In the course of studying Chp. 3: The Roots of American Democracy, we will:

a. evaluate the historical ideas and political philosophies that shaped the development of the U.S. government.
b. summarize key political principles expressed in the foundational documents of the United States.
c. examine the debates and events that led to the writing and ratification of the Constitution.
d. analyze the ideas expressed in the Constitution from the perspective of a delegate to the Constitutional Convention.

Ideas that Shaped Colonial Views on Government

I. Religious and Classical Roots
   1. **Ancient Judaism** stressed that people should seek to create a just society based on respect for the law. Colonial thinkers based their notion of justice on this idea.
   2. **Christians** believed in natural law, the idea that a universal set of moral principles existed. Many colonists believed that a human law that violated natural law was unjust and should be changed.
   3. **Ancient Greeks** introduced the idea of direct democracy, or decision making by all citizens. Direct democracy took root in New England’s town meetings, where citizens gathered to solve local problems.
   4. **Ancient Romans** introduced the idea of representative government, or decision making by elected officials. This idea would be the basis of U.S. government.

II. English Roots
   1. **The Magna Carta** defined the rights and duties of English nobles, set limits on the monarch’s power, and established the principle of the rule of law. The colonists had great respect for the traditions of English government.
   2. **The Petition of Right** demonstrated the idea of limited government by affirming that the king’s power was not absolute. The idea of limited government was one of the principles that colonists admired in English government.
   3. **The English Bill of Rights** reaffirmed the principle of individual rights established by earlier documents. One reason the colonists rebelled was to secure their individual rights, which they believed had been denied to them.

III. English Enlightenment
   1. **Thomas Hobbes** first introduced the idea that government was the result of a social contract between people and their rulers. His social contract theory laid the groundwork for the idea that government was formed by the consent of the people.
   2. **John Locke** wrote about the idea that all people were equal and enjoyed certain natural rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property. This idea exerted a powerful influence on colonial thinkers.
IV. French Enlightenment

1. Montesquieu introduced the idea of separation of powers, in which governments are organized to prevent any one person or group from dominating others. Americans applied this idea to their colonial governments.

2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed in the idea that a government formed by a social contract was legitimate if it was based on popular sovereignty. Some colonial leaders, including Thomas Paine, agreed with this idea that the government should be based on the will of the people.

From Ideas to Independence: The American Revolution

I. 1619, Virginia House of Burgesses:

1. This was the legislative branch of the colony where elected officials made decisions. The House of Burgesses was the first elected assembly in the colonies; other elected assemblies would follow.

II. 1620, Mayflower Compact:

1. Before settlers from the Mayflower landed, they drew up this compact for governing their new colony. They agreed to live in a civil body politic and obey just and equal laws enacted by representatives. This was the first written framework for self-government in the colonies.

III. 1763, French and Indian War:

1. After the war, Britain reversed its policy of "benign neglect" by imposing new taxes and restrictions on the colonies. Before this time, colonies had been accustomed to managing their own affairs, with Britain rarely interfering in the day-to-day business of government.

IV. 1765, Stamp Act/Stamp Act Congress:

1. The British government required Americans to buy stamps to place on various documents. Colonists felt that, as British citizens, only their elected representatives could tax them; with no colonial representation in Parliament, the taxes were illegal. The Stamp Act Congress was the first political open act of defiance.

V. 1773, Boston Tea Party

1. Colonists objected to the Tea Act because they believed that it violated their rights as Englishmen to "No taxation without representation," that is, be taxed only by their own elected representatives and not by a British parliament in which they were not represented. Colonists led by Samuel Adams dumped 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor.

VI. 1775, Battles at Lexington and Concord:

1. Massachusetts militia troops clashed with British soldiers, marking the beginning of the American Revolution. This event revealed that tensions between the colonies and the British government were so high that armed conflict was inevitable. "The shot heard round the world."

