

HST 201: US History F19 (Escobar)

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The Revolution

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, November 15, 2019, 5:12 PM

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A largely unchanged status quo

by [Eric Runes](#) - Friday, November 15, 2019, 9:22 PM

When I think of a revolution I imagine a major upheaval to the status quo of a country. I picture a complete change in the leaders, and the social/economic dynamics that led to the conflict. I see both sides reaching a near chaotic breaking point both militarily, and politically that leaves the country almost unrecognizable to its pre-revolution form. In regards to our revolution in America, this is definitely not what I see. On Tuesdays class the point was made that America had a war for independence.... The French had a revolution. I believe this sums up my view succinctly and is why I believe that the American Revolution was very much a conservative movement. In Professor Carl Denglers essay there are a few points made that can not be ignored. First is how America dissolved the Anglican church leading to a separation of church and state. However, our version of the separation "had little in common with the practice in countries like revolutionary

France, Mexico, and atheistic Soviet Russia where separation has been hostile to religion to interfere, at times, with freedom of worship" (pg.2). The essay points out how our American version is not anti-religious at all, and all 3 branches of government maintain religious ties, including worshipping practices, and continuing to reflect on the populations religious concerns. The next point I focused on was how most of our leaders were the same before and after the revolution. Page 5 states in regards to our politicians "These men merely shifted from their favored status under the colonial regimes, to comparable if not improved positions after the revolution". Finally in regards to the acquisition of British lands there was no social motivation or consequence. Instead the motivation was to enhance state revenues, and the author points out that "Land was abundant most men who wanted it already possessed it, or were on their way to possessing it (pg.6). Professor Dengler makes the claim that "Important social institutions were left untouched by the revolution: class structure, distribution of property, capitalistic economy, and the ideas of people concerning government (pg.6). With so many of the pillars of American society being marginally if at all changed, I believe it is hard to not classify the American revolution as a conservative movement. For me, the most telling quote that sums this up is "Instead of being an abrupt break the Revolution was a natural and even expected event in the history of a colonial people who had come of age (pg.6)".

Sum of ratings: [3 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Qualifying Degler's Side**by [Brontae Sodeman](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 7:48 PM

"First is how America dissolved the...populations religious concerns." Your first quote that credits Degler with a good argument, should have been enough to push you towards the idea that it was a conservative movement. America dissolved the Anglican church after being separated by the Atlantic Ocean for at least 100 years. The American revolution was conserving what the colonists had been living by before they were taxed for the French and Indian war. The religious ties to the three branches of government furthers the argument especially because we still practice those ties to this day.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: Qualifying Degler's Side**by [Jarod Doerner](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 10:52 PM

I would argue that the the revolution wasn't a conservative one, but a radical one. The revolution was radical and not conservative since it was more about societal change and not all about religion. Sure, America dissolved the Anglican church after being separated by the Atlantic Ocean for over 100 years, but there were so much more than that. The American Revolution changed American society as a whole. It shaped the United States to become a great power in the twentieth century and beyond. It wasn't like the French Revolution in which the rich were killed by the poor, but how "one class did not overthrow another [and] the poor did not supplant the rich;" the class structure stayed the same (Gordon S. Wood 10). Religion still has a profound effect on American society, but we benefited from so much more. Carl N. Degler did bring up some good points, but Wood gives more to infer that the American Revolution shouldn't even be called a revolution, but a social awakening for the people of the 13 Colonies, later the United States.

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**Re: Qualifying Degler's Side**by [Bryce Turney](#) - Thursday, November 21, 2019, 7:44 PM

I agree with you that the Revolution was radical and it also changed the structure of society. Wood expresses how social relationships were way better in the way people were more connected to each other after the Revolution (pg. 10). He also said it was a new society unlike any other that had ever existed anywhere else in the world (pg.10). Wood talks about how mind boggling it is for ten million people to come together and unite to form a new societal structure after being separated by the British before the Revolutionary war (pg.10).

