

HST 203: ONLINE U.S.History Sp19 (Escobar)

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Taxation
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 8:44 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Taxation topic.

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Disproportionate Taxation
by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Monday, April 22, 2019, 11:47 PM

I was surprised by the chart on the history of income tax rates. The first thing I noticed was the huge percentage that the top bracket was made to pay, and that increasing the number of brackets, especially during wartime, obviously made the Government feel justified in charging that top bracket larger percentages. Taxing the wealthy seems to have been the go-to for war financing. Is that fair to make the wealthy pay for war? I would say no, but the wealthy industrialists also profit from increased production for war, this originated with the appointment of Baruch to the War Industries Board in 1918(Murrin textbook p. 755). Above and beyond this is also the sad truth that it is mostly the poor who pay the greatest cost of war. Nevertheless, in my opinion, no one should be taxed over half their income.

I couldn't argue with most of what President Coolidge said in his speech on taxes. I am in complete agreement with the importance of frugality in government spending. I also think that it is more satisfying to keep more of one's paycheck that has been earned. He is presenting a pushback to the big government of the Progressive era and its expense. President Coolidge seems to be the original purveyor of Reaganomics (Wiki), maybe we should say "Coolidgomics" instead. The fact that Coolidge could reduce taxes and also reduce the deficit (history.com), is the difference between his and more current administrations, perhaps because they were simpler times.

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Analyzing the history of Taxation in the U.S.
by [Christina Dukes](#) - Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 5:27 PM

After reading the articles and watching the videos, I noticed that progressively the government spending has increased significantly over the last century. In times of war, the government has of course increased its taxation percentage of the people within the United States in order to be able to pay for all of the allocated costs of war. In looking at the charts I do notice that from around the start of the 1800's through to the 1900's the governments taxation and the amounts spent by it remained largely the same, dipping lower or higher every so often (due to different economic factors), but it wasn't until industrialization and westward expansion happened in the early 1900's, did the dramatic changes in U.S. taxation rates occur. I mean, there were world wars that happened that created economic downfall, but most of the taxation issuances happened after major progressive movements.

Referencing President Coolidge "They take from each home annually an average of over 300 dollars -- and taxes must be paid. They are not a voluntary contribution to be met out of surplus earnings. They are a stern necessity. They come first." (Calvin Coolidge August, 1924). In this speech over the course of the video/text President Coolidge speaks of the detriment of the economy of the government and how it affects its people. If the government is not doing well, it reflects on the people within its boundaries since they must tax the people more in order to meet the demands of the funding they must have. Money has to come from somewhere in order to pay the governments bills. The governments bills are what they have decided are necessities for themselves and what is their responsibility. That debate of what is necessary or not has continually been a problem amongst different political parties for centuries and will probably continue for much longer, but basically military, healthcare, schools, national security, social programs, etc. The specific monetary amount shifts continually giving each beneficiary different amounts from the governments "wages/earnings", and whenever the government starts to owe money, we reduce spending in order to pay off our debt. So the money they bring in to themselves does not go down, its just the spending does. It is the same logic that follows a personal household finance situation, where if I were to notice a buildup of spenditure on my bank account, I would try to spend less money on my necessities (food/clothing/etc.) in order to use the money spent each month in a smarter way, and then the excess money used to pay off my debt on my credit card.

What I agree with is the general merit or moral behind the reasoning for President Coolidge's stance on taxation, I don't necessarily agree with his methodology. "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government -- and more for themselves. I want to have them to have the rewards of their own industry. This is the chief meaning of freedom." (Calvin Coolidge video). The idea behind President Coolidge's theory is that he wants people to keep their earned supplements, rather than have to pay it forward straight to the government. He bases this behind the idea that the harder you work the more you earn, which is true - but there are always different variables influencing this. For example, sometimes theres a 20 year old who net earns more in their one year of life than you would in your entire lifetime, solely because he is the benefactor of his families wealth from the time before they were ever alive. How are you to claim that that 20 year old deserves to keep a larger percentage of their already grossly high income, than a 20 year old who makes not even enough to afford their own cost of living?

My view on Coolidge before was that he was a stark republican with very biased views, but the more I read on him the more I am able to identify that a lot of what he wanted was the same idea that the democrats then and now want. The views of each political party as to where the cut spending effects, is the main problem. What happened with Coolidge was a decrease in spending, and a decrease in taxation - which doesn't help the problem as the debt to income ratio maintained around the same, and theres no way to fix debt if the government doesn't maintain a surplus beyond its allocated expenses. One of his largest based points was that he wanted to decrease government debt, by spending less money and taxing people less. What I don't believe he accounted for was the sudden switch in the lifestyle of the United States inhabitants and those who were affected by the government. For example, government spending being cut from social programs means those who are in the social programs are in turn needing more income from their end, in order to provide the same services or lifestyles as before the government cut backs. The general people must now find a way to supplement their income, in order to provide for those basic services. In doing this, a huge trend in debt occurred and when government spending got cut back, the debt to income ratio of the government remained the same (i.e. not paying any debt off/decreasing the amount of debt), but the debt of the people spiked higher drastically. Because of this there has been a steady increase in debt, and spikes following government tax cuts. The history following his presidency shows to me that my claims are right and a decrease in "government spending" shows an increase in its peoples debt, in which now it starts a chain reaction. The people can no longer afford basic lifestyles and cost of living, try to rely more on the government, creates a strain immediately for themselves and for their futures, spend less, less economic taxation, less economic income, less revenue for the companies/coorporations, and in turn the corporate companies need to find a way to supplement their income, so that they can afford their basic necessities. They impose a higher taxation rate, which now would only make it harder for the consumer, and the consumer would spend even less than they did before. Now, spending on the lower earning class diminishes (along with their taxes), spending on the higher class lowers (along with taxes), and the government is now not ascertaining any of the funds as no method of providing for them is the same (i.e. income from taxes acquired is lowered). In turn, it only hurts the overall general economy I believe.



