



Unit Outline:
North America,
1492-1763

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This outline presents many of the topics typically discussed in a unit on colonial America in the AP U.S. History survey course.

"Big Picture" Statement:

Between 1607 and 1763, North American colonists developed experience in, and the expectation of, self-government in the political, religious, economic, and social aspects of their lives.

I. Exploration and settlement by France, Holland, and Spain

- A. The dynamics of European expansion
 1. Desire for spices, fabrics, gold (from Africa), etc. -- goods not available in Europe
 2. Desire to break Italian monopoly on trade with Europe
 3. Fall of Constantinople in 1453 makes trade more difficult and expensive
 4. The Renaissance mindset
 5. New aids to navigation/full-rigged ship with stern rudders that can sail into the wind
 6. National monarchs who see wealth and prestige in foreign empires
 7. Desire of Roman Catholic Church to convert natives to the faith
 8. Colonies fit into increasingly popular mercantilist economic policies
- B. Spain
 1. Claims based on exploration/conquest by Columbus, Magellan, Cortés, Coronado, etc.
 - a. Cuba and other islands in the Caribbean
 - b. Mexico, California, the American Southwest, Florida
 - c. Claims along Mississippi overlap those of France
 2. Initial wealth from gold/silver
 3. Patterns of settlement
 - a. Immigration to colonies controlled
 - b. Colonial administration in the hands of Spanish-born governors
 - c. Creoles (merchants, large landowners, and professionals) have little power
 - d. In many areas Indian labor force replaced by African slaves
 4. Spain enforces mercantilist policies
 5. Intercontinental exchange of goods, disease, people
 6. Impact on native people
 - a. Destruction of long-established civilizations in the Americas
 - b. Extermination (primarily by disease (Mexico's population goes from 25 to 2 million))

- c. Exploitation through enslavement/forced labor and debt peonage
 - d. Conversion to Roman Catholicism
- 7. Spanish settlement in the Southwest
 - a. Native Americans as forced labor
- C. France
 - 1. Cartier, Champlain, La Salle establish claims to eastern Canada and Mississippi Valley
 - 2. Claims of France overlap with those of England and Spain
 - 3. Conversion of Indians to Roman Catholicism
 - 4. Patterns of settlement in Canadian territories
 - a. Immigration to colonies controlled (Huguenots and other dissidents excluded)
 - b. For the most part, French coexist peacefully with Indians
 - c. Initial wealth from fur trade
 - d. Population grows slowly (under 100,000 in 1763)
 - 5. France enforces mercantilist policies
- D. Dutch (based on exploration/claims of Henry Hudson) maintain a colony in New York from 1624 to 1664

II. Factors encouraging English settlement in North America

- A. John Cabot/Henry Hudson give England claims along east coast of North America, Hudson Bay area, Newfoundland (claims conflict with those of France)
- B. English set few restrictions on immigration to New World
- C. Conditions in England that stimulate settlement in American colonies
 - 1. Civil War
 - 2. Religious controversy
 - 3. Glorious Revolution
 - 4. Foreign wars
- D. Primary reasons for English immigration to American colonies
 - 1. Opportunities for economic gain
 - 2. Escape from political persecution/turmoil
 - 3. Desire for religious freedom by non-Anglicans
- E. Mercantilist and political regulations fall prey to policy of "salutary neglect"
 - 1. Navigation Acts
 - 2. Dominion of New England

III. Patterns of English settlement

- A. New England
 - 1. Plymouth Colony, 1620
 - a. Separatists
 - b. Mayflower Compact
 - 2. Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1630
 - a. Puritans
 - b. John Winthrop's "city upon a hill"
 - 3. Dissenters from Puritan theology establish new colonies
 - a. Roger Williams establishes colony in Rhode Island
 - b. Anne Hutchinson
 - c. Settlement of Connecticut, 1631-1660
 - d. New Hampshire, 1638-1643
 - e. Maine annexed by Massachusetts, 1652
- B. The Chesapeake region
 - 1. Jamestown, 1607
 - a. London Company/economic gain
 - b. Salvation from tobacco
 - c. Anglican Church
 - 2. Maryland, 1632
 - a. Proprietary colony (land grant to Lord Baltimore -- expectation of profit by proprietor)
 - b. Haven for Roman Catholics
- C. Middle colonies
 - 1. New York/New Jersey/Delaware taken from Dutch, 1664
 - 2. Pennsylvania, 1681
 - a. Proprietary colony (land grant to William Penn)
 - b. Haven for Quakers
- D. Restoration colonies (Carolinas), 1665
 - 1. Proprietary colonies established by Charles II
 - 2. Anglican Church
- E. Georgia, 1732