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[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: Qualifying Degler's Side**by [Ryan Peel](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 5:37 AM

I'm also of the mindset that the Revolution wasn't a conservative movement. Not fully, anyways. Unlike the French Revolution, where people were getting their heads lopped off, the American Revolution was tamer than the French movement. More like "conservative radicalism" if that makes any sense at all. We didn't kill any of the current governors, members of parliament, or King George. All we did was fight for our freedom. Yes, a battle did ensue, one that was long and hard for us. But, it's where our current governing body came from. Now, the Declaration wasn't the governing document that arose from the Revolution. All it did was say that we were cutting ties with Great Britain. Here's a line from the textbook that I would like to reference here "Unable to govern the Colonies, Britain now faced the grim task of conquering it." (textbook, page 163.) The Declaration was made during the Revolutionary War, not before it. The Constitution was the governing document that was made after the Revolution. Now, I'm not saying that to be conservative, the Colonists just should've grinned and beared it, but, there was still a war that we had to fight, and we had to enlist the help of France in order to win it. Also, I'm using modern-day conservatism to view the Revolution. Who knows? Maybe back then, the Revolution would have been seen as conservative.

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[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**(NO) The American Revolution was not Conservative**by [Jarod Doerner](#) - Saturday, November 16, 2019, 11:28 PM

I have to agree with Gordon S. Wood about why the American Revolution was not a conservative one, but a radical one. The American Revolution changed American society as a whole. It shaped the United States to become a great power in the twentieth century and beyond. However, the revolution was not a revolution, but more of a societal change. It wasn't like the French Revolution in which the rich were killed by the poor, but how "one class did not overthrow another [and] the poor did not supplant the rich;" the class structure stayed the same for the most part (Wood 10). In terms of governmental, societal, and economical changes, a lot of change was governmental. The revolution led to the creation of the American Republic (United States) and its principles of liberty. Wood said above that there was no change in the the class structure, yet there

were some poor men that did become rich through the government (like the 7th President Andrew Jackson). The economy, however, was in turmoil. The nation was left in a lot of debt and a lot of colonies experienced an economic depression for many years. The American Revolution shouldn't even be called a revolution, but a social awakening for the people of the 13 Colonies, later the United States.

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American Revolution A Conservative Movement

by [Trevor Mejia](#) - Sunday, November 17, 2019, 9:50 PM

Personally, I believe in the idea that the American Revolution was a conservative movement which did not cause great political or social upheavals. If we compare it to the French Revolution as an example of a more radicalized and revolutionary movement, then we can also determine that the American Revolution was tame by comparison. Although, it is true that many of the legal and political arguments made by the Americans were based in English legal tradition, much of the spirit of the Revolution came from the ideals of the Enlightenment. It is because of this combination that the American Revolution did not become as violent or chaotic as the one in France. However, it is also because of this combination that the American Revolution started out as a conservative movement to reclaim traditional rights American colonists felt were being stolen, but eventually evolved into a radical social transformation. So, I agree with Gordan S. Woods' argument and would like to conclude with a statement from Joe himself "The American revolution should be called the American independence, The French revolution should be called the French revolution."

~Joe Escobar, Nov 12th . Tuesday's class

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Re: American Revolution A Conservative Movement

by [Trevor Mejia](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 8:45 PM

To expand on my own point, I've been doing some research on the french revolution to compare to our own.

The war for Americas independence is called the Revolutionary War, but it was revolutionary only in the sense that we revolted against the "establishment of tyranny." It was not a revolution of rapidly changing ideals in our country, as other revolutions have been. However, if we look at the French Revolution for example. It was marked by deep, widespread and major social and political upheaval. Even the [calendar](#) was altered. For the French revolution a week became 10 days long, and each month consisted of three 10-day weeks. Every day became 10 hours long, with each hour lasting 100 minutes, and each minute was 100 seconds. However, In contrast, if we look back at the American independence and the revolution that put it in place were necessary not because the revolutionaries and their leaders wanted everything to change. The American Revolution was about upholding timeless ideals. America itself was a new idea, but the unalienable rights we fought for of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are those with which we have been endowed by our Creator since the dawn of time. All points in Gordan

S Woods article, However if we look at Jeffersons Letter too Henry Lee He states "Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take." In that sense the "revolution" was conservative and indeed conforms to its common meaning of something revolving. (A full revolution returns affairs to an original condition.)

