

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

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The Revolution

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, November 17, 2018, 11:07 AM

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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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A Conservative Revolution

by [Christian Jakobsen](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 3:14 PM

A revolution to me is the changing of the political power. I believe the revolution was conservative because it is still trying to preserve liberties. The colonists wanted to restore what the British Empire used to be. They also wanted to continue and preserve their way of living. They wanted a large political class of people who could vote and have say on the way government worked and organized. Mainly about resources and taxation. The colonial victory in the revolution left the American economy with benefits and disadvantages.

Previous restrictions on trade ended, creating an American merchant marine and manufacturing industry. They also lost Britain as a trade partner and their protection from pirating.

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1



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Re: A Conservative Revolution

by [Jessica Eckley](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 7:26 PM

The meaning of Revolution in my opinion is a movement to overthrow a government in order to evolve into a better government. So, I do agree with your argument of the Revolution being a conservative movement, I don't fully agree that its about political change. In the article Degler specifically states that the Revolution didn't invoke a drastic change because "...no new social class came to power". America, even though defeating the British, stayed in power of those who were of upper class either from previous generations, land owning, or of British happenings. If the Revolution was to change the political power instantly, then why was a farmer calling the shots for the nation? Farmers are what most of the nation was anyhow. In further proof, Degler proceeds to say "These conservative, upper-class leaders who proclaimed the Revolution suffered no repudiation in the course of the struggle no mass from the bottom rose and seized control of the Revolutionary situation to direct the struggle into new channels" (*Was the American Revolution Conservative Movement?* page 5).

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2



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Not a Conservative Movement

by [Colleen Young](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 4:38 PM

How I define and perceive the term 'revolution'; a movement (whether peaceful or violent) within a political order to modify and recreate laws and ideals. I think of revolutionary change as a widespread, national gathering of people coming together to make a change.

In terms of whether the Revolution was Conservative or not, I'm going to have to go with Gordon S. Wood's argument of no. In his article, he states that "America was only a collection of disparate colonies huddled along a narrow strip of the Atlantic coast-- (with economically underdeveloped outposts" (pg. 10) in 1760, compared to Americans becoming the "most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the world" (pg. 10) almost 50 years later. He goes on to explain that the Revolution helped pave the way for the 19th century movement involving anti-slavery and women's rights, as well as egalitarian thinking. After the revolution, the government and citizens of the U.S. were focused on the pursuit of happiness and acquire land and money.

Wood talks about Jefferson proposing in 1776 that Virginia give every man 50 acres of land who didn't have a lot, stating that "without having property and a will of his own— without having independence—a man could have no public spirit; and there would be no republic" (pg. 13).

In our textbook, chapter 8 talks about postcolonial societies in the 1790s. Farmers were a large part of the market, producing and exchanging goods. It is stated that markets provided "household independence and neighborly cooperation" (pg. 279). Using a "changing system," farmers were able to barter more, and had more leniency to pay back store goods by using credit (pg. 281). Farmers and their neighbors overall were successful people who came together, creating an economic trade system and having friendly relations.

Overall, the state of America came together after the Revolution, making the U.S. a distinctive, radical and refreshing society.

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3



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Re: Not a Conservative Movement

by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Friday, November 23, 2018, 2:12 PM

I certainly agree that there were significant changes that took place in the fledgling United States as a result of the Revolutionary War. For me, the word revolution implies a certain change in social hierarchy, which I find lacking. Although "Federalists endowed the new central government with more power than Parliament had ever successfully exercised over the colonies [and] insisted that the Constitution was fully compatible with liberty and equality," (Murrin p 218) it was still mostly the same people who were in charge.