IV. Political development in the colonies until 1750

- A. Official designations
 - 1. Royal colonies (Virginia, New York, later Georgia)
 - 2. Governance set up in charters (Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island)
 - 3. Proprietary colonies (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Carolinas, New Jersey)
- B. Political structure
 - 1. Governor
 - a. Appointed by king or proprietors (Chesapeake, Pennsylvania, Carolinas)
 - b. Elected by property-holding men (New England)
 - 2. Two-house legislature elected by property-holding men
 - 3. Local government
 - a. New England town meeting
 - b. Appointed justices of the peace run local affairs in Chesapeake
 - c. Elected county officials common in middle colonies
- C. Suffrage -- with property qualifications, granted to men
- D. Home rule evolving -- especially in New England
 - 1. Dominion of New England rejected
 - 2. Navigation Acts ignored
- E. Bacon's Rebellion shows potential power of lower orders

V. The colonial economy

A. Southern colonies

1. Plantations dominant over small farms
2. Cash crops for export
 - a. Tobacco in the Chesapeake
 - b. Rice, indigo in the Carolinas
3. Economy compatible with mercantilist policies

B. New England

1. Agriculture -- small farms -- dominant occupation
 - a. Soil/climate are limiting factors
 - b. Cash crops sold internally -- not for export
 - c. Cottage industries (e.g., textiles) part of this economy
2. Fishing -- catch sold primarily to West Indies
3. Wood products -- for export and domestic use
4. Shipping/shipbuilding
5. Some industry (e.g., Saugus Iron Works)
6. Vibrant merchant class dominate activities in urban areas (Boston, Hartford)
7. New England's economy increasingly not compatible with mercantilist policies

C. Middle colonies

1. Agriculture dominant occupation
 - a. Small farms/commercial farms
 - b. Produce crops (e.g., wheat, corn) for home consumption and export
 - c. Modest in scope
2. Small-scale industrial enterprises
3. Vibrant merchant class dominate activities in urban areas (New York, Philadelphia)
4. Middle colonies' economy increasingly not compatible with mercantilist policies

D. Rapidly expanding population (1,200,000 in 1750)

1. Creates markets within colonies
2. Stimulates urban growth
3. Population growth in North from natural expansion and immigration
4. Much of population growth in South from slave imports

E. Colonial commerce

1. Coastal trade (variety of products produced within colonies)
2. Trade with West Indies (rum, grains, fish)
3. Trade with England (raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods)
4. Slave trade a particularly profitable commerce

F. Developing a source of labor

1. Impact of easy availability of lands
 - a. Limits number of immigrants in labor force
 - b. Makes hiring of workers difficult in some occupations (e.g., rice and sugar plantations)
2. Indentured servants
3. Slaves (by 1700, slavery legal in all the colonies)

VI. Creating an American identity

- A. The Puritan impact
 - 1. America as an ideal ("city upon a hill")
 - 2. Education
 - a. Colleges (e.g.: Harvard, 1636)
 - b. Boston Latin School
 - c. 1642 Massachusetts School Law
 - 3. "Puritan ethic"
 - 4. Intolerance/witch trials
- B. Religious diversity and evolving toleration
 - 1. Declining Puritan piety
 - 2. Legislation allowing degrees of toleration (Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland)
 - 3. The Great Awakening
- C. Impact of the Enlightenment
 - 1. Acceptance of the concepts of natural laws and natural rights
 - 2. Interest in science
 - 3. Americanization of the Glorious Revolution/English Bill of Rights
 - a. Validation of self-government
 - b. Powers of government are limited
 - c. Free expression of ideas (e.g., Zenger case)
- D. The institutionalizing of chattel slavery in all thirteen colonies

