

HST 201: ONLINE History of U.S. F18 (Escobar Meta 20748 22964)

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Continuing the Discussion

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, November 23, 2018, 9:03 AM

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The Radical Revolution and the Seeds of Liberty

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Friday, November 23, 2018, 2:53 PM

The selection from "The Revolution and the Unfree," 1973 by Linda Grant DePauw was a strong argument that initially made me rethink my previous position that no, the American Revolution was not a conservative movement but in fact a

radical one. DePauw argues that the “inalienable rights” referenced in the Declaration did not apply to Negroes, servants, women, or minors, who made up 80 percent of the population in the colonies in 1776 (DePauw sentences 1-2). At first, I considered this a telling statistic. If the revolution only extended these rights to twenty percent of the population, then it certainly would not seem to qualify as a radical social revolution. However, in “The Radicalism of the American Revolution,” Gordon S. Wood argues appropriately that “These changes were radical, and they were extensive. It [sic] focus, as we are today apt to do, on what the Revolution did not accomplish—highlighting and lamenting its failure to abolish slavery and change fundamentally the lot of women—is to miss the great significance of what it did accomplish; indeed, the Revolution made possible the anti-slavery and women’s rights movements of the nineteenth century and in fact all our current-egalitarian thinking” (Wood tenth paragraph). The argument here is that the eventual emancipation of the slaves, as well as the suffrage movements that followed for both women and African Americans, were in fact a resulting consequence of the American Revolution.

John Richard Alden reiterates this point in the section from “The American Revolution,” 1954. Alden argues that “The proclamation in the Declaration of Independence of the equality of men in the sight of the Creator continues to serve as a battle cry for social and political justice. The patriots won independence; they also made a good start on the long road to securing ‘the rights of mankind’” (Alden sentences 5-6). While these changes in American society were slower to develop, they absolutely have their genesis in the American Revolution. All of the liberties that we enjoy in America today are a result of the Revolution, but some were still “seeds” at the close of the war that needed more time to grow. The Revolution created a new government certainly, but it was also a result of and a tool for a new attitude about the rights of the people. These attitudes certainly were applied first to white male landowners, but the beauty of the government that was created is that the laws can be changed as the attitudes of the people change. As the American people became more aware of what we today consider obvious injustices to various groups, the laws were changed accordingly. This is something that continues to this day in America as the people continue changing their attitudes toward certain things. It is a very important part of the American experience, and it started with a radical revolution.

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Re: The Radical Revolution and the Seeds of Liberty

by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 2:03 PM

Personally, besides disagreeing with Wood, I found his arguments to be poorly constructed and without much evidence. For instance, he says "It was as radical and social as any revolution in history," (Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution p 9)

and "By the time the Revolution had run its course in the early nineteenth century, American society had been radically and thoroughly transformed." (Wood p 10), "These changes were radical, and they were extensive." (Wood p 11) etc. but most of his evidence is very general. I felt like he was trying to persuade me by repeating his thesis over and over.

I found it especially interesting when he claimed that "the Revolution made possible the anti-slavery and women's rights movements" (Wood p 11). How can we conclude this? It is tempting to imagine that everything good about the US came from the Revolution, but I don't see it in this case. In fact, it seems to me that the US held onto slavery longer than most other countries. This is especially relevant regarding Britain, who "outlawed the Atlantic slave trade in 1808" (Murrin p 373), well before the US did so. I'm inclined to wonder if the US slave trade would have ended sooner if Britain had maintained control over its colonies. In the end, slavery was especially lucrative for southern plantation owners, and that incentive would keep the practice alive for several more decades.

Similarly, how can we say that the Revolution "made possible the ...women's rights [movement]," when Britain granted some women the right to vote in 1918 (Representation of the People Act 1918), and all women the right to vote in 1928 (The Equal Franchise Act 1928). The US passed the 19th Amendment in 1920 which granted women the right to vote. My point is that even though the US was first to give full suffrage to women, Britain was making moves in this direction as well. I don't see what difference breaking away from Britain made in this issue.