To their credit, these men had some bold visions about new forms of government, but I believe that this is mostly because of the vastness of the continent, and the colony's relative isolation from Britain. They already had their own way of doing things, and many of what I think of as core American values would gradually develop over the next couple centuries. For instance, despite declarations of equality, most slaves continued to be slaves: a situation that must have created some cognitive dissonance, but wouldn't significantly change for several decades. As Frederick Douglass said, "Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them." (What to the Slave is the 4th of July, Frederick Douglass. Speech given July 5th 1852) When we look at this level of social stratification, the American Revolution looks less like a revolution, and more abstract.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: The Revolution

by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 10:40 PM

I fully agree with what you said. Not only was this revolution something that brought significant change in the mainland, but also globally. I think also that the bit about Jefferson was interesting considering what actually played out.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Social revolution**by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 4:49 PM

After reading the two essays provided for this week's forum, I agree most with the views of Gordon S. Wood, that the American Revolution was not a conservative movement, but in fact a radical revolution. Wood explains that "In our eyes the American revolutionaries appear to be absorbed in changing only their governments, not their society. But in destroying monarchy and establishing republics they were changing their society as well as their governments" (Wood fifth paragraph). Wood goes on to describe the difference between the colonies of 1760 and America fifty years later, highlighting that America had grown from "insignificant borderland provinces" and become "almost a continent wide republic of nearly ten million egalitarian-minded bustling citizens who not only had thrust themselves into the vanguard of history but had fundamentally altered their society and their social relationships" (Seventh paragraph). After the revolution, America proves that their republic will in fact be successful. The aristocracy of the former government is gone, and America becomes a land where anyone can become anything they want to. The textbook Liberty, Equality, Power seventh edition describes the year 1776 as "a hinge around which the history of the continent-indeed, the hemisphere-seems to turn" (Murrin Textbook page 244). This revolution did much more than replace a government, it created a country that would go on to become the leading power in the world. This is made possible because the founding fathers created a government that works for the people. When the Bill of Rights was ratified, it demonstrated that the civil liberties of the people are extremely important. These ideas created a society in which people were free to choose their own destiny. Through competition, capitalism, and patriotism, America became the most powerful nation on earth, a nation that continues to attract immigrants from every part of the world who want to take part in the American dream.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Social revolution**by [Jessica Eckley](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 7:09 PM

As I do agree with how America later became a great nation with the famous American Dream, Carl N. Degler was arguing that the Revolution as a specific event, was indeed a conservative movement. As the article state "'...no new social class came to power through the door of the American Revolution. The men who engineered the revolt were largely members of the colonial ruling class.'" (Was the American Revolution a Conservative Movement, page 4). Degler was saying that right after the war ended, it didn't change much so soon. Yes, of course America has evolved since the event; evolved into a powerful nation with an incredible military. But when at the time f the Revolution, most of the nation was still conservative. For example, Thomas Jefferson was a founding father that changed history and the course of America in many ways. Not to mention later becoming the president. So, my response is to maybe focus on

specifically that time, not the America today. America as a nation has had a lot of influences over the course of time, the American Revolution just happened to be the beginning.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2



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Re: The Revolution

by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:54 PM

- I think the main idea is that these things following the revolution happened BECAUSE of what transpired. The ways we put things into place were radical in theory, so as a result some more radical changes occurred. If this wasn't a radical or unconventional time, I don't see how all of the other radical things that happened could have.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0



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More of a social revolution

by [Kathy Holmes](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 6:09 PM

In reading the intro and the two sides of the discussion I am starting the forum siding with Gordon Wood for a few reasons: overall his argument was more palatable which made it easier for me to consume and understand and his arguments really stuck with me.

The point I agree with most in Wood's argument is "...Yet it is important to realize that the Revolution suddenly and effectively ended the cultural climate that had allowed black slavery, as well as other forms of bondage and unfreedom, to exist throughout the colonial period without serious challenge." (Pg 15 Par 3) This solidified my opinion that the Revolution was not a traditional revolution like we have seen in other parts of the world but more of a social revolution. At the time the revolution took place it could have easily been seen as a more 'traditional' revolution but as time passes and we look back at the events that took place after the revolution we see that the effects it had socially were so deeply embedded in how the country grew. "One class did not overthrow another; the poor did not supplant the rich, but social relationships—the way people were connected to one another—were changed, and decisively so." (Pg 10 Par 2) Before this class I have more of what was considered a loose revolutionary construct—the idea that any resort to violence that produced change within a constitution, or politics—was considered a revolution but after reading the textbook and these arguments I think I agree more with the strict revolutionary construct of a revolution consisting of a significant and deep social change.

