

English 2450 Lecture 4

The Republic, Rhetoric, and
Independence and its Discontents

“The Romans of the New World”

- *"[T]he Five Nations of Central New York . . . instituted a form of democratic representative government before the coming of the white man, that antedated the Confederation of the Thirteen Colonies. The League of the Iroquois was much in the minds of the colonial statesmen, Franklin in particular, and others who met the "Romans of the New World."*
- *Happiness is more generally and equally diffus'd among Savages than in civilized societies. No European who has tasted savage life can afterwards bear to live in our societies.*

--William N. Fenton

--Benjamin Franklin,
1770

Logan



- **Logan, James (c.1725–80)**, chief of the Mingo Indians, whose English name, although sometimes given as John Logan, was probably taken in honor of the Pennsylvania statesman. After 1774, when his family was massacred by white settlers on the banks of the Ohio, he began a series of attacks on the colonists, and was a leader in Dunmore's War. Although defeated, he refused to make peace, delivering a speech in reply to treaty offers that is often cited as a great example of Indian eloquence, and that was printed in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. During the Revolution, Logan aided the British. Later he became dissipated and degraded, and was killed in a family dispute. He figures frequently in literature, as in Neal's *Logan, A Family History* (1822).
- Oxford Companion to American Literature

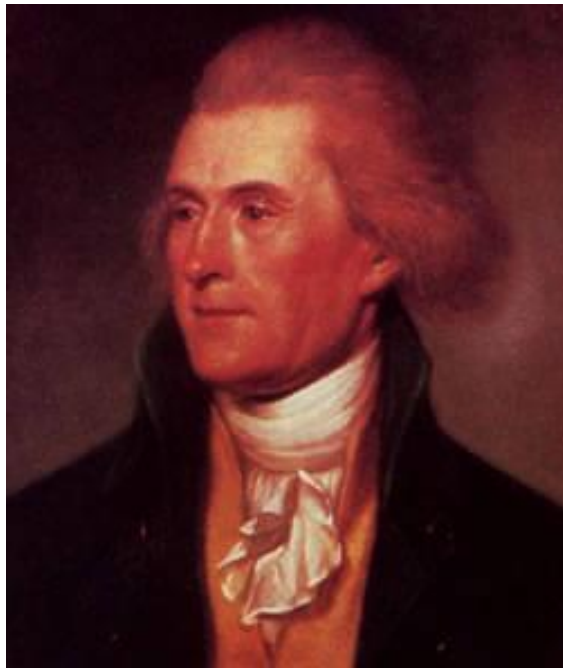
Red Jacket



- Charles Bird's 1828 painting "King Red Jacket;" he is here pictured wearing the "peace medal" given him by Washington.