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Re: The Radical Revolution and the Seeds of Liberty

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 4:14 PM

You make some excellent points here! I can't find anything specifically relating to Britain outlawing the Atlantic slave trade in 1808 on the page number that you referenced, but it is possible we are working from different editions of the text. Nonetheless, Britain did outlaw the Atlantic slave trade with the Slave Trade Act of 1807, and finally abolished slavery altogether with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. The United States also voted to abolish the Atlantic slave trade in January 1807, and this law took effect in January 1808. Of course, America would need a civil war to ultimately abolish slavery altogether many years later. It is interesting to think what might have happened regarding slavery in America had Britain won the war. On the other side of the coin, had Britain won, and therefore maintained control of the colonies (including the southern slave plantations), they might have been less willing to vote the slave trade and slavery itself out as soon as they did. It is easy to get sucked into these lines of reasoning, all we really have to go off of is what did happen. As John Adams reminds us "Facts are stubborn things".

Britain and America moving toward women's suffrage at the same time is possibly more indicative of an overall change in the attitudes of "civilized" countries. That these things were happening almost simultaneously in the two countries is interesting. It does give less weight to my previous argument that the seeds of freedom were planted during the revolution. It may also speak to the fact that due to the system of government that was put in place in this country, change simply came slower. There were slaves in the colonies parading and chanting for liberty as early as 1765. We are told that "Around the middle of the 18th century, slavery came under serious attack for the first time. An antislavery movement arose on both sides of the Atlantic and attracted both future patriots and loyalists" (*Liberty, Equality, Power*, seventh ed. 183). Up to this point, slavery was widely accepted in the colonies as the way things were. Even prominent historical figures like Patrick Henry agreed that slavery was wrong, but chose to keep his slaves anyway out of convenience (Murrin 184). My point is that there were voices in the colonies that were already calling for abolition before the War of Independence, but the government that came to power as a result of that war meant that even slaveholders had equal representation. This makes it much more difficult and slows the process of abolition when an entire region of the country is dependent on the practice of slavery. This process may have been sped up had the monarchy stayed in place, but again we will never know.

I really enjoyed your points. These forums are my favorite part of this class because they really challenge me to look at several angles of any given topic.

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The American Ideals

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 1:07 PM

I think that "The American Revolution" #2 from this week's forum materials made a very strong argument for the case that the American Revolution was not a conservative movement, but something much more ingrained in society itself. Gordon S. Wood, one of the featured authors in this week's discussion, describes the consequences of this Revolution elegantly by saying that "It not only legally created the nation in 1776, but infused into our culture all of our noblest ideals, our highest aspirations, our belief in equality, our belief in liberty, our belief in the happiness of ordinary people, our belief in constitutionalism. All of these things came out of the Revolution," (Video 0:20). This statement speaks strongly for the set of core values that were being developed in this country during the Revolution. The idea that Americans are stronger, tougher, more unified, and ultimately more righteous than our enemies has been often repeated throughout history, but it was born during the Revolution.

In the same video, General John Galvin explains other consequences of the Revolution by saying that “We qualify everything that we do and all the relationships that we have domestically and in terms of our foreign policy on those ideals that came out so very clearly as we started into the War of Independence” (Video 0:57). This comment makes me think back to the time just after 9/11 when Americans were unified in a way that they had not been possibly since World War Two. There was the feeling that we were all in this together, and that no matter what came next, we could face it and defeat it *because* we are Americans. These ideals did not come from a conservative Revolution, they came from a Revolution that united a people with a tradition of courage and resilience that is very difficult to defeat. These changes happened at almost every level of society during the Revolution. There were still loyalists who felt that the colonies had no business being in the War of Independence, but ultimately; they too fell to the ideals that American society had decided were important to them.

This was not an overnight process however, and the video closes with a quote from John Adams which reminds us of this fact. Adams is quoted “What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution, it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people. And this was effective from 1760 to 1775 in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was drawn at Lexington” (Video 2:15). The ideals which today are considered “American Patriotism” were in their infancy then. They were developed slowly, tested by war, strengthened by adversity, and solidified by the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Things were not perfect when the new government was finally in place, and they are not perfect today. That is why the founding fathers were attempting to “establish a more perfect union,” not a perfect one. What was established through this whole process was the idea that Americans are united, and we will stand up to tyranny when we see it.

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 7:06 PM

As I look further into the materials, I am convinced that my initial thoughts on the matter are what I believe to be correct. Document #1 states that "The successful rebellion of the patriots profoundly affected the course of the future, not only for the Americans, but for all other peoples", and that's just a little bit of what it dives into. I believe that being the "first break in the European colonial system" is no conservative feat. Something that brought such a fundamental change to not only this region of the world but others can not be understated.