I honestly hadn't considered the ties the Revolution had to the other aspects of the country such as slavery or the ideas surrounding land ownership and dependency and am very excited to read and respond to others view points as I know I have more to explore on the topic.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: More of a social revolution**by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Friday, November 23, 2018, 2:24 PM

I agree that the revolution laid the groundwork for new ideas to grow or mature, but I don't see these changes as all happening during the time of the Revolution. The issue of slavery is especially interesting to me. In this case, it is true that the ideals of equality and liberty would eventually come to apply (at least nominally) to black Americans as well as whites, this was by no means the norm at the birth of the nation. I would argue that the British were mostly concerned with the profitability of their colonies, and allowed slavery simply for the financial benefits. They also freed slaves when it suited them: "The British army enabled more than half the slaves in Georgia and perhaps a significant fraction of those in South Carolina to win their freedom [through military service]" (Murrin 209). I believe that the very same self-interest that caused British leaders to allow slavery applied to many of the founding fathers, who actually owned slaves directly. In fact, it can be argued that slavery is still alive in the US, it's just as a punishment for a crime now (prison labor) as specified in the 14th Amendment.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: More of a social revolution**by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 9:21 PM

I've been considering the claim that "...the Revolution suddenly and effectively ended the cultural climate that had allowed black slavery..." (Wood p. 15), and I don't really see it. According to our textbook, "The British ... outlawed the Atlantic slave trade in 1808. Mexico, Peru, Chile, ...Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama... and other new republics carved out of the Spanish empire emancipated their slaves." (Murrin p 373) So why did it take the US until 1865, after a bloody civil war to end its slavery? I'm actually really not sure what Wood is referring to in this case.

It seems to me that the cultural climate needed for black slavery may have taken root in the southern colonies even more fully than anywhere else in the world. In fact, the stubborn defense of slavery may have something to do with the separation of church and state. "Jeffersonian planter-politicians led the fight for equal rights and the absolute separation of church and state, [while the] Bible provided plenty of ammunition [for southerners who] preached that the Chosen People of the Old Testament had been patriarchs and slave-holders." (Murrin p. 322) Even after the Civil War, the culture of racism continued in the US. It can easily be seen even today. If breaking ties with Britain did help end slavery in the US, I'm at a loss to imagine what might have happened if the Revolutionary War had gone the other way.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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**Re: More of a social revolution**by [Kathy Holmes](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 4:01 PM

Although I agree with your point that the changes didn't all happen during the time of the revolution, the importance of the beginning of change is still immensely relevant.

I think this is a pretty bold claim to make, but if the revolution had not laid the groundwork for slavery to be abolished it could have lasted much longer than it did. The revolution marked the beginning of the cultural climate change surrounding black slavery in America. Although not all areas of the United States followed suit in the abolishment of slavery at the same pace that has been a common theme throughout our text.

From what I understand of Wood's text, when he is talking about the revolution changing the cultural climate surrounding slavery is that when a country is growing, just like a child it makes mistakes. We have to learn from them and grow. As children our parents would say "don't touch the stove, it is hot" but it took you touching the stove to believe them. Although other countries had abolished slave trade prior to the United States, America had to 'touch the stove'.

According to Max Fisher at The Washington Post 2013 in an article titled "This map shows where the world's 30 million slaves live. There are 60,000 in the U.S."

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/10/17/this-map-shows-where-the-worlds-30-million-slaves-live-there-are-60000-in-the-u-s/?utm_term=.6b8a565e4f13

Slavery is still being practiced all over the world in massive quantities. I am by no means saying this is right, or condoning slavery (I hope that goes without saying) but the same could be said about countries like India. So many other countries have abolished slavery, why hasn't India? Because they are 'touching the stove'. We had to learn from our own mistakes in the past. The revolution opened the door for America to start "Attacking [slavery] with a vehemence that was inconceivable earlier." (Wood Pg 15)

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**Re: The Revolution**by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:43 PM

I think it's interesting to look at the way we established our country and how that led to problems later down the line. Relying on the British really seemed to help in a lot of ways and when we were left to our own devices we messed up pretty bad for a while, it wasn't much better.

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**No, the American Revolution was not conservative. It was radical.**by [Jessica Bene](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 6:13 PM

No, the American Revolution was not conservative. It was radical.