Re: Taxation
by [Carisa Snell](#) - Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 6:47 PM

At the risk of being labeled as “thoughtless” or “unanalytical,” I do have to point out some issues with the “3 Brothers” video. Instead of a video that is an explanation of the progressive tax code, it instead shows the burden of taxes the rich have in a prejudiced scenario rather than the actual progressive tax code we currently have. The video, to me, was a biased representation by the creator ([known Republican Dennis Prager](#)) and his conservative views on how he disagrees with the current tax system. In no way did it explain the current system or influence my understanding of the taxation in the united states except for the fact that Prager views the current system as unfair that the wealthy pay a higher amount in taxes while being condescending to the lower classes.

In the video, the narrator insinuates that Tom, the brother that makes \$25,000/year only works 20 hours a week by choice and has “the same skills, same IQ and same opportunity” as his brothers (0:12 into the Brothers video), when in reality, most people who make only \$25,000/year don’t do so by choice when they could make three times that amount if they worked more hours (say full time). This is the same thing as saying that people who only make \$25,000/year do so by choice, choosing to be poor/have less money. Now, thinking analytically, I think we could all agree that most people who only make \$25,000/year would gladly make more money given the “same opportunity” as those who make \$150,000 or even \$75,000 doing the same job if they only had to work the average 40 hours a week.

The 3 Brothers video gives all three brothers the same upbringing, family size, and careers, which I guess could be rationalized into some view of equal taxation today, however it also gives them all the same “equally priced homes” (1:26 minute mark in the video) which insinuates they all have the same amount of bills/expenditures. This, however, is where the video really isn’t accurate. The video is assuming that all the brothers are making a living wage and that Tom and Dick spend “all of their family income” (0:51 into the video)-instead of saving like Harry-any extra income on top of their expenditures. If the goal was to show the differences in the tax brackets, the brother making the least (Tom) would make closer to minimum wage, which, if that was the case, would put Tom’s family well below the poverty line and more than likely unable to afford a house that his other brothers could possibly afford-let alone have spending money after his bills were paid. However since this was more a video about how wrong the current system is they of course made it as seemingly plausible as possible.

One thing that I do agree with from my overall take of the video is that the progressive tax system does need revision. Even though the video greatly exaggerates the disparity between the tax brackets of the brothers, tax reform in general is an area I’d like to see more focus. But, if one is going to claim that this video is an “explanation” of the system, then I believe not only should it actually talk about the system, but it should also accurately represent the parties involved, citing the economical, social, and financial differences between the groups.

Of course people should ideally be saving some of their income and putting it towards retirement or for incidentals, but the reality is that our lower classes are barely keeping their heads above water financially and most-if not all- don’t have the ability to simply stop being “lazy” and work full time instead of part time. Our poverty line is far above the minimum wage in this country, in fact here in Oregon, where the minimum wage is \$10.75, the living wage-the average for a family with 2 adults and 2 kids with one adult working full time-has been found to be \$27.34 ([2018 rates from here](#)). I think the first thing we need to do is make sure families are making a wage that they can live on before expecting them to be able to save anything or paying more in taxes.

Overall, my thoughts are that I believe this video was made to shock us into thinking about how unfair and awful the progressive tax system is rather than giving an unbiased look at how the system works. If anything, it gave me a glimpse at the disparities between the spectrum of views on this topic and opened me up to researching a far more helpful way of “explaining” this topic through my searches afterwards.



Re: Taxation
by [Carisa Snell](#) - Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 8:13 PM

Now I realize, a little too late to change it, that I forgot to change my subject line. My apologies!



The Three Brothers Video

by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Friday, April 26, 2019, 5:51 PM

Hi Carisa,

I agree with you. This video presents an imaginary scenario. Looking at this video thinking it represents the tax system, knowing nothing of socio-economic realities, of course it seems unfair. I think that is the point, this is made by someone with no consideration of those facts. The solution to the "problem" the video presents would be that Tom should work harder and save his money for extra expenditures. That is not the reality for some in our country. The progressive tax code is in a sense, a social program for the greater good of all. It is made to allow all Americans able to have a decent standard of living. All things being equal is not the situation in which a progressive tax code is a necessity. Laziness or ambition is not always the determining factor of income, there are many factors determining a persons ability to earn. We could analyze this all the way down to the facts and scientific data about how stress and nutritional deficiency affect fetal development. If this is supposed to be a representation of the progressive tax code there should be a least some data concerning the amount of disposable income as the progressive tax code takes into account a person's disposable income after cost of living has been taken out.