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/letter-to-henry-lee/>

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Re: American Revolution A Conservative Movement

by [Bryce Turney](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 4:29 PM

I don't think the American Revolution should be discredited for being a revolution because it wasn't as violent or chaotic as other events previous to it. When I think of a revolution its a group of people retaliating against a government or authority in charge in order to establish a new society. The colonists definitely established a new society and a new political system as well. Wood argues that by destroying the monarchy and establishing republics they were changing their society as well as their government (pg.9).

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The revolution was a conservative movement

by [Brontae Sodeman](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 1:42 PM

I agree with Carl Degler, though I don't think his first topic is very convincing. It's not until he started to discuss that the upper middle class men who led the revolution didn't change social class post-revolution that convinced me it was a conservative movement. Conservative is define by keeping traditional social institutions in the context of culture and civilization. Degler starts his argument by implying that the religious movement in America pre and post revolution was different than anyone had ever seen before, "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 2). This became traditional thinking to colonists and is still practiced to this day in American politics. "Rank seating in churches and the differentiating title of esquire were fast passing out of vogue," (Degler 3) this is a quick summary on the stance on equality colonists had, impressive considering the British were very connected to class status. The collective colonist mindset was that the British had a foreign way of thinking, making them the non-conformists. "colonial revolt against an alien power," (Dengler 5) I think this quote best describes the connection between conservatism and the colonists disgust towards the British.

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To Today's Standard Yes

by [Jacob Yates](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 1:51 PM

The Revolution wasn't conservative for its time, a time where being a conservative was being loyal to and supporting the monarchy. But to today's standard of conservatism, the average definition being the Republican party as an example, the Revolution is very much a conservative movement. It was a movement to get rid of a giant, intrusive government who 'heavily' taxed them, those are all things that conservative now are very against. If you want to talk about if it was conservative for its time I'd say it wasn't, it was a radical movement where the people just wanted to "do as they please" without the king or parliament telling them what they could or could not do from across the ocean

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Discussing the Conservative Nature of the American Revolution

by [Jordan Sage](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 4:12 PM

The American Revolution's debate of it being a conservative movement relies heavily on the person who is bringing judgement.

The idea that the revolution was a conservative movement to me, brings a more modern outlook onto it. Especially when discussing the matter of religion and its importance at the late 18th century time period, as non-religious people are becoming a bigger demographic in the current United States (<https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>). The United States from a modern perspective is a conservative state, as detailed in the current Neo-Liberal world. Instead of looking it at it from a modern viewpoint, we should view it from the point of a typical person living in the 18th century.

From the viewpoint of the 18th century, the American Revolution was a liberal movement, bringing the basis to a lot of change in the world soon after, as seen in the French Revolution and Haitian Revolution. From the concepts of "all men are created equal" to freedom and religion, to its republicanism foundations. The American Revolution is a liberal movement. The established idea of a state religion taking foothold for a good citizen was removed as a result of the revolution, as shown in, "Since Emperor Theodosius in the fourth century of the Christian era, religious orthodoxy had been considered necessary for good citizenship and for the service to the state." The religious status quo was dominated by the state during the late 18th century and was challenged by the American Revolution as well. The "all men are created equal" is very similar to the freedom of religion rhetoric as well. As the idea forced states to abolish slavery, as was the case in Massachusetts in 1781, and the case of William Binford in 1782 as well. (Handout Page 2)

From the standpoint of the 18th century's status quo on politics and society, the American Revolution was a considerable liberal movement, not conservative.

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The Revolution was a conservative movement

by [Riley McQueen](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 5:18 PM

I believe that the Revolution was a conservative movement. In the introduction paper we got last week it defines the view of Strict Constructionists as the idea that a "revolution as producing significant and deep social change". And the American Revolution did just that. It might have been unexpected but the disestablishment of the Anglican church lead to the idea of Separation of Church and State. After this happened Virginia "put no church in its place and instead passed a law guaranteeing religious freedom"

(Degler 1). Because of this law it led to the federal Constitution being ratified in 1788 which was "the first step in the acceptance of the principle that a man's religion was irrelevant to government" (Degler 1). Other states saw what was happening and decided to follow suit with Massachusetts being the last in 1833. This is important because for many years prior ones religion was key to them and because of this ratification a man of any religion can be an officeholder. The idea and execution of Separation of Church and State was just one of the side effects to the Revolution.