"...if we measure the radicalism by the amount of social change that actually took place by transformations in the relationships that bound people to each other - then the American Revolution was not conservative at all; on the contrary: it was as radical and as revolutionary as any in history."(Wood) Gordon S. Wood lays out the basis of his argument for the radicalism of the Revolutionary War by saying, in not exact words, that the Revolutionary War changed the dynamics of America so much that for the 200 years since then people from other countries have flocked here in pursuit of the "American Dream". The basic thought process of the conservative idea about the American Revolution is that only the government changed from a monarchy to a republic but all other aspects of the country's culture and social aspect remained the same: the rich stayed rich, the poor stayed poor, and there was no changing or swapping between the two. However, this simply isn't true when you look at the America that we have become during and since the Revolutionary War. As mentioned above the idea of "The American Dream" was adapted through the changes that took place after and because of the American Revolution. The simple idea of "The American Dream" is that hard work and contribution to a society can and will lead to opportunity and prosperity and that those who give no contributions or don't work with society can fall from opportunities and prosperity. In simpler terms, the poor can become rich and the rich can become poor. "The Revolution not only radically changed the personal and social relationships of people, including the position of women but also destroyed aristocracy as it had been understood in the Western world for at least two millennia... brought respectability and even dominance to ordinary people long held in contempt and gave dignity to their menial labor in a manner unprecedented in history and to a degree not equaled elsewhere in the world." (Wood)

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Slow moving, but still radical.

by [Jessica Bene](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 8:10 PM

I think a largely missed factor of the whole Conservative VS Radical argument is that the view of what was affected by the Revolution is far too narrow. When asked whether the revolution was conservative or radical people assume that it's just a reflection of the tail end of the 18th century only. However, it's important to remember that because The Revolution resulted in the birth of a brand new nation with endless possibilities with where they could go that everything that has happened in the last 200 years is a direct result of the American Revolution. Every political, social, or economic movement that has happened good or bad is because the colonist decided that Europe no longer had control, that it shouldn't have control over the colonies that rested hundreds of miles away. While I still am on the side that yes the revolution was a radical movement I will admit that a lot of the monumental changes in America happened slowly and over a long time. For instance voting. While after the revolution voting shifted from men with a significant amount of land to men with any type of land, it was only white men who were allowed to vote. It wasn't until 1870, nearly 100 years after the revolutionary war that African American men won their right to vote with the 15th amendment. Finally in 1920, another fifty years later, women won the right to vote through the ratification of the 19th amendment. The basis of both these movements was connected back to the Declaration of Independence that states that all men are created equal under God, leading to these movements and ratifications to be slow moving but direct results of the American Revolution.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: The Revolution

by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:47 PM

That was something that didn't make much sense to me. "Only changing governmental systems". I feel like that's a pretty radical change considering this was one of the first republics to be successful. I think it was really smart to include the fact that things changed so much in the coming years because of what was done during the revolutionary period.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Separation would be a better word for it.**by [Asa Tellschow](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 6:30 PM

I found Carl Degler's argument persuasive, because the social hierarchy didn't significantly change after the Revolutionary War. Although the term "revolution" technically applies because the patriots did reject Britain's rule, and cast out the loyalists, I think the term "separation" would be a more correct description. As Degler points out, "This lack of profound and widespread social and economic change is not surprising. These Americans, for all their talk, had been a contented and prosperous people under the British Crown and they were, therefore, contented revolutionaries who wanted nothing more than to be undisturbed in their accustomed ways." Perhaps the situation would have looked very different if the colonies had been located closer to Britain, but the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean already provided a strong barrier to British influence. The Revolutionary War just made it official.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution**by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:49 PM

That's interesting. I think we have to think about the biggest change that happened, that being the form of government. While the society was still well under the influence of British ways, I think the fact that we got so far away from them in terms of government says a lot about what transpired.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**My view**by [Jessica Lillis](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 7:50 PM

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of the American Revolution is that it was a war fought against the British for independence. To me the word Revolution means a group of people coming together to fight for a change. Whether it is with violence or not.