It seems to be a common belief among certain people that a large percentage of their taxes are going to social welfare programs and that this "redistribution of wealth" is outrageous because their money is essentially being given to those who choose not to work for it. This equates to a small percentage. That percentage would be increased to pay for more social programs if the lower bracket were taxed at the same percentage as the top as they would not be able to afford basic needs. The fact is that 40% of tax revenue is being spent on the elderly, (economist.com article link below). By the rationale of this video, they should have worked harder and saved more. Instead of blaming the poor, elderly and disabled for the reason a person is paying too much income tax, maybe we should look for solutions to super-inflation(fortune.com link below), wage inequality(hired.com link below) and other social issues so that things can be more equal. I see no value in evaluating things the way this video would have us, I see it as harmful and contentious, showing total disregard for the greater good of our country and humanity.

www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/05/23/donald-trump-releases-his-full-budget-proposal?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e

<http://fortune.com/longform/shrinking-middle-class/>

<https://hired.com/page/wage-inequality-report/>

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Re: Taxation

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 2:17 PM

In the forum materials there is a very helpful line about some of these complaints, **"When doing experiments, it is important to remove all variables that might influence the outcome. This video removes race, age, location, and other factors OUT of the equation. This should aid your analysis,"** (Escobar, Forum 2 Materials & Questions). The Three Brothers video was created to demonstrate the conceptual inequality in the progressive tax system without getting into the weeds of various personal situations. The video does not say that Tom is unable to work as many hours as his brothers, it simply says the brothers had "different priorities" and that Tom chose to work only 20 hours per week (Three Brothers Video 0:26 minute mark). I am certain that this wording is intentional and meant to demonstrate that these brothers all had the same opportunities to make money and simply made different choices. If we put aside all the extenuating circumstances which we could come up with for any household in America, we are left with a system which is based on inequality. If we accept that the situation in this video is fictional, and also that it is not possible for everyone in America to make the same amount of money, we can look at the system objectively and determine whether or not it really serves the spirit of equality which we so value in this country.

Given that we cannot all make the same amount of money, Harry's idea that everyone should pay the exact same dollar amount in taxes is impractical given the way that the debt-to-income ratio would pencil out for each group. We know from chapter 23 that "To help pay its bills (during the First World War), the government slapped the rich with a

67 percent income tax and a 25 percent inheritance tax. Progressives wanted to make sure that all Americans would sacrifice something for the war and that monied interests would not be able to use the war to enrich themselves," (Murrin Textbook, page 757). If the government wanted to ensure that the war was being paid for by everyone, why not give everyone the same tax *rate* (not *amount*)? I don't see any reason why anyone should be paying 67 percent of their income to fund the government while others are paying nothing. This of course is not the current situation, thankfully the income tax rate for the wealthiest Americans was down to a slim 39.6 percent by 2013 (History of Income Tax Rates Adjusted for Inflation). This means that there were people paying nearly 40 percent of their income to the government while other people paid nothing and received a refund.

Going back to the Three Brothers video, if we use the metaphor of the street improvements representing the government, all three brothers enjoyed the same unrestricted use of the street and enjoyed living on a street that was nicer and more secure than others. We live in a country that most people would say is nicer and more secure than others, yet it has been decided that the upkeep of that country is primarily the burden of those who make the most money, while other people pay nothing and continue enjoying all of the benefits of residency. I would like someone to explain to me how this represents equality. If we were truly interested in sharing the burden, we would go with Dick's idea of a flat 12 percent income tax. This would ensure that all Americans carry the same burden proportional to their unique economic situation. This would mean that all American taxpayers would spend the same amount of his or her time "working for the government" as President Coolidge (another "known Republican") explained.

Despite personal situations, American citizens all share the same benefits of citizenship. They are all equal in many respects, but the income tax laws are not one of them. This is a system which disproportionately forces the wealthy to carry the burden for the rest of the country. I do not reside in the top tax brackets, I received a tax return this year, but that does not change the way that I think about this issue. We all need to share the burden of the government which we benefit from.

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Re: Taxation

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 8:39 PM

Hello Clifford. Thank you for your reply, I appreciate you doing so, though I have to disagree with you on many points.

First, regarding the three brothers video, the description clearly stated that it was an "explanation of the current progressive tax code in the U.S," and that is what I take exception to. The video did in no way **explain** the system as it is today, but rather told a fictional story, inflated the brackets (70% for the "rich" brother?), used language meant to influence the watcher, as well as cast a negative light on the lower brackets as lazy for simply not working as hard as the top bracket brother Harry. Being a science major, I understand the basics of experiments and how to keep an experiment unbiased. However, given that the video was made by a very non biased republican with very strong statements in the video (insinuating that the brother that made less a year was lazy and he called Harry "greedy and selfish" when he complained about the money split) does not give an accurate representation of the current economic situation we have in this country.