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**Re: Continuing the Discussion**by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 9:41 PM

Although some of my classmates have made good points about way in which the Revolution did cause significant changes, I feel even more settled in my agreement with Degler that the Revolution was conservative. In my opinion, it is important to consider history from the perspective of those who are least enfranchised by a given culture. In this case, Linda Grant DePauw says it well: "Negroes, servants, women, and minors together comprised approximately 80 percent [of] Americans in the year 1776, [but are excluded from] the 'inalienable rights' of which the Declaration speaks." Even adult white males with "little or no property" couldn't vote. (The Revolution and the Unfree 1973) This situation seems more or less the same before and after the Revolution.

My definition of revolution would include significant changes in the social order. "Eighty-nine percent of those who filled an office before the Revolution also occupied an office under one of the new state governments" (Degler, Out Of Our Past, 1984) For the most-part, slaves remained slaves, women were unable to vote, and poor folks remained poor. To the extent that it was a radical revolution, I would consider the American Revolution radical primarily in philosophy and rhetoric. Yes, this may have "set into motion ideological and social forces" (Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, 1991) but those changes weren't realized until decades later.

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I think we're looking at it a little too closely. While maybe social order wasn't profoundly changed in the continental U.S., the world's social order was changed. The U.S. carved a path for many places to take this idea and use it. I think when you're talking about change on a global scale that's a pretty dramatic change.

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After taking a look at the other resources my opinion that the American Revolution was more of a social revolution than a traditional one still stands. When reading the historians opinions, the one that solidified my view most was Document #7. These documents bring to light some of the social changes that still had to take place and document #7 focuses on the right to vote. Linda Grand DePauw says "But perhaps the most significant mark of their unfreedom was their usual lack of a right to vote..." so even with the revolution behind them many people were still unable to vote even though the revolution was thought

to be a large political upset. I think more of the social aspects come in to play here. "What do we mean by the revolution? The war? That was no part of the revolution, it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people..." (2:25 American revolution video #2) John Adams said this and I think it shows that there were and are many people who think of this as less of a revolution. I do agree that a better name for the revolution should be The War for Independence. As I learn more about what traditional revolutions are, I come to the conclusion that I do not believe that this could be considered a revolution. We became independent but a traditional revolution did not take place, yes it was one of change but it was one of social change and social acknowledgement of the need for change.

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A Non-Conservative AND Social Movement

by [Colleen Young](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 5:40 PM

After reading the posts from different historians, my opinion on the American Revolution hasn't changed... much. I agree with J. Franklin Jameson on the Revolution being a social movement, which I never really thought of before, but I could see these social and radical ideas showing that it was not conservative.

Linda Grant Depaw talks about women, minors, black people, and servants being excluded from receiving the benefits of "inalienable rights", which I can see that aspect of the Revolution being conservative. However, that doesn't mean there wasn't a movement for social reform and steps taken in the right direction for these minorities. Slavery became more talked about and debated, and people started to question it more, whether it was morals or economics.

Post-revolution, though not a minority at acquisition, sons of farmers are often set up with an inheritance of land, while daughters are left with goods to be received when they're older (Murrin pg. 283). In 1811, the Waltham-Lowell System built mills and hired young women to work. Finally, women weren't restricted to farmland and being housekeepers, but were able to go out and work. Our textbook states that these girls "worked steadily, never drank, seldom stayed out late, and attended church faithfully" (Murrin pg. 301). Though these ladies had some rules and codes of conduct to follow, women were less constricted than they were 30 years prior. This was only the start of the Industrial Revolution, and more growth and power/respect to women would come.

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Yes, The American Revolution was Radical

by [Jessica Bene](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 6:30 PM

After reading the historian's informed opinions I am surer of my original position that The American Revolution was a radical movement that changed more than just the governmental rule in the country. One of the opinions that helped to solidify my faith in my choice was John Richard Alden's comment. The American Revolution was monumental for not just Americans but for many other people groups because it marked the first separation from European control. Not only had the Americans successfully separate themselves from the strongest governmental and military power at the time, but they revolutionized the way in which a government worked with the development of the republican system in a large expanse of a nation. Many aspects of the American Revolution are looked too when other revolutions begin to stir, but more than anything our proclamation of the equality of all under the Creator is looked too as a basis for political and social rights.