VII. The colonies and Native Americans

- A. Disease leads to decline in populations (e.g.: in Maine, 90 percent of native population dies between 1616 and 1619)
- B. Natives described, and looked upon, as savages
- C. Efforts to Christianize and assimilate
- D. Different philosophies of land use/ownership lead to conflict
 - a. No understanding or appreciation of Indian culture
 - b. Quaker efforts to deal fairly with Indians fail when non-Quakers immigrate to Pennsylvania
- E. Numerous treaties made and broken
- F. Indian wars and their impact
 - 1. English expansion leads to Pequot War and defeat of natives, 1637
 - 2. Bacon's Rebellion an attempt to open Indian lands to settlers, 1676
 - 3. King Philip's War, 1675
 - a. Wampanoags (allied with Nipmucks/Narragansetts)
 - i. Fear that native culture being subverted by Europeans
 - ii. Want to halt colonial expansion into interior
 - b. Colonial losses heavy -- 10 percent of male population killed or captured
 - c. Colonial victory, 1676
 - i. Power of Indians in New England broken
 - d. Conflicts between Scotch-Irish and natives in Pennsylvania
 - i. Many captured Wampanoags sold into slavery in the West Indies
- G. English and French exploit/use Indian allies in their wars for empire

VIII. Colonial society

- A. Families
 - 1. Patriarchal family structure
 - 2. Early marriages
 - a. Pregnancies often precede marriages (no stigma attached)
 - b. High mortality in childbirth -- leads to remarriage
 - 3. Many children
- B. Men
 - 1. Head of family/property owner
 - 2. In charge of "outside affairs"
 - a. Church
 - b. Politics
 - c. Law
- C. Women
 - 1. Few legal rights
 - 2. Essential to well-being of family
 - 3. In charge of "inside affairs"
 - a. Child rearing
 - b. Cultivation of garden
 - c. Food production/preparation
 - d. Responsible for manufacture of clothing
 - e. Responsible for obtaining candles, soap, etc.
 - 4. Women's "underground economy"
 - a. Textile production
 - b. Dressmaking/tailoring
 - c. Sale/bartering of commodities (e.g., soap, candles, textiles, etc.)
 - d. Midwifery
 - 5. Slave women and women in indentured service lack rights of other women
- D. Children
 - 1. More valued than in Europe
 - 2. Play major role in household economy
 - 3. Treatment more humane than in Europe
- E. Standard of living, general health, diet superior to that of comparable Europeans
- F. Class structure evolving
 - a. Status based on wealth
 - b. Class lines more fluid than in England

IX. African Americans in the colonies

- A. Need for cheap labor, especially in southern colonies
 - 1. European immigrants
 - a. Have many opportunities for land ownership
 - b. Will not work on rice/tobacco plantations
 - 2. Native Americans
 - a. Prone to disease
 - b. Can escape too easily
 - 3. Indentured servants can only provide a temporary solution
- B. First Africans arrive in Virginia, 1619
 - 1. Initially treated as indentured servants
 - 2. As numbers increase whites worry about control (e.g., Carolina)
- C. Breakup of Royal African Company's monopoly stimulates slave trade
 - 1. Slaves easy to obtain/prices reasonable
 - 2. Profits from slave trade high
 - 3. Slave trade fits into established trade patterns
- D. Factors favoring institutionalizing of "peculiar institution"
 - 1. Southern planters gain a self-renewing labor force
 - 2. In areas with large African population, control easier
 - 3. Escape difficult
 - 4. Belief Africans are inferior to Caucasians
 - 5. Lack of opposition (Cotton Mather, "What God will have to be the thing appointed for you.")
- E. By 1750, slavery legal in all colonies
 - 1. Slave population in all colonies
 - 2. Distribution of slaves as percent of population will vary
 - a. Largest slave population in north in New York (14.3 percent of total)
 - b. Largest slave population in south in south Carolina (60.9 percent)
 - 3. By 1775, 80 percent of slaves in colonies American born
 - 4. Very few free blacks until after revolution
- F. Great Awakening stimulates Christianizing of slaves
- G. Harsh treatment of 17th century softens somewhat during the 18th
- H. Enlightenment causes some to rethink the legitimacy of slavery

X. The struggle for North America, 1689-1763

- A. European wars have colonial components in India, the Caribbean, and North America
- B. English colonies involved in fight -- especially against French
- C. Colonial war aims differ from those of British
 - 1. New England troops capture key French fortress at Louisburg
 - 2. English -- in exchange for territory elsewhere -- return fort to France
- D. Conflicts end with English victory in French and Indian War
 - 1. American colonists (including George Washington) participate
 - 2. Albany Plan of Union
 - 3. Treaty of Paris, 1763
 - a. France gives up all territory in North America
 - b. Spain gets New Orleans and control of Mississippi