After reading the article, I agree with Gordon S. Wood. I believe that the Revolution changed a lot for the United States. In the second paragraph on page 8, Wood points out that the American Revolution is considered conservative because the American people

didn't have to suffer the way other countries have had to during their Revolutions. The reasoning for this being that Colonial America was still new and they were freer than those in other countries. While that may be true, I believe that the American Revolution had a significant impact on social and economical change. Removing the British influences allowed our nation to grow.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution- NO**by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 8:59 PM

I think Gordon S. Wood made the most compelling argument on this issue, because he looked at the right things. He admitted that the revolution compared to others in terms of violence, bloodshed, or passion was different than most. However, he highlighted what I really think is the most important aspect; "the amount of social change that actually took place by transformations in the relationships that bound people to each other" (reading page 9). I'll get into more of the details and why those details are more decisive in further posts. For now, though, I think 'NO' simply because the entire standpoint that he is coming from is more compelling. He mentions the reasons people think 'YES' but then shows why those aren't the only components.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: The Revolution**by [Callista Wulff](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 9:16 PM

As both Degler and Wood make persuading arguments, it is important to note that the Revolution was YES indeed Conservative because "no new social class came to power through the door of the American Revolution." Thus there was no shift in power and social classes once the Revolution was underway. The same "men who engineered the revolt were largely members of the colonial ruling class." These men held positions of power within the colonial system in the 13 colonies and helped ignite a revolution that not only kept these men in power, but gave them more access to a growing economy that no longer suffered from the control of the British government. Although proclaiming revolutionary ideas within a new constitution, such as that all men are created equal, these ideas did not create systemic change within the colonies, and furthermore did not create change in the upcoming century. Power relations did not undergo shifts and social classes remained as constant as before the revolution, thus the revolution was conservative.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**I agree with Carl N. Degler!**by [Jessica Eckley](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 10:00 PM**Yes, the American Revolution was a Conservative Movement.**

Reading the article shed light on the details behind the American Revolution. One of the reasons that Carl N. Degler uses to back up his overall argument was that the American Revolution was led by many conservatives. One example is Thomas Jefferson who led almost from the beginning “The self-styled Democratic Republicans who were as firmly tied to revolutionary ideals of limited government and a citizenry of independent farmers as the Federalists were tied to visions of an orderly commercial republic with a powerful national state “(**Liberty, Equality, Power** Ch.7 page 237). Jefferson also later took the oath of office and with that “Jefferson’s first order of business was to reduce the size and expense of government” (**Liberty, Equality, Power** Ch. 7 page 256). Another example is James Madison, “...the Virginia congressmen who had helped write the Constitution” (Ch. Page 239). Madison also “...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 awhile Madison was the right-hand man to Jefferson and had a significant part in the American Revolution.

Another reasoning that Carl N. Degler uses to back up his overall argument was no significant change in the social class structure and was ran by upper-middle class colonists. A backing for this argument comes from the article itself (**Was the American Revolution a Conservative Movement?** page 4) “...no new social class came to power through the door of the American Revolution. The men who engineered the revolt were largely members of the colonial ruling class.” He then goes to explain the backgrounds of most of the men who led the Americans. Some were from the militia, some were judges on the Supreme Court, and some were wealthy merchants. I think that Degler is mostly trying to point out that for a country that were mostly made up from lower class farmers, there wasn’t one or more colonists representing them with the arguments. Degler proceeds to say “These conservative, upper-class leaders who proclaimed the Revolution suffered no repudiation in the course of the struggle no mass from the bottom rose and seized control of the Revolutionary situation to direct the struggle into new channels” (**Was the American Revolution Conservative Movement?** page 5).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: I agree with Carl N. Degler!

by [Callista Wulff](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 10:16 AM

I had similar views. I believed that YES the American Revolution was a Conservative movement. I mainly agree with your second point of reasoning. "No new social class came to power through the door of the American Revolution." Meaning, like you stated, there was no significant change in social classes and was run by upper/middle class colonists. It was wise to explain the background of the men who led the Americans. These men had positions of power and also helped ignite a revolution that kept men in power AND gave them access to a growing economy that no longer suffered from the poor control go the British government.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: I agree with Carl N. Degler!**by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:07 AM