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I Agree With Degler

by [Carter Ranck](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 6:51 PM

As I went through and read both papers and arguments about the American Revolution and whether or not it was a conservative movement, I ended up being more persuaded by Degler's stance. I don't have much prior knowledge on the subject and I'm choosing his viewpoint on this subject just due to the fact that he was the one that convinced me the most. The disestablishment of the Anglican Church to created opportunities for innovations was interesting to hear about because it was the groundwork for the separation of Church and State. Another interesting detail was that many conservative upper-class leaders ended up getting better positions after the revolution which can't have been a full-on coincidence. Overall I just see a lot of things going well for the conservatives throughout this event and almost even slowly paved a path for a better life for them.

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Was the Revolution a Conservative Movement?

by [Ryan Peel](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 8:26 PM

Before I say yes or no, we should look at modern-day conservatism and conservatism during the American Revolution. Basing my response off of modern conservatism, I would say no. The American Revolution was not a conservative movement. But, we need to look at what conservatism would be during that time period, if they are so different that the answer would change. I cannot say with certainty that it is a conservative movement. We split from the British Empire because we didn't like being taxed without the consent of the local governing bodies in the colonies. We were also increasingly paranoid that the British had some sort of plan to "enslave" us in the Colonies. Likewise, the British believed that we always were yearning for freedom. As the textbook would say, BOTH sides were WRONG. (textbook, page 163) The British could not govern the US, they now needed to conquer it to restore order. The first document that severed our ties with Great Britain was the Declaration of Independence. But, that's all the document did. It wasn't a governing document. It simply said in a lot more words and eloquence, that we had cut ties with Britain. Now, we had to fight for it. From a modern-day standpoint, the answer is no. It was a radical decision that was spurred on by more than a few bad crises.

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No the Revolution was not a conservative movement

by [Bryce Turney](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 9:36 PM

I agree with Gordon S. Wood that the American Revolution was radical and wasn't a conservative movement for the wealthy colonists to improve their lives more. Wood brings up how the revolution was about Patriots vs Courtiers and not about the rich vs the poor or even democrats vs aristocrats (pg. 12). He brings up a quote from John Adams that sums up the American people and how their position of power doesn't come from patronage but naturally from their talent and from recognition by the people. One of the arguments from Carl N. Degler was that the lower class didn't benefit from the revolution and it was only fought for the upper-middle class to gain more land and wealth. Wood indirectly responds with saying that revolutionary leaders did not expect poor humble men to gain high status in politics but that if they had the abilities and attended school then they would have a chance in pursuing their dreams in office (pg. 14). George Mason upheld the right to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness, and condemned hereditary privilege, and even called for rotation in office. Virginia delegates passed the declaration of rights before approving the constitution (textbook 190). The revolution wasn't about the rich getting richer but about everyone having a chance to have a new life with more freedom than before.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: No the Revolution was not a conservative movement**by [McKenna Wilson](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 9:33 PM

I agree with you and the stance that Gordon S. Wood took. When reading through the article, page 12 had also caught my attention during the explanation of the Patriots vs. Courtiers and how on page 13 Wood dives into the discussion of them wanting independence from Great Britain but also wanting their independence from personal influence. I think it really proves the point you made of having the revolution become a chance to gain the freedom and independence they had been seeking. I also had not noticed the indirect response Wood made in regards to the comment Degler made about the war being fought only for the upper class. Page 14 of the paper shows that Gordon believed in the sons of the poor making a way for themselves after the revolution in a way that could boost them politically.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**The Nature of the Social Change**by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 4:18 PM

This is probably the most important aspect of the argument to me. The aspect of America abolishing hierarchy, in a way allowing for the potential to achieve more. I think that this is the main aspect of what was really a radical change in ideas and perspective for the time that is a large part of allowing the American Revolution to be called a real social revolution. I also think that the fact you bring up that while the lower class at the time were not expected to be able to advance themselves as much their children were going to have the chance to is also very important (Wood 14). Particularly against the arguments that seemingly no immediate change in leadership indicates no overall societal change. The social change was the idea that anyone could theoretically gain any position if they were talented enough which was a radical and revolutionary idea at the time compared to the rigidly divided class system of Europe and Britain.

