slavery; he says this explicitly, even as early as 1837, and consistently throughout his life. Though he uses good abolitionist rhetoric, he for the most part had limits on his commitment to human equality; he expressed empathy for Southerners (not a common trait among Yankee abolitionists), and he was by our standards a racist, even though he hates slavery. He didn't hate slaveowners, but rather the expansion of slavery; he was a Free Soiler.

In 1854, he started giving speeches against the Kansas-Nebraska act, put forth by his political rival, Stephen Douglass. This repealed the ban on slavery in some territories (e.g. Kansas and Nebraska), to be decided by popular sovereignty, though this in practice means the South mobilizes and wins the vote. Lincoln makes it clear that he is not in favor of complete equality of blacks and whites, preferring gradual emancipation, and was extremely reluctant to blame the slowness of emancipation in the South, admitting it's a complicated problem. The point is, he doesn't like slavery, but takes the long run, different from abolitionists. His position, in our time but also his, is somewhat weak, though he really is trying to build the largest possible coalition, because he would much more prefer to preserve the Union.

But the expansion of slavery put the Union under severe stress, e.g. "Bleeding Kansas," violent attacks between pro- and anti-slavery advocates in Kansas territory or further violence after the Dred Scott ruling in 1857. To a growing number of Northerners, it seems that the South will not stop until the whole of America has embraced their system, and the Southerners believe compromise is impossible, since abolitionists won't have it any other way. Thus, when Lincoln is elected, they think that it's time to go, and enshrine slavery into their constitutions.

Unlike the abolitionists, Lincoln is sorry to see the South go, though he has the red line against expansion of slavery; in his first inaugural address, he pledges to respect Southern slavery, even as he refutes the Dred Scott decision (with the justice responsible in the audience!); the idea that the nation is a creation of people, not of states (just like Jackson, despite Jackson's otherwise pro-slavery stance), so Southerners can't just go off and start their own country on their own.

This is good politics, especially in the North; Frederick Douglass later observed that if Lincoln had put abolition above the preservation of the Union, then the North wouldn't have been so strongly mobilized. He continues his wishy-washy opinions, espousing colonialism and separation, very Jeffersonian ideas, in 1862. That doesn't mean he didn't believe in civil equality, but it reflected a common view that blacks are different and should be kept separate for greater stability. Nonetheless, this remark led to condemnation of black and white abolitionists, who wondered why they couldn't live in the same country together.

Even so, everyone knows the Civil War is a fight about slavery, not just the Union. But it's not, at least initially, a war about abolition. It's over slavery, but not to end slavery. Then, the North realizes that it needs the help of freed slaves to win, and this shifts the dialogue to a degree.

In this context, Lincoln publishes an executive order, the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in the Confederacy, but not ending slavery in the United States. This is arguably more politicking than anything else, and it opened up lots of constitutional questions, but it was politically helpful. It also represented a turning point in his opinions; he would proceed to turn away from colonization, and express real admiration and praise for the African-American soldiers in his army. Though he doesn't become a full-on progressive, his views change significantly, including that the promise of equality in our Constitution had to extend to everyone, black and white.

Perhaps Lincoln expressed these opinions because he needed them to hold the Union together, but there is evidence that he is genuine, e.g. requiring the end of slavery as a condition for ending the war. This is a controversial stipulation, and many encourage him to go back on it, which he never does. He also expresses his desire for black suffrage for literate citizens or veterans, which is unprecedented for a president.

In summary, the war led to an evolution in Lincoln's racial and political thinking, and was necessary for this, too, particularly the importance of black soldiers in the war. And the war annihilated a centuries-old tradition in the South.

One interesting reflection is that the perspective of the world changes between today and tomorrow, and even by the beginning of the 1700s, people saw themselves as modern, with views distinct from the ancients. But by the 1850s, with Darwin and Lincoln, people were less concerned with comparing themselves with the classical world, and more about making the world a better place, e.g. the appeal to tradition for slavery is much less strong. And because of this it seems that Lincoln and Darwin are a good place to end the course.