Second, I am not quite sure about your statement in which you say that certain Americans "paid nothing and received a refund." Are you referring to the Earned Income Credit, where families that make at or below the poverty level receiving a kickback from the government? If so, this goes back to my post, in which I said that one of the first ways we need to fix our economy is by offering living wages. If we didn't have so many families going without food or resources despite working full time and trying their best, then I would be more on board for a tax reform in which everyone paid equal taxes. Unfortunately, I just don't feel right taking away from families trying their hardest to make ends meet working minimum wage jobs and asking them to pay as much as people making 6+ figures.

Third, regarding your statement that "American citizens all share the same benefits of citizenship." Theoretically, yes, I can see where you are coming from. But I think the thing which you're forgetting is just how not equal our system is today. It's disheartening to realize that our country today is still facing inequality like it was a century ago. Women are still fighting for equal pay as they were in 1923, pushing for the Equal Rights Amendment (page 786 in Liberty, Equality, Power), and people of color are still paid less on average just like the Mexican farm workers "earned 50 cents to a dollar less per day than Anglo workers" (page 810 in our Liberty, Equality, Power book) back in 1920. So yes, we are all citizens, but we are far from "equal."

I do agree with you regarding needing tax reform, and sharing the burden of the government. However, I believe we have a lot of work to do on our economy before we can all share the burden equally.

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Re: Taxation Debt

by [Seth Mayfield](#) - Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 10:39 AM

Calvin Coolidge presidency is a forgot president to me, to be honest. He was also president during the roaring twenties were money was plentiful for most Americans. The belief that it's only going to get better from here.

Coolidge stated (Coolidge speaks on taxation) "I want the people of America to be able to work less for the government -- and more for themselves." That sounds great, and he did it. From 23-19 (History of income tax) the rate at which the lowest bracket was taxed went from 3% to 0.375%. While the richest people were taxed 43.5% for \$200,000 to 25% for \$100,000. He is right it's definitely a favor need of the people, as well necessary of this country. (Government Debt) Shows that during the war our debt goes up along with our taxes, to try and cover the debt. As of the 2000s, our debt keeps climbing but the taxes stay constant. How are to play of a position of the debt we accumulate, besides cutting services we need. I agree with Coolidge, but I feel that we also deserve the right to choose where the prestige of the money goes.

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Re: Coolidge and Taxation

by [Autumn Pitzer](#) - Wednesday, April 24, 2019, 7:28 PM

The graphs show a somewhat steady taxation up until about the 1940's, then they spiked and it doesn't appear that they went back down. The first graph showing Distribution of U.S. Federal Taxes in 2000 as a Percentage of Income shows little or no tax for low income households but high income taxes for the highest income earners, but in 2010 the graph shows that there is little or no tax for low income and the highest income but the middle earners seem to be taxed at an alarming rate. The middle earners are being taxed almost double what the top earners are being taxed. The graph on Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates in the U.S. shows that when the country is at war taxes are increased. This is due to the funding of war efforts. The graph also shows there are two significant dips in taxation in the 1930's during the great depression and in the 1980s when the Economic Recovery tax and the Tax Reform Act were implemented.

Coolidge believed people should enjoy the fruit of their own labors. Coolidge states, "I want the people of America to work less for the government and more for themselves. This is the chief meaning of freedom". I believe partially with what Coolidge is saying. Of course I want to keep my earnings for myself but it also makes sense that the government needs to charge a tax. I do not think that taxing one particular class of earners more than everyone else is right. I think being taxed on your income is fair as long as you are not being overtaxed. Coolidge believed in lower taxation and believed this would result in a better economy. If people have more of their money available they could spend it on the comforts of life, economic growth, schooling, and in general a greater freedom for all people.

AmericanRhetoric video 2:13 sec

Distribution of U.S. Federal Taxes in 2000

Shares of US Federal Tax Liabilities for All Households, by Pre-Tax Income Group 2010

Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates in the U.S.

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Re: Coolidge and Taxation

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Friday, April 26, 2019, 3:11 PM

Hi Autumn! I see where you are coming from regarding taxes and how the lowering of taxes can result in a better economy. While I agree with your general statements, I think it's important to highlight two areas involved in this conversation.

First, the issue of tax brackets. While I generally agree that people should overall not pay more taxes than another higher or lower earner, the problem is that if we lower tax brackets for everyone, it will almost definitely land us in a deficit. We have become so accustomed as a government to expect the rich to compensate for the smaller amount lower brackets pay in taxes, that losing that big chunk of money the government pulls in from

their tax paid would for sure hit the budget hard. In addition, since most of the lowest bracket is considered to be below the poverty line (of course depending on family size/etc but generally speaking), asking them to pay higher tax on their earnings possibly putting them more in the red (as they're already earning below what is considered a "living wage") doesn't seem fair either.