Another opinion that stood out to me was J. Franklin Jameson's comment on how The American Revolution expanded the right to vote to include more people than ever before thought off. Before the American Revolution, only men owning a significant amount of land were allowed to vote so in short the most prosperous in the colonies. However, after the revolution, any man who was a freeholder, or owned land of any size or personal property was given the right to vote.

(While this isn't the rights that Americans see today where any American citizen over the age of 18 had a right to vote no matter gender, race, land size, etc. This was still an amazing feat in that day and age and more people than ever before had a right to had a voice in the political movings of the young country)

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New Materials in the Backing of Delger

by [Jessica Eckley](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 7:50 PM

In my other post, I agreed and argued why Carl Delger is correct on the view of the Revolution being a conservative movement. I am going to use evidence from the new material to continue to argue Delger's point. The first example is "The successful rebellion of the patriots profoundly affected the course of the future, not only for the Americans, but for all other peoples. The American Revolution brought the first break in the European colonial system. It inspired and continues to inspire colonials of all colors to seek freedom from European domination." (Document #1: John Richard Alden, The American Revolution, 1954). I chose to use this statement first because o course it is obvious. However, during the time of the Revolution and the time shortly after the event, didn't drastically change the political system. The nation was still led by upper-class colonist that "who proclaimed the Revolution suffered no repudiation in the course of the struggle" (Was he Revolution a Conservative Movement article). It even states later in the article that the colonists afterwards continued in the system as part of the Supreme Court.

The second example is ““The Americans were fighting not so much to establish new rights as to preserve old ones... The Revolution itself had been a kind of affirmation of faith in ancient British institutions... trial by jury, due process of law, representation before taxation, habeas corpus, freedom from attainder, independence of the judiciary, and the rights of free speech, free petition, and free assembly” Document #3: Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics*, 1953). He is correct that the Americans were fighting for NEW rights in the Revolution. The Bill of Rights came shortly after the Revolution ended and we still use those rights to this day. However, the man who wrote the Bill of Right was conservative James Madison. Madison “...proposed 19 constitutional amendments to the House. The 10 that survived congressional scrutiny and ratification by the states became the Bill of Rights.” (Ch. 7 page 239) Although Madison did write part of the Federalist papers, I think it is important to mention him because for a while Madison was the right-hand man to Jefferson and had a significant part in the American Revolution.

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2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Revolution Videos- Not Conservative**by [Colleen Young](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 7:59 PM

After watching these two short videos, I'm still convinced that the American Revolution was NOT a conservative movement.

In the first video, Gordon Wood talks about what people think of when they hear the term "revolution"- an overthrow of government, as well as a change in social relations and society. He goes on to explain that Americans had an idea that the current order was unfair, and were willing to take risks. As Edward Countryman states that, "What drives people to get involved, somewhere between hope and fear, vision and desperation" (0:39), I believe this stands for what America once was, strived to be, and still is today. Shelia Skemp says that the United States was good for the Revolution, but at the time didn't know it. The United States creation of a new political order shows that it was "revolutionary in social context, economy, and politics, according to Jon Butler (3:04).

The second video explains that the American Revolution "legally created the nation (...) and infused nobilist ideas, aspirations, and a belief in constitutionalism and happiness" (0:27). Thomas Fleming states that Americans have the "ability to come back from incredible discouragement" (1:43). Overall, the revolution was in people's minds, which caused them to strive for a great change.

I believe that Americans beliefs and ideals in the Revolution is what caused a great social change, and was a step in the right direction towards freedom and independence of all peoples.

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After reading the material it gave me much to think about, and what I found was that I still agree with my original stance that the Revolution was not conservative. The two writers that confirmed my stance were Clinton Rossiter and Gordon Wood in documents #2 and #4. The document by Rossiter was the biggest stand out to me because of the reason that he made clear the fact that maybe to the American people it was conservative, but to the outside world it was very radical. Rossiter says, "The world - at least the American corner of it - had already been made over as thoroughly as any sensible man could imagine." (Document #2) The American people had been preparing for the change to the new ideas they wanted so they were ready for the change. They were conservative to a point, but they also couldn't have fully prepared for the mass changes that were about to occur in their lives. Also if you look at the outside world's view on the events the Revolution was very radical. To the American it may have seemed like they were preserving themselves but to Britain it was a total change from everything. To the Britain's it was a betrayal and simply a radical idea that these small colonies could win their freedom and be independent. So I will admit that there was some conservative idea to the Revolution from the view point of the American, but to everyone else and to some Americans as well it was in fact a radical movement.

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