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The American Revolution was not a conservative movement because it was based on the ideals that all men were created equal, and had equal opportunity to flourish, pursue happiness, and govern themselves. The revolutionaries felt as if they did not need to be ruled by some government halfway across the world on an island. "With all men now considered to be equally free citizens, the way was prepared as well for a radical change in the conception of state power." (PG.16)

Throwing out a king who was appointed by god to be the ruler of the British Empire, and replacing him elected politicians was very different from the rest of the world and the furthest thing from conservatism in the 18th century. Also creating a nation, that liberty (not authoritarianism), is the role of the government, also a nation where anyone could be of any religion. Compared to the rest of the world these ideas probably seemed crazy.

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McKenna Wilson

HST 201

Forum 3

After reading through both articles by both historians, I found myself agreeing more with Gordon S. Wood who thinks the American Revolution was not a Conservative Movement. If I was asked to define "revolution" I would say something along the lines of a revolution is a sudden or radical change involving the government. Wood talks about how one class didn't overthrow the other but the way society was as a whole and how people interacted with each other changed drastically thus making way for the transformation of society to be what it is today in America. To revolutionize something is to change it and the American Revolution brought on the societal changes America was needing. In the Article Wood explains that the revolution brought an attack on the patriarchal monarchy. Women and children were still heavily dependent on husbands and fathers but as time went on "...white males found it increasingly impossible to accept any dependent status whatsoever..." (Wood). This paragraph in particular stuck out to me because of the way Gordon explains how because of the Revolution the distinctions and dependents of the monarchical society

were essentially all freemen or slaves. Gordon S. Wood's argument and evidence was more compelling for me than the other Historian Carl Degler and was more explanatory of the side that the revolution was in fact radical.

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Hierarchy and Independence in the American Revolution

by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 11:21 PM

I found myself personally agreeing more with Gordon S. Wood that the American revolution was not a conservative movement. I felt that Carl N. Denger did not make sufficiently persuasive points to prove the conclusions of Wood incorrect. As Denger focused too much on the fact that those who were in power before largely remained in power afterwards without really acknowledging their actual viewpoints and values that they held. He also seems overly preoccupied with the idea that for it to be a revolution it must be similar to other future revolutions such as in Russia and France, with no regard for more underlying and less obvious societal changes that are taken for granted about the American Revolution related to hierarchy and freedom.

A point that Wood made that I found particularly persuasive is the idea that the American Revolution and America itself radically changed the traditional role of hierarchy in society that permeated all of Europe (Wood 10). This was exemplified in the nature of a courtier, someone who gained artificial power not by merit but by relationships and heritage (Wood 12). This role was contrasted by the patriot who would gain power by the respect of those below him and his ability to manage and wield the power responsibly. This dichotomy shows the viewpoint of Americans at the time of independence, their ideal was one that was beholden only to his own ability and did not serve another. This even revealed itself in their views on property owners being allowed to vote, they felt that if you did not own property then you would naturally be dependent on another and thus not have your own will (Wood 13). All this was a radical departure from the tradition in Europe of reliance on another and the patron-client relationship that governed all aspects of political life. However these progressive American views are often shown in stark contrast to the situation of non-whites and females in society and their clear disadvantages and lack of independence, but Wood argues that this initial strongly held belief led to the eventual equality of these formerly oppressed people (15). That before the attempt to move away from hierarchy the idea of slavery was not even questioned and it fit with the overall structure of society at the time, but afterwards slavery stood out against the ideals held by America. This led to conflict and social forces that would eventually topple the institution after the civil war (Wood 16).