Second, is the amount of revenue the government is expecting and their debt. I think without addressing the government's budget and their spending and coming up with a secure plan to reduce it without compromising the spending for needed areas like school and health care, thinking about cutting the revenue from taxes or lowering the percent of taxes is a hard pill to swallow. In the chart titled "US Government Revenue 1790-2015" it clearly shows just how much taxes pull in (and that's a significant amount from WWI on), it's still far below our debts we currently hold as a nation.

Now I'm no economy expert and surely the reason we have had the progressive tax system for so long is because it works, but probably also because our government can't decide as a whole the best way to tax us as well as spend that revenue fairly.

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Re: Coolidge and Taxation
by [Christina Dukes](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 7:30 PM

Hi Carisa and Autumn!

I thought it would be best to reply to the both of you, as I agree with what Autumn first said in her post, as well as Carisa's reply to it. Firstly, I agree that everyone should be representatively taxed in the same way as in paying "x" percent of their earned income, yet I think that it would be best to have those living in poverty situations prove their situation to the government, and pay less taxes on their earned income than the remainder of the population. Since I believe that creating a higher tax percentage for the lower wage earners and a lower tax on the higher wage earners would potentially be too much of a change for those making lesser money. I think that there should be a program implemented in which if you find yourself in a situation where you meet a defined criteria for poverty, then you could do some sort of a request to the government, they evaluate your situation, and then your percent of taxed income is lowered for say 6 months.

Now, this could be problematic since the amount of those who are impoverished seem to continually grow, and some areas are higher likelihood of becoming impoverished, as well as some areas already having a higher amount of individuals living in poverty. So, I'm not necessarily sure how this would work; potentially they could only allow a certain number to have the benefit of a lower taxed rate and if more and more people apply for a lowered rate, they could have stricter standards? I'm no expert here either, but paying taxes seems like its always going to be a hot topic for debate in America. American's started the trend to try and move away from great Britain in order to avoid all of these overwhelming tax rates, etc. but then theres always going to be tax situations like this where we find ourselves always in a debate type situation. One of the main problems is that we cannot decide were to allocate the funds we received into the government from the taxes we claim. If you look at your pay stub from work it has smaller sections that say "x" amount taken for "healthcare" or "social security", etc. So we can see how much is taken and what percent of gross income is the taxed amount per subject, but why is there so much debate over where the funds are coming/going if we know where a lot of it goes towards? I don't know, it just seems silly to me that there are people who argue the government taxes us and doesn't know how much to give each subject, but each subject is exactly known. It's just the money used in each subject/topic is distributed to areas where people have problems with believing their outcome of where the money is projected is either distributed properly or not.

In referencing the same picture as Carisa "US Government Revenue 1790-2015" you can see how much is taken from the American's wages to help with funding different government responsibilities. The government needs more or less money for necessities any given year, and when they have more bills to pay then they need to acquire more money, aka through tax.

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Calvin Coolidge and the Three Brothers
by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 6:16 AM

Overall, I find myself agreeing with President Coolidge’s views on taxation. He outlines very well in the beginning of the video the fact that the burden of government expense is one which all Americans share. Coolidge stated that “The expenses of the government reach everybody. Taxes take from everyone a part of his earnings and force everyone to work for a certain part of his time for the government,” (Calvin Coolidge Speaks on Taxation, 1:00 mark). I believe that in a society where everyone enjoys the benefits which our government offers, we should all share in the burden of funding that government. I also agree with Coolidge that government spending needs to be reversed in order to put more money back into the hands of the people. With so much national debt in this country today, the fact is that taxes are going to continue rising in order to meet that debt. The only way which Americans will find relief from this cycle is for the government to become smaller, spend less, and pass those savings on to the American taxpayer. When I watched the video about the three brothers, I thought it was the best explanation of the progressive tax system that I had seen. I think it takes a system which can seem overly complicated and broke it down into an example which most people could understand. I do not think it is the best interest of equality for the wealthiest Americans to have to pay most of the taxes simply because they make more money. In the example given in the video with the street improvements, I liked the second idea proposed by Dick the best. Dick proposed that all three parties pay 12% of their income in order to cover the debt. This means that each party would not be paying the same amount of money, but rather the same percentage of their income. This allows for equality in the tax burden while still scaling the amount of taxes paid against the overall income of the individual. As we saw in the video, this is an unpopular view with those in the lowest and middle brackets, who would in fact have to pay more money in taxes, but it redistributes the burden more evenly and allows everyone to take responsibility for a system which they are benefitting from. This is equality. This would also help ensure that all American taxpayers had a stake in the spending habits of their government, perhaps leading to more people calling for a decrease in government spending. When everyone is sharing a burden, they are more likely to come to a consensus that the burden needs to be lightened than if one group is carrying most of the load.

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Re: Calvin Coolidge and the Three Brothers
by [McKay Luke](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 8:55 PM

Thanks for your post! I like the point you made in regard to the three brothers video. I agree that the middle brother had the fairest solution to the problem. I would say that President Coolidge's view on taxes would fall most in line with this idea. In paragraph two of his speech, he states "the farmer is doomed to provide a certain amount of money out of the sale of his produce, **no matter how low the price**, to pay **his** taxes." I feel that many people today do not see the point that President Coolidge was making here. Regardless of one's profession, wage, or circumstances, a debt is owed to the government, and I believe that is should be just as much of a sacrifice to the millionaire as it is to the grocery store cashier. This is the difference between equality and equity.