Thomas Jefferson

- Painting by Charles Wilson Peale, 1791



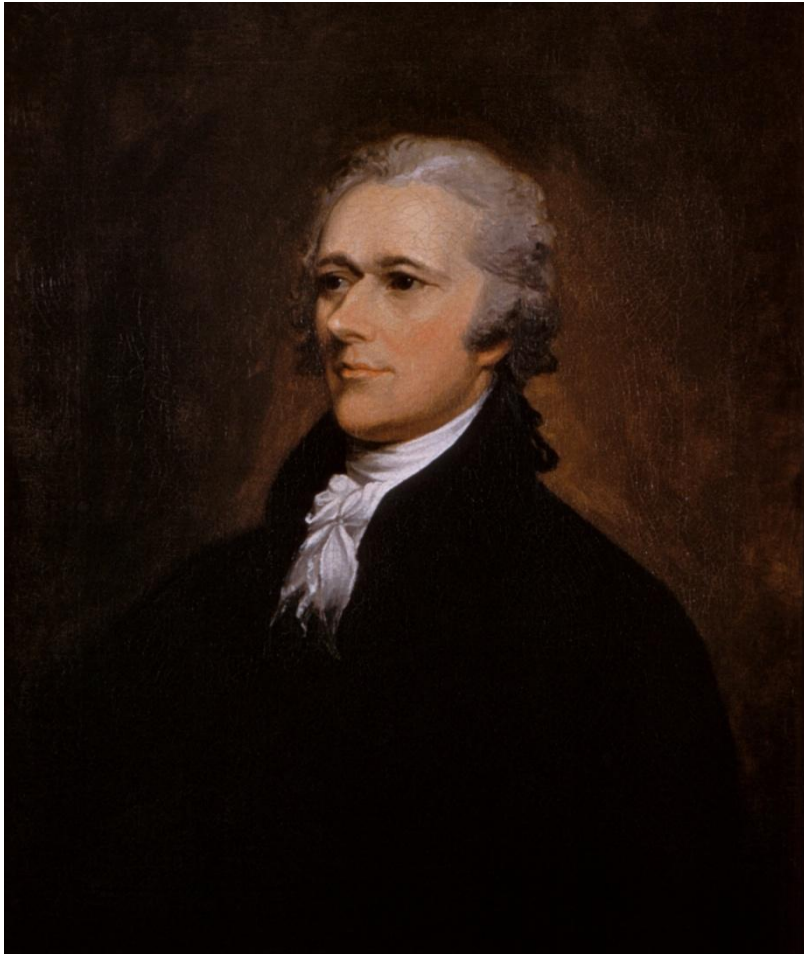
The Declaration of Independence

- By Jefferson's own admission, the Declaration contained no original ideas, but was instead to be a statement of sentiments widely shared by supporters of the American Revolution. As he explained:
- “Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.” (1825)
- Philosophically, the Declaration stressed two major themes:
- 1) The rights of individuals (Jefferson’s insistence on the need for a bill of rights against Hamilton’s insistence that the Constitution was sufficient to make such a bill unnecessary was one of the many points of contention between these often vehement opponents.)
- 2) The right of revolution; Jefferson maintained that corrupt government necessitates the right of popular overthrow; in his oft-quoted phrase,
- “The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

The Federalist Papers

- Written and printed from October 1787 until May 1788 to counter arguments against ratification of the Constitution of 1787. Alexander Hamilton was the originator of this work and author of 51 essays; James Madison wrote 26 of the papers; three essays were jointly authored by Hamilton and Madison; and John Jay wrote five of the papers. However, when these essays appeared they were attributed to "Publius" (this pseudonym referred to Publius Valerius Publicola, a great defender of the ancient Roman Republic).

Alexander Hamilton



- Hamilton in an 1806 portrait by John Trumbull

Olaudah Equiano



- With Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Granville Sharpe, Equiano was a major abolitionist, working ceaselessly to expose the nature of the shameful trade. He travelled throughout Britain with copies of his book, and thousands upon thousands attended his readings. When John Wesley lay dying, it was Equiano's book he took up to reread.
- - David Dabydeen

Phillis Wheatley



- I have this Day received your obliging, kind Epistle, and am greatly satisfied with your Reasons respecting the negroes, and think highly reasonable what you offer in Vindication of their natural Rights: Those that invade them cannot be insensible that the divine Light is insensibly chasing away the thick Darkness which broods over the Land of Africa; and the Chaos which has reigned so long is converting into beautiful Order, and reveals more and more clearly the glorious Dispensation of civil and religious Liberty, which are so inseparably united, that there is little or no Enjoyment of one without the other: Otherwise, perhaps the Israelites had been less solicitous for their Freedom from Egyptian slavery; I do not say they would have been contented without it, by no means, for in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call love of Freedom; it is impatient of oppression, and pants for Deliverance--and by the Leave of our modern Egyptians I will assert that the same principle lives in us. God grant Deliberance in his own Way and Time, and get him honour upon all those whose Avarice impels them to countenance and help forward the Calamities of their fellow Creatures. This I desire not for their Hurt, but to convince them of the strange Absurdity of their Conduct whose Words and Actions are so diametrically opposite, How well the Cry for Liberty, and the reverse Disposition for the exercise of oppressive power over others agree I humbly think it does not require the penetration of a Philosopher to determine.
- - Wheatley's letter to Rev. Samson Occum, Feb 1774