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Was not a Conservative movement

by [Max Birch](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 11:27 PM

After reading both articles I can say that I agree with Gordon Wood's stance that the American Revolution was not a Conservative movement. Wood explains that people view the American Revolution as not as intense as others revolutions, with less killing and more talking, which isn't wrong, but it doesn't mean it's conservative. When "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, pg.

9). Although the American Revolution didn't have tons of huge uprisings or insane speeches it still had a huge effect of the people of the time, and did a lot to change how they live. The revolution put people on a much more equal playing field, it uncovered many issues regarding the class system and was able to alter the social hierarchy in many ways. Wood says, "It was the Revolution, more than any other single event, that made America into the most liberal, democratic, and modern nation in the world" (pg. 10). The revolution sparked new ideas at a faster rate than ever before, and these ideas were out of the box and extraordinary for the time.

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Comparisons to the French and Russian Revolutions

by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 2:27 PM

I think that you mention a good point that Gordon Wood makes about the nature of a revolution. Specifically the idea that a revolution must be violent and bloody to be a "true" revolution. This is something that I think Degler does not sufficiently acknowledge, and in many cases he compares the American Revolution to the later French and Russian Revolutions on many aspects which I do not think is always entirely reasonable. Such as when he mentioned that there was not a large scale land redistribution in the Americas as in Russia and France (Degler 5). I think that this is not a reasonable comparison, though it is a reasonable criticism in some ways. Earlier he makes a more general but similarly based claim saying of the social changes after the American Revolution "In both purpose an implementation they were not to be equated with the massive social changes which shook France and Russia" (Degler 4). I think that this is setting too high of a watermark, that to be a revolution something must be as drastic as two of the largest revolutions in history.

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"More like a war for independence"

by [Robert Whitney](#) - Monday, November 18, 2019, 11:53 PM

The American Revolutionary War was less a revolution and more a break away war. Several times in class Mr. Escobar referred to the Revolutionary War as "more like a war for independence". I think what he said, as well as what Mr. Degler argues for, is correct. As shown in Degler's essay, the heavy majority of important figures and leaders prior to the war were in positions of political power after the war. Degler points out that many important aspects of pre-war America existed after. Those aspects consisted of things such as the economy, land dispersion, and the people's mindset of how government should function. When revolutions truly occur, they usually involve a change of governmental structure or economic structure, which likely led to the revolution on its own. Mr. Wood makes a good argument in the opposite opinion essay, pointing out that it was a revolution of its time, where people couldn't imagine a society apart from a government. However, I don't think that his points are enough to persuade me. I understand that the war was a break away from the crown and that it meant establishing a new nation, but it did not instantly change the daily lives of every individual within that new nation and it did not bring about an entire new set of leaders.

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**Re: "More like a war for independence"**by [Bryce Turney](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 8:02 PM

I do agree with Deglers point and how having the same leaders before and after the war makes it seem less like a revolution but after the war those same leaders were the ones who created a new government. James Madison who was one of the leaders before and after the war formed the Bill of Rights because of fear of a centralized power controlling the people like before the war (textbook 202). I would say that this was a true revolution because of the change in government and how the American people were more represented with rights that protected them from the government.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: "More like a war for independence"**by [Robert Whitney](#) - Friday, November 22, 2019, 10:40 PM

I do see what you are getting at, however I must go back to the fact that most every leader from America returned to the country after the war to serve as some sort of leader or politician. Even the highest general in the American military, George Washington, returned after the war to serve eight years as the first president. Other key figures before the war such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and John Adams all returned after the war to assume positions of power. All three of the men were key authors in the Declaration of Independence, and all three men were presidents for at least one term. To me it sounds like the people of America just wanted the British out rather than a large scale lifestyle and national change. I think it shows through the voting of the time period and through the lack of political leadership change that the revolution was a conservative one, if it was one at all. After learning the information we have learned in class, I've actually personally taken this belief because it genuinely makes the most sense to me. There wasn't an violent overthrow of the active government, because many of the colonies already had their own governments set in place with the crown overseeing.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Changed the view on slavery**by [Max Birch](#) - Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 1:21 PM