In regard to government spending, I feel the solution is being sought from the American People rather than elimination from the source. Taxes can continue to be raised to pay off the debt, but as long as the government finds more expenses, the debt won't disappear. There is a disparity in the economy we see today that was not always prevalent in history. On page 4 of the taxation form document, we see a graph indicating the government deficit from 1790-2015. It is very clear from the graph that the United States is capable of paying off debt. Most of the reasons for the spikes in the deficit were in line with US involvement overseas. However, what I find troubling is the steep rise since 2008 not having been a result of a major war and having no foreseeable decline. Obviously, the population is much greater than it was a century ago, but the tax system should still be capable of handling the increase in population. I'm not an economist but I believe any person can see from the data readily available that there is a problem resulting not from the people, but from the administration.

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Remember the Deficit
by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Saturday, April 27, 2019, 11:46 PM

“ the Republican Congress and president do not seem to care about deficits or debt, and are not only failing to take steps to address the government’s poor fiscal situation but are taking steps likely to worsen it some.” - “Remember The Deficit?” by Yuval Levin, nationalreview.com

This article is taken from a news outlet which is considered to have a far right bias. I was, at first, surprised to hear such a scathing review of our Republican Congress and president by a conservative news source. It seems like it is all partisanship over country lately, with both sides defending themselves and blaming the other side for problems. I

didn't notice any rhetoric here, it was common sense reality about where we are going without budget revision, how the current budget is unsustainable. The article was informative, providing data and charts showing the trend towards the largest debt held by the public since 1946 (from article, quoted from CBO report). Historically, it has always been the stance of Republicans including President Coolidge to reduce government spending by decreasing the involvement of government. As we can see by the chart, "U.S. Government Debt, 1790-2015" the revenue and debt reached a peak during WWI. After the war, the debt came down briefly but has been on the rise ever since. There are two things that can happen to solve this: higher taxes, or reducing government spending. The author calls for a large reduction in entitlement spending, specifically Medicare and Social Security. While this idea is not attractive to many on both sides of the spectrum, it seems like it may be an inevitability. I think this article is one that Pres. Coolidge would have agreed with as the man who said "One of the greatest favors that can be bestowed upon the American people is economy in government"

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Re: Remember the Deficit
by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 6:36 PM

Hi Jamie,

I agree with you that the only ways out of the current deficit situation are higher taxes or lower government spending. Unfortunately, the U.S. Government has dug itself into such a large hole that this is not something that can happen in a timely manner, but trends need to change as things are only getting worse. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid do seem to be top candidates for budget cuts, despite how unpopular it would be. The problem is that an administration who comes in and focuses on decreasing the deficit by cutting these programs will be perceived as cold and unwilling to stand up for basic human rights. In the big picture, Americans either need to continue supporting these programs or accept that their country will go broke or their taxes will skyrocket and they will go broke. This is an issue with a lot of passion on both sides of the debate, but certainly one that needs attention. Government spending is out of control, tax rates are unfair to the middle and upper classes, and most people do not want to see the elderly suffer as a result of a broken system. I believe that President Coolidge would have looked at the current state of the country and been sick to his stomach. Coolidge was clearly a man who believed that the government should not overreach as it does today. Our text says that "He [Coolidge] believed that the best government was the government that governed least, and that the welfare of the country hinged not on politicians but on the people-their willingness to work hard, to be honest, and to live within their means," (Murrin textbook, page 788).

I personally think that the willingness to work hard, to be honest, and to live within one's means have largely vanished in modern society. As a result, the American people have become too dependent on an ever-growing government to take care of their needs. This has resulted in the current fiscal situation. It has also resulted in a generation of Americans (to which I belong) being labeled as lazy, dishonest, and apathetic toward their fellow man. The "consumer society" took root in America during the 1920's and it never went away. Americans became more interested in buying the next-best-thing than saving and donating their money to help themselves and others. Most Americans today want to see other people get the help they need, as long as it doesn't affect them personally. They want the government to foot the bill for the social programs to help the elderly or the underprivileged. The result is a government which is so soaked with debt that the majority of Americans don't even care anymore. Like a young adult with a credit card, they put the debt off for another day and simply live in the moment. This has lead to a society which is failing and has taken the United States from the status of world leader to a point where other countries laugh at the choices we make. The trend must be reversed and soon if we are going to reclaim the respect which we once enjoyed throughout the world.

There are no easy answers to a problem of this magnitude. Like the credit card debt which the young American runs up, the only two options are bankruptcy or paying the piper. My wish is that this country would come to its senses and reduce its spending, overhaul its tax system, and pay its debt. This is the only way we keep the national prestige we still have and move out of this hole. As I said, it will not be a quick fix, and it will not be painless. Americans dug themselves into this hole and we need to start repairing the damage before it is too late.