I disagree with Carl Degler's claims that the social status of the revolutionaries both before and after the revolution is somehow proof that this was a conservative movement. Degler would like his readers to believe that because the leaders of this revolution were often wealthy, educated men who had also served in office prior to this conflict, it somehow follows that a simple change in government was the main purpose and result of this revolution. Degler points out that "Fully 40 percent of them attended college or one of the Inns of Court in England at a time when such a privilege was a rarity. An additional 21 percent of them came from important families of their respective colonies, or, like Robert Morris and Joseph Hewes, were men of acquired wealth. Over 69 percent of them held office under the colonial regimes, 29 percent alone holding some office within the executive branch; truly these were not men held at arm's length from the plums of office" (Degler pg. 4, par. 4). I submit that this is a main reason that the revolution and the resulting government were successful endeavors. When we look back at the annals of history to the number of attempted revolutions which ultimately failed, we are hard pressed to find another group of fifty-five men all united in a common cause with educational backgrounds and fortunes that allowed them to make the decisions required to achieve their end goal. Who else would we want leading our Revolution except the richest and smartest people in our country? The fact that these men were not disenfranchised guerrilla warriors should not detract from the fact that they led a radical revolution against a world superpower.

The fact that Britain was willing to raise more soldiers and larger fleets than ever before, as well as more than double its national debt, indicates that they understood the importance of this struggle (*Liberty, Equality, Power* pg. 200). These were not ordinary men that they were lining up against. These were some of the brightest minds in the colonies with enough financial means to do what was necessary as war ravaged their homeland. These intelligent men knew that the nation that they were creating would forever change many aspects of the society in which they lived. They had the foresight to create a separation of Church and State. Degler admits that "Never before had a national state been prepared to dispense with an official religion as a prop to its authority and never before had a church been set adrift without the support of the state" (Degler Pg 2, Par. 4). This was indeed a radical proposition, one that continues to shape the

country today. This is one example of a well-planned government, shaped by some of the brightest minds of the time. These were the most qualified men to lead this revolution and indeed, had the most to lose if they were not successful.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

3



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Re: The Revolution

by [Garrhett Nelson](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 11:52 PM

I think the revolution ended up not being conservative, because there WERE big changes. Essentially the entire way our country operated changed in the following years, and our government was something that the world hadn't really seen play out. I think most of these big changes we see in the following years are a product of what took place during this time. Since these events led to these, I would say it was fairly radical.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0



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The Revolution: Conservative or Not

by [Jared Moore](#) - Wednesday, November 21, 2018, 10:18 PM

When I first began to read Degler's take on the Revolution as being conservative I agreed with him. His take on the Revolution as starting, "only for limited political and constitutional purposes, the war released social forces which few leaders ever anticipated..." (Page 1) seemed very reasonable and made sense to me. However, as he went on to give certain examples of those "unforeseen results," such as the separation of church and state and the belief that all men are created equal, it became hard to believe that those just happened unexpectedly. The founding fathers were smart people and they had to have known to some extent that their choices and actions would lead to major political and social changes to the lives of the people of America. What they wanted to do, have freedom to govern themselves, was something that would change life in America forever. It wasn't something small that would only the political and constitutional parts of the country. This move to be independent was something major that would have many results from it.

It is because of this and other reasons that I find myself agreeing more with Wood's take on the American Revolution being non-conservative. As Wood's states, "most people in that very different distant world could not as yet conceive of society apart from government." (Page 9) The people of the day saw society as intertwined with government. The two flowed together and related to each other. The fact that society and government were so connected at the time made it clear that you couldn't change one without changing the other. When you change one part of a two piece connection it has an effect on the other no matter what. The new government and expanded freedom of a Democratic Republic opened the people up to new possibilities never accessible to them before. Wood's stated that, "...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." (Page 11) Society

changed for all America because of the governmental change. When the colonies declared their independence and began their fight for freedom they knew it would have a profound change to everyday life of the colonies. Changing society and starting a new way of life unseen before in the world was not their main goal or purpose for wanting to be free, but it was something they had to have known was coming and planned for in some fashion. So as I do still agree with Degler a bit, I have to say overall I understand and agree with Wood's viewpoint in saying the Revolution was not as conservative as most people say.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3