In Wood's article he mentions how the revolution changed the American view on slavery. Before the revolution colonists took slavery for granted and didn't think twice about what they were doing or how they were treating their slaves. People were indifferent on the issue and never really put too much thought into it. The revolution, which was America trying to gain independence from Britain, put slavery into perspective for the colonists. They were finally able to realize how terrible slavery was, and how they should give these slaves the independence that they so desperately desired themselves. The revolution also changed the colonists view on labor. Before the revolution they thought of slavery as free labor, like any other kind of work, but the revolution pushed "the growing recognition that labor was not simply a common necessity of the poor but was in fact a source of increased wealth and prosperity for ordinary workers made slavery seem more and more anomalous" (Wood, pg. 15). The colonists began to realize how out of the ordinary slavery was and how it was unlike any other type of labor. These are huge societal advances that may have never happened without the changing mindset brought on by the American Revolution.

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1

[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Re: Changed the view on slavery**by [Eric Runes](#) - Tuesday, November 19, 2019, 3:22 PM

While the importance of acknowledging the revolution as the first steps on the path to ending slavery can never be under-stated, I think Carl Dengler made some interesting points about Social and Economic trends of the time dictating Americas evolving view on the practice. Dengler points out that the assertion "all men are created equal" one of the most powerful phrases in the Declaration of Independence was "actually the distillation of a cherished popular sentiment into a ringing phrase, allegiance to which stemmed from its prior acceptance rather than from its eloquence"(pg.3 handout). In essence as a people Americans value of social equality existed long before the revolution, as we began to form our government, and our national culture, the mistreatment and glaringly unequal way African Americans were treated began to become progressively more obvious, and out of place with what we chose to stand for. Dengler further points out that "On an economic level, this abiding American Faith was translated as equality of opportunity" (pg.3). If from the start as a country we stand and fight for the fact that all people are equal, and should be afforded the same economic opportunities, then the institution of slavery is a living contradiction of our values. While I could not agree more with your point that the end of slavery is an enormous societal advance, I still label the American revolution as a conservative movement. I would like to believe (perhaps idealistically) that slavery's end was a natural, and expected change that our country made as we began to take accountability for the way our actions contradicted what we stood for.

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2

[Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**A foreign perspective**by [Eric Runes](#) - Wednesday, November 20, 2019, 4:52 PM

One of the ways Carl Dengler sets out to prove his stance on the revolution being a conservative movement is to quote a few foreign travelers regarding their views on Americans societies stance towards equality. Dengler is trying to illustrate an atmosphere at the time where the concept that "all men are created equal" was less of a revolutionary concept, and more of a pre-existing idea that rose to the surface. The French traveler Jacques-Pierrel Brissot is quoted "that the Americans more than any other people are convinced that all men are born free, and equal" (pg.3). While German traveler Johann Schoepf while visiting Philadelphia noticed "rank of birth is not recognized, is resisted with a total force...People think, act, and speak here precisely as it prompts them" (pg.3). The essay points out that at the turn of the 18th century "social distinctions like rank-seating in churches, and the differentiating title of esquire were fast passing out of vogue" (pg.3.). Finally Dengler makes the connection that "on an economic level, this abiding American faith was translated as equality of opportunity" (pg.3.). Therefore while the revolution certainly gave fuel to the changes that happened rapidly after the revolution in regards to social equality, it was not the spark that created the flame.

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2

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by [Max Birch](#) - Thursday, November 21, 2019, 1:47 PM

When debating whether or not the American Revolution was a conservative movement it shouldn't even be an argument. The revolution induced drastic changed on society and transformed it completely. Even though "One class did not overthrow another; the poor did not supplant the rich. But social relationships—the way people were connected one to another—were changed, and decisively so" (Woods, pg. 10). The first two reasons Woods mentions in that quote is why many people consider the American Revolution conservative, and if nothing else happened during it I would agree. But socially, more was changed and influenced than ever before. The Revolution legally created the United States, along with introducing the democratic system that we still use today. The introduction of this system shaped society and changed the way people viewed the class system as a whole. It allowed more free speech and gave the people more power, making the American society completely different from any society in history.

Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#) [Permalink](#)[Show parent](#)[Edit](#)[Split](#)[Delete](#)[Reply](#)**Slavery and Women's rights**by [Bryce Turney](#) - Friday, November 22, 2019, 10:18 AM

Although the Revolution failed to abolish slavery and women's rights were not immediately impacted there was still progress being made to get the freedom and respect in the future. After the revolution the south continued to be big on slavery, and even though in the north slaves were not treated equally, thousands were freed after the revolution (textbook 186). As far as a change in power for women, in 1780, Esther de Berdt Reed created the Philadelphia Ladies Association which was the first women's society in the history of America to have a public role. Also in the Northeast women learned to read and write, and by 1830 almost all native born women in the northeast became literate (textbook 187). I know that these were small things that happened and the major changes weren't until later but the revolution had some positive impact and definitely fueled the slaves and women to get what they deserved.

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The Revolution was a conservative movement because they were fighting the British government from threatening their way of life. The British government was trying to put more control over the colonists and they pushed back. They fought to keep their rights from being taken away from them and to keep their lives as they were. As Degler said in his essay " 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" (Degler 6). All the colonists wanted was to be left to their own devices. The colonists weren't trying to overthrow and start over they were just trying to preserve what they had and build on that.

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Society Before the Revolution

by [Marcus Jackson](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 3:06 PM

While I ended up disagreeing in my conclusion and initial post I still think you make a good point about the colonists being reasonably content and feeling unpressured, before the English pushed them over the edge by limiting their ability to live in this way. However a point to consider is that the way they were living before hand was quite societally different from the norm of Europe and Britain. Particularly in regards to the nature of hierarchy which is an aspect that Wood goes over in great detail (10). I think that this shows they were contented in their lives and ways in spite of the British rule and customs rather than because of them. Degler mentions the colonist wishing to be undisturbed in their "accustomed ways" which I think strengthens the idea that they were not similar to the British in many ways and that their revolution was to uphold and enforce revolutionary social changes that were part of the society already. Degler himself even acknowledges this idea, though for a different conclusion, saying "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." (4).

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I do not believe the Revolution was a conservative movement

by [Ryan Peel](#) - Friday, November 22, 2019, 4:30 PM

In comparison to other revolutionary movements, yes, the American Revolution was conservative. No one got their heads chopped off like in the French Revolution, and it was not as bloody as the English's Glorious Revolution. So, you could argue that it is conservative. But, it still required us to battle for our independence from the British. While no one in the Colonies felt the need to kill a member of Parliament or the current governing body, yes, you can argue again, that this is more of a conservative movement. To me, it's still a radical movement because of the war with the British that ensued after unrest in the states became too much for the British to handle. Remember, both sides were paranoid that the other was always going to lead to this Revolutionary War. The Colonists believed that the British wanted to erase freedom from the West. The British feared that the Colonists always had yearned for freedom. So, in a way, while both sides might not have seen the war coming, both weren't unwilling to fight in it.

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Yes, the American Revolution was a RADICAL Movement

by [Ruby Lohne](#) - Saturday, November 23, 2019, 12:47 PM

Reading through Gordon Wood's argument for why the American Revolution was a radical revolution almost convinced me the exact opposite. He spent quite a few paragraphs reiterating a lot of what Carl Degler, who believes the American Revolution was conservative, had already stated. Then he hit on a point that really struck me. "...most people in that very different distant world could not as yet conceive of society apart from government." (Wood, paragraph 5) This statement brought me back to a sentiment that I myself had been thinking while reading Degler's piece. While Degler emphasized the lack of significant social change post-revolution (Degler, paragraph 13), I couldn't help but think of the social system in England. So

much of it was reliant on political titles that, importantly, weren't earned by merit, but by birthright and political/social connections. In England at this time, it was hard to tell the difference between the two systems, and that naturally carried over into the "New World," creating a monumental obstacle for these new Americans, who emphasized liberty and equality over everything, to overcome.

This idea became even more concrete in my mind as I remembered Degler discussed the opinion of foreigners in relation to this new era of social mobility and lack of importance pressed upon "titles." Foreign visitors were appalled by the level to which class ranks didn't matter to the Americans. (Degler, paragraph 10) I do not believe that the eventual separation of social and political identities was anything less than radical at this time.

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