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Coolidge & Taxes

by [McKay Luke](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 12:38 AM

Upon reviewing the many graphs and chart shown from the forum materials coupled with knowledge from the textbook, it seems that taxation in the United States has followed many patterns dependent on a few factors such as presidential policy and war involvement. We can see from many of the visuals given in the forum materials that most times of high tax rate saw a spike when the US become involved across borders and had a steady decline post-war. On page four of the taxation forum document, we see a graph representing US Government Revenue between the years 1790 and 2015 along with two paragraphs explaining the data shown. We read that upon involvement in the second World War, the government achieved funding via a combination of debt and increased tax rates. Like most wars, spending dropped sharply after the war ended, but due to the lingering debt, the rate that Americans were taxed remained the same and even to this day are not too far off from those initial "ballooned" numbers (Page 4 of the document, figure 1).

Calvin Coolidge was known for his quiet, no-nonsense demeanor, especially in contrast to his predecessor, the riotous and corrupt Warren G. Harding. We read from the textbook that Coolidge did not believe the government needs to be heavily involved nor heavily funded. His policy was such as to state that "The welfare of the country hinged not on politicians but on the people—their willingness to work hard, to be honest, and to live within their means" (Murrin textbook, p.788). I agree with President Coolidge’s views on government and the role the people play. I believe that taxes are necessary to help allow for the freedoms we are to enjoy, but not so much as to restrict said liberty, as stated by Coolidge himself that "I want them to have the rewards of their own industry... This is the chief meaning of freedom" (Coolidge speech, paragraph 8). I personally believe that Coolidge was more right than wrong, considering I view government as needing to be less involved in the lives of the American people. However, I would also argue that an increase in taxes to support a war can be necessary, assuming the involvement in the war helps to secure safety for the United States. The economy is a living thing, constantly fluctuating and changing its needs. To a degree, I believe in a Laissez Faire approach to economics, so as I look at the tax rates and federal debt since after the second world war, I can only assume that the government has strayed farther from this idea of limitation and continues to spend more than it can pay back. This only digs a deeper hole, a slow restriction of freedom to the American People.

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Re: Coolidge & Taxes "Il spending of money hurt it"

by [Seth Mayfield](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 7:04 PM

I feel that the state paint a picture of that hole digging you speak of. Calvin Coolidge stated taxes "is needed by the national government, and the remainder by local governments". The government needing 700 million dollars to function, but if you add another 100 million to this request. In turn, the government forces you the worker to work another 4 days to cover the cost. This is why he wanted to lower taxes for the American people. As I am sure you know there are federal, state and local taxes. These can highly vary from place to place, but can also affect other states.

I use to live in Illinois, don't ever move there, no seriously don't. The state had a 5% income tax and then an 8% sales tax on all goods. Don't sound bad until the cities and counties start taxing you. County wants 1% but the city wants 2%. Inturn sales tax was 11%. The state then turns around and just spent. I also forgot to mention that the state didn't have a budget for 3 years, so they have about 200 billion in the hole. Being from there see streets that are destroyed, 911 calls that go unanswered. Fire trucks getting cute from service. Schools using books that are 5 years old, no matter what class you're in. You just want to get out.

I feel taxing should reflect what Calvin Coolidge states pay for what is need. We pay for wars as need then had tax brakes. (rise debt becomes the norm graph) + (history of income tax graph). Illinois is a great example of spending passed the needs of the government, causing debt, state destroying debt. Since 2006 over 300,000 people have left the state and no ones moving in.

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Re: Coolidge & Taxes

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 9:32 PM

Hello! I think the best thing in your post was when you said, "The economy is a living thing, constantly fluctuating and changing its needs." I had to take a second and decide why this statement struck me like it did, but I think it's mostly because though I absolutely agree with the validity of the statement, our government has not fluctuated or changed it's needs as far as the progressive tax system much over 100 years. Sure, there have a been a few tax reform attempts as shown in the chart "History of income tax rates adjusted for inflation (1913–2013)," but the problem is that the recent attempts don't help the country as a whole but rather just certain tax brackets.

I also agree with you that taxes are necessary like Coolidge said, and that sometimes increasing taxes because of the need to fund a war is warranted, however, where do we draw the line? Our debt, as referenced in the US Government Debt 1790-2015 chart on page four, is continually climbing. I don't know what the answer is as far as how to lower taxes as well as the national debt, but I think all parties need to come together to work on the disparity. I think you're right, that the further in debt we go, the bigger restriction of freedom on the people it causes, as more of our earned money goes towards fixing the problem, and that is a travesty.

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Examining the history of Taxation

by [Alison Backes](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 7:06 PM

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The Three Brothers: Equity > Equality

by [Declan Jensen](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 8:08 PM

It's very funny that this is the disclaimer for this video: "NOTE: In the past, some thoughtless and/or unanalytical students have said “this is too simple and things don’t happen this way” to dismiss every single point made in this video. However, remember what you should [have] learned in your science classes. When doing experiments, it is important to remove all variables that might influence the outcome. This video removes race, age, location, and other factors OUT of the equation. This should aid your analysis." Considering the fact that this is indeed not as simple and that cases like this are far more nuanced than just "erasing every relevant demographic that could possibly affect my narrative" possible. It is extremely inappropriate to give us an example of "three equally privileged" people when the reality is that it affects each demographic differently and then call us "thoughtless" or "unanalytical" when we take into account things that affect each demographic. Making a scenario that is "pure" of outside influences is what we in the sciences call a "control." We don't use controls as our results; in fact, more often than not, if you get results that line up with your control, you have executed your experiment poorly and have likely only experimented once (which is bad science). Why should this be any different?