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Re: The Revolution: Conservative or Not

 by [Kathy Holmes](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 1:35 PM

I had a very similar view in the beginning, I thought that I would agree more with Degler's view point but as I read on, I wasn't fully convinced. Reading over the documents for a second time with my family over Thanksgiving dinner we had mixed opinions at first but once I read "But in destroying monarchy and establishing republics they were changing their society as well as their governments, and they knew it." (pg. 9 par 3) It solidified my agreeance with Wood. This feeds off of you saying that the founding fathers were smart men who knew what they were doing. They knew that what they were doing would change America forever, not just in a political sense but in a social one as well. In reading Wood's view point it seems as though much of what he is recounting is that of a need for changes socially. Much of what he states backs that up. "...not just the independence of the country from Great Britain, but, more important, the independence of individuals from personal influence...". (pg 13 par 2) I hadn't really considered what you said about "the people of the day say society as intertwined with government. The two flowed together and related to each other." Until I read this in conjunction with much of the information on pg 13 in Wood's document, I of course understood this thought but having someone put it in to words clarified my thinking, so thank you for that! The textbook states "By 1830, the primary engine of northern economic development was no longer the North Atlantic trade; it was the self-sustained internal development of the Northern United States" (pg 277) which really goes to show that even at that time the goal was to become more self sufficient and grow in a social manner as we tried to move our trade from external to internal.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3


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Re: The Revolution: Conservative or Not

 by [Jared Moore](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 9:09 PM

I'm glad to know I wasn't the only one who wasn't too sure about their viewpoint to begin with. I want to thank you for adding the part from the textbook, "By 1830, the primary engine of northern economic development was no longer the North Atlantic trade; it was the self-sustained internal development of the Northern United States" (pg 277). I had not noticed this line before, and you pointing it out to me was great

because it, as you said, showed that they were working to be self sufficient and not working to simply move out of Britain's control into the control of a different country. They wanted to be their own thing and change their world which was something radical in it's time. Maybe not as radical to them but radical to the outside world for sure.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1



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Re: The Revolution: Conservative or Not

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 6:37 PM

I like your comments about society and government being connected and the fact that one could not be changed without affecting the other. I agree that the founding fathers had to have known that society was going to change along with government. These men were stepping up and challenging the greatest superpower in the world, and in the process managed to draft a form of government that became the envy of a lot of the world. It is clear that this had major implications on American society as well. In chapter 6 of the *Liberty, Equality, Power*, the text discusses the effects that independence had on society in America. While acknowledging that women and slaves would only succeed at their goals when they became compatible with the ambitions of white men, it also points out that the Anglican Church was left vulnerable, and that the "first emancipation" occurred within a generation in the "North" (Murrin pg. 219-220). The war also gave women a more pronounced role in society while the men were away serving. These of course are baby steps when compared to the society that we live in today, but not all revolutions happen quickly. I think that our textbook has a very appropriate title as *Liberty* and *Equality* were both ideas that this country was founded on, with *Power* coming as a byproduct of a free society. When I consider the immense pressure that the founding fathers must have felt as they faced the two headed giant of separation from Britain and creating a new government, it amazes me that they were able to come up with a system of government that works so well. This was not a conservative effort, but the largest undertaking any of them had ever faced. They gambled with their lives because they knew that if they succeeded, the reward of a free and (eventually) equal society would be worth whatever price they had to pay.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2



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Re: The Revolution: Conservative or Not

by [Kathleen Gilbert](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 1:28 PM

You make a good argument; however, I would still side with the conservative side on the Revolution. In my opinion, it is more evident that it was more conservative than radical. According to Merriam-Webster, conservative means: "believing in the value of established and traditional practices in politics and society: relating to or supporting political conservatism". While on its face the revolution may seem like a radical movement, the revolution only preserved the society. The colonist's views were primarily based off the Age of Enlightenment. Daniel Boorstin, in *The Genius of*