VII. 1776, Declaration of Independence:

1. This document called for a final break between the colonies and Britain. It set forth a vision for a new kind of nation in which the government is formed to protect people's unalienable rights and gets its powers from the consent of the governed.
Comic Strip of the Revolutionary War

**DIRECTIONS:** You are to create a comic strip of the “road to independence.” Select 4 key events and represent them in the frames below with pictures and dialogue. Be creative!
Framing New Constitutions

I. First State Constitutions
   1. constitutionalism—the idea that government should be based on an established set of principles. These principles included
      a. popular sovereignty
      b. limited government
      c. separation of powers, and
      d. most began with a statement of individual rights.

II. Virginia Declaration of Rights
   1. Written by George Mason in 1776
   2. Explains that all Virginians should have certain rights, including freedom of religion and the press
   3. Basis for the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States of America

III. Articles of Confederation
   1. Achievements
      a. Northwest Ordinance – established a fair policy for the development of land west of the Appalachian Mountains and declared that newly admitted states would be equal to the older states
      b. Treaty with Great Britain
      c. Departments of Foreign Affairs, War, Marine and Treasury
         i. still exist today as State, Defense, Navy and Treasury
      d. Citizenship - each state to treat each other’s citizens equally
   2. Weaknesses
      a. One vote for each State, regardless of size
      b. Congress was powerless to lay and collect taxes or duties
      c. Congress was powerless to regulate foreign and interstate commerce
      d. no executive branch to enforce the acts of Congress
      e. no national court system
      f. Amendments could be made only with the consent of all States
      g. nine of the 13 states were required to pass laws
      h. the Articles were only a “firm league of friendship”

IV. The Constitutional Convention
   1. Document of compromises
   2. The Connecticut/Great Compromise
      a. Blend of the Virginia Plan (by James Madison) and the New Jersey Plan (by William Patterson)
      b. Virginia Plan called for a government with three branches; bicameral legislature – lower house based off of population, lower house chooses the upper house; Congress would choose the National Executive and the National Judiciary; goal was the creation of a truly national government with greatly extended powers
      c. New Jersey Plan called for a unicameral legislature with each of the States equally represented, a weak federal executive of two or more people chosen by Congress the federal judiciary would be composed of a “supreme Tribunal” appointed by the executive
d. legislative branch to be bicameral
   - House of Representatives – membership based on state population
   - Senate – 2 from each state

3. The Three Fifths Compromise
   a. argument between the Northern and Southern states as to whether or not slaves should be counted as citizens
   b. all “free persons” should be counted, and so too, should “three-fifths of all other persons”
   c. win for the South because they have now have a larger population
   d. win for the North because there was a direct tax based on population paid to Congress

4. Commerce and Slave Trade Compromise
   a. Congress agreed not ban the slave trade until 1808 and that it would regulate interstate and foreign commerce, but it could not tax exports

Ratifying the Constitution

I. Anti-Federalists
   1. Preferred the loose association of states established under the Articles of Confederation.
   2. Feared that a strong national government would lead to tyranny.
   3. Believed that states are better able to represent people’s rights and preserve democracy.
   4. Were concerned that the Constitution did not contain a bill of rights.

II. Federalists
   1. Favored the creation of a strong federal government that shared power with the states.
   2. Believed that because the national government represented so many people, it would be less likely to fall under the sway of factions.
   3. Believed that separation of powers in the Constitution kept the national government from becoming too powerful

III. Ratification
   1. States agreed to ratification if a Bill of Rights would be added to it.
   2. Delaware was first (Dec. 7, 1787)
   3. Ratified on June 21, 1788 when New Hampshire became the 9th state to ratify it
   4. Virginia was 10th (June 25, 1788)
   5. George Washington was elected president and John Adams was the first vice president
   6. Bill of Rights - In 1789, James Madison introduced a series of proposed constitutional amendments in Congress. These amendments were a list of rights, including those discussed at state ratifying conventions and found in various documents
## Glossary Chp. 3

**Directions:** Fill in the definition for the term listed. Then, in the box on the right, you have to draw a picture OR write the definition in your own words OR write a sentence using the word that demonstrates its meaning.