Regardless of all of these belittling comments, the Three Brothers video unfairly frames poor people as lazy and shortsighted (even though it's still incredible that Tom is making \$25K working 20 hours a week, how do I get that job?) while simultaneously framing rich people as the burden-carriers of our society. Harry should absolutely be paying more because of his (and his wife's) income because not only are they working to make money, they're getting money that they're not even working for (most rich people don't earn their money, they inherit it). Why does Tom have to be framed as lazy and greedy? Maybe he suffers from chronic pain that prevents him from working more than that.

I save my money, personally; I don't work at all and I still have enough money for rent every month and *then some*--I am *privileged* in that respect because I am being supported through school. I haven't worked a paid job in my life because I have never needed to. My family has had stable work throughout *my* life and the only time I saw them struggle was when my mother had to leave a toxic work environment on short notice. I am lower-middle class and always have been, I have never had to worry about whether I'm going to eat tonight or not or if I'm going to have to get a job to support my parents and help with their expenses. However, I know that it isn't that simple for everyone, and I realize that luxuries aren't just for people like me. Poor people deserve functional smartphones because that's how our society works now; poor people deserve clothing, food, and shelter; poor people deserve help when they need it and they *still* deserve a break from taxes because many of their disadvantages arise from outside influences, like race, gender, and social class.

Don't give us a video based around a topic that requires nuanced thinking and tell us not to think about it.

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Why the U.S. is in Debt

by [Connor Antich](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 8:14 PM

By looking at the graph of U.S. Government Debt, 1790-2015, I noticed that the % of GDP of debt was around 110% during World War 2. This is understandable as our nation was in the largest worldwide modern conflict the world was ever seen. We were fighting Germany in Europe and Japan in the Pacific. This war took every resource, every man and every dollar to win. So seeing the U.S. at such a high debt during this time makes sense to me. Between 1980 and 1990 the graph is at around 40%. This makes sense why the graph is low around this time. The Cold War ended and the U.S. was able to not spend taxpayer money solely on military and nuclear build up. Where the graph loses me is where from around 1980 to 2015 are % of GDP in debt according to the graph is around 100%. We haven't been involved in a World War or any huge crisis comparable to World War 2 or the Cold War. So why are we in such debt? I think the reason for the debt spike since 2000 is a combination of things. One factor I believe is the money we have spent on a number of wars and operations in the Middle East. The U.S. as been at war in Afghanistan for 17 YEARS. This is the longest war in U.S. history. This war and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and continued operations in Iraq I believe is a huge reason why we find ourselves in debt. Another reason why we are in debt is for military bases around the globe. The bases we installed around the globe throughout the Cold War are catching up with us. These installations in foreign countries are expensive. It is because we have maintained these bases for so long and that are government has spent a lot of taxpayer money on them. The debt and cost of these bases is catching up with us. Also our trade with China has contributed to this debt. These are the main reasons for why the U.S. finds itself in huge debt today. These are the conclusions I make from the graph. Because of these conclusions I agree and disagree with President Coolidge. I believe the government today uses or tax payer money on the wrong things. The money shouldn't be spent on foreign wars in the Middle East, but rather problems within the country. For example, we should spend this money on providing universal health care for all american citizens. We should spend it on social welfare primarily. We are tremendously in debt, but this is because we spend the money wrong. The government should focus spending at home not abroad. We should spend the money to create a policy for where citizens can freely attend universities. So much countries in Europe have these social policies and are in way less debt than the U.S. This tells you that they spend their money in the right way. I agree when Coolidge said, "Taxes must be paid and they are not a voluntary contribution" (2:57 Coolidge Taxation video). I agree that citizens should pay their taxes. The main conclusion I have came to from the forum materials is that we need to elect better people into government who spend our money and invest it in the right things. Clearly, our current government does not do this as we are in tremendous debt. We need to use our democracy to elect better leaders.

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Re: Why the U.S. is in Debt rebudle
by [Seth Mayfield](#) - Sunday, April 28, 2019, 9:03 PM

I feel that the debt you speak of is highly influenced by war and the Afghan war that has landed us in this debt. With the graph (rising debt became the norm) you can see the debt went up during wartime, but taxes went up as well to try and balance out the debt. WW1 and WW2 used taxes to help pay for the war effort. Once the war was over then used the debts collect from other nations to play off our debt. (The history of income tax graph) shows that little to no change has been made to balance out the wars we find ourselves in today. They know it would be hard to raise higher taxes for a war most Americans just want to end. Instead, the government chose to borrow the money to help fund the war. Inturn more debt without a means to pay for it.

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