American Politics, 1953 (Document #3) states that "The Americans were fighting not so much to establish new rights as to preserve old ones" (Boorstin). The colonists were challenging the ideals and ways of the British crown. The British were attempting to force down the colonists throats their beliefs. "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." (Boorstin). The colonists were angry and wanted to fight for the current way of life they had established, not the British way. In this sense, it was a resistance against change. This is further evidenced in our book, in that "once Americans broke with Britain, they warmly embraced the republicanism and never looked back." (Murrin, p.198). They were able to build viable republican governments because they grasped the voluntarist dynamics of their society." (Murrin, p. 200). Also, it is important to note that just because some of the members were attempting to make the more "more radical", the political interpretation of the war is seen as conservative. "While armed partisans were making the war more radical, politics became more conservative." (Murrin, p. 212).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3


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Re: The Revolution: Conservative or Not

 by [Jared Moore](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 9:01 PM

I think you make a good point and I had thought the same thing on my first read of the new documents given to us to look at. However, one writing that lead me to stand with my original thought was the writing of Clinton Rossiter. Rossiter says in his writing that "However radical the principles of the Revolution may have seemed to the rest of the world, in the minds of the colonists they were thoroughly preservative and respectful of the past..." (Document #2) this really stood out to me because to the American people of the time it may not have been that radical, but to the outside world it was radical indeed. To the Americans it may have looked like wanting to preserve their old rights but to the world around them and to Britain as well it didn't look like this, but more of a total abandonment of the normal to a whole new world. To add to that Gordon Wood in Document #4 also makes the point that the New America had completely radicalized the government of their new country. So above just their new ideas they changed the way they made laws and who was given the opportunity to vote, though it was still very limited, and even those that could hold a political position. They changed the look of the people who could hold political position from the wealthy and highly respected people to the rural farmer and average joe. So I do see how some of the readings can change one's viewpoint and I will admit I came close to doing just that, but with what some of the other writers said and showed I just couldn't make the full change.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2


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Upheaval and the Revolution



by [Kathleen Gilbert](#) - Saturday, November 24, 2018, 8:01 PM

After reading both positions from Carl N. Degler and Gordon S. Wood, I would have to agree with the assertions made by Carl N. Degler. The American Revolution was a conservative movement. Degler supports his position by stating that "it is significant, for example, that no new social class of power came to power through the door of the American Revolution." (Degler). From reading our book, *Life Liberty and Equality*, watching the videos on the American Revolution and reading this article, I based my decision on the idea that the colonists were fighting not for a new government, but rather to keep themselves separate from the British and the government the British was trying to force into effect. The colonists did not want the British to have control, they fought for their freedom in keeping the way of life that they had already developed. They had an efficient system and wanted to keep it that way. The colonists did not fight to overthrow their society, but rather to give their society a chance to grow. A radical revolution would imply that the colonists were fighting to uproot their current society and change it into a new society. This is not what happened. Instead, the American Revolution more closely resembles a conservative movement because there was social upheaval, a battle, and when the revolution ended, the society was not different from prior to the revolution. As Degler states, "For the most part, the society of post-Revolutionary America was but the working out of social forces which were already evident in the colonial period." (Degler)

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What is a revolution and why does it happen

by [Kathleen Gilbert](#) - Sunday, November 25, 2018, 9:05 PM

I would interpret the term revolution by inferring on the idea of revolting. In my opinion revolution means a challenge to or overthrow of some large form of power, or government. In the Revolution video #1, Professor Edward Countryman of Southern Methodist University discusses what drove the colonists to participate in the Revolution. This concept, I think, is key in determining whether or not the American Revolution was conservative or radical. He contends that it was a feeling of being "aggrieved, that the system was unfair, unjust and something has to be changed" (0:56). The big questions of course, was were they happy with the Monarchy in France? The answer is no. Another good question was should they break with great Britain or stay? Sheila Skemp of the University of Michigan claims that they were "ripe for revolution, even if they did not know it." (1:45) "they loved being English (1:48). John Butler of Yale University supports this contention by stating that "before 1776 Americans had almost unwittingly, without any planning affected a revolution that transformed the nature of the old seventeenth century colonies. (2:12). They developed a new political order, legislature, people were participating in politics (2:23). "it was a modern society" (3:17). These quotes support the argument that americans wanted to challenge British authority, to keep the way of life they had established, therefore the revolution was conservative, rather than radical.

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