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<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Processing (Illustration, Summarization, or Sentence)</th>
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After the Constitutional Convention, people asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government the new Constitution would create. “A republic, if you can keep it,” he replied.

In this article, a scholar with the National Constitution Center looks at the challenges our nation has faced over two centuries to make the Constitution work. You will also find results from a survey on what Americans think about the Constitution. As you read this information, think about Franklin’s warning: “if you can keep it.” Answer the questions at the end of the article.

**A REPUBLIC, IF YOU CAN KEEP IT**

by Robert R. Beeman, PhD

While today we marvel at the extraordinary accomplishment of our Founding Fathers, their own reaction to the US Constitution . . . was considerably less enthusiastic . . .

Nearly all of the delegates harbored objections . . . Their over-riding concern was the tendency in nearly all parts of the young country toward disorder and disintegration. Americans had used the doctrine of popular sovereignty—“democracy”—as the rationale for their successful rebellion against English authority in 1776.

But they had not yet worked out fully the question that has plagued all nations aspiring to democratic government ever since: how to implement principles of popular majority rule while at the same time preserving stable governments that protect the rights and liberties of all citizens . . .

The American statesmen who succeeded those of the founding generation served their country with a self-conscious sense that the challenges of maintaining a democratic union were every bit as great after 1787 as they were before. Some aspects of their nation-building program—their continuing toleration of slavery and genocidal policies toward American Indians—are fit objects of national shame, not honor. But statesmen of succeeding generations—Lincoln foremost among them—would continue the quest for a “more perfect union” . . .

As we look at the state of our federal union . . . [two centuries] after the Founders completed their work, there is cause for satisfaction that we have avoided many of the plagues afflicting so many other societies, but this is hardly cause for complacency. To be sure, the US Constitution itself has not only survived the crises confronting it in the past, but in so doing, it has in itself become our nation’s most powerful symbol of unity . . .

Moreover, our Constitution is a stronger, better document than it was when it initially emerged from the Philadelphia Convention. Through the amendment process (in particular, through the 13th, 14th, 15th and 19th Amendments), it has become the protector of the rights of all the people, not just some of the people.
On the other hand, the challenges to national unity under our Constitution are, if anything, far greater than those confronting the infant nation in 1787. Although the new nation was a pluralistic one by the standards of the 18th century, the face of America in 1998 looks very different from the original: we are no longer a people united by a common language, religion or culture; and while our overall level of material prosperity is staggering by the standards of any age, the widening gulf between rich and poor is perhaps the most serious threat to a common definition of the “pursuit of happiness.”

The conditions that threaten to undermine our sense of nationhood . . . are today both more complex and diffuse. Some of today’s conditions are part of the tragic legacy of slavery—a racial climate marked too often by mutual mistrust and misunderstanding and a condition of desperate poverty within our inner cities that has left many young people so alienated that any standard definition of citizenship becomes meaningless.

More commonly, but in the long run perhaps just as alarming, tens of millions of Americans have been turned off by the corrupting effects of money on the political system. Bombarded with negative advertising about their candidates, they express their feelings of alienation by staying home on election day.

If there is a lesson in all of this it is that our Constitution is neither a self-actuating nor a self-correcting document. It requires the constant attention and devotion of all citizens . . . Democratic republics are not merely founded upon the consent of the people, they are also absolutely dependent upon the active and informed involvement of the people for their continued good health.

Dr. Beeman is a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania and a scholar at the National Constitution Center.

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1. Why is there "cause for satisfaction" with the U.S. Constitution?

2. Why are the challenges to national unity under the Constitution far greater today than in the past?

3. What can you do to keep our republic alive and well?
Summary

DIRECTIONS: Choose only one of the following:

a) write a summary (25-75 words) of what you believe was the most important aspect of the notes/lecture
b) write what you believe to be the most interesting or memorable part of the notes/lecture (25-75 words)
c) draw something that symbolizes the notes/lecture to you (has to be different than your title page)