

Roots of American Government

Our English Heritage



English Kings

- The first “kings” of England were merely leaders of small tribes
- Most were picked because of strength and courage
- The first king of a unified England was William I
- William united England in 1066 at the battle of Hastings



Feudalism

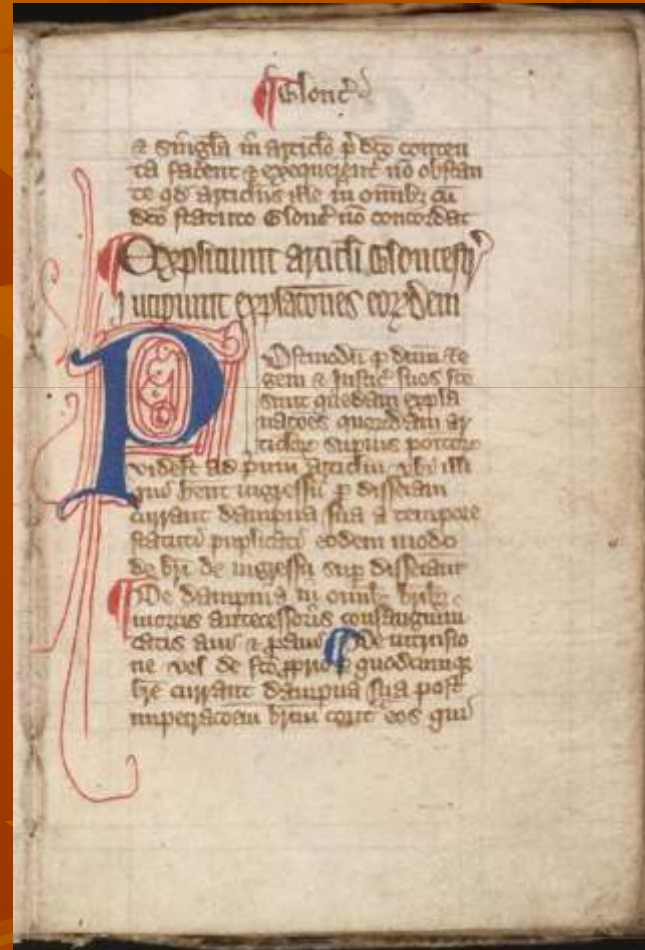
- Under strict monarchy England developed the Feudal system
- King was in control (held all the land)
- The king gave his rich friends land and they paid him tribute. This was the nobility and the church
- The lowest class in this society were the peasant or commons. 99% of the pop.

Feudal System Cont.

- In the Feudal system the king was incomplete control
- The control the nobles had over the land was because the kings allowed them to have it. So technically there was a “shared power” system.
- This went on for several years until many nobles got tired of being at the mercy of the kings whims

Magna Carta

- In 1215 the Nobles forced the king to sign the magna carta
- The king did not want to but realized he had to
- For the 1st time ever the king had limits on his power
- The magna carta only help a few very rich people but it set an example for future legal documents such as the US Constitution



**What rights did the Magna Carta
grant?**

The background of the slide features a repeating pattern of stylized, overlapping leaves. The leaves are rendered in various shades of brown, tan, and orange, creating a textured, autumnal effect. The overall color palette is warm and monochromatic.

Magna Carta

- King could not control church
- Inheritance
- Right to free trial (land owners)
- Right to travel
- No unnecessary searches

Development of Parliament

- After the Magna Carta many nobles felt they should have their opinions heard
- After the Magna Carta the king realized he had to listen to the nobles demands at least a little more than he had in the past
- As a result the king and the nobles would get together and discuss problems from time to time

Development of Parliament Cont.

- At first the meetings were very informal
- After several years they became very formal and structured
- They were called parliament after the French word parler “to talk”
- After several years this moves from informal meeting to an actual legislature with two groups

Parliament



Parliament

- House of Lords
- Upper House
- Made up of nobles and military class
- At one time had the most power now they have very little power at all
- House of Commons
- Lower House
- Made up of Representatives from towns and cities
- At one time had very little power. Today they have almost all power in England

Parliament and the King

- From the beginnings of the English government the king had total control
- Magna Carta put limits on him for the first time and from that point his power was on the decline...very slowly
- At first Parliament had very little real power but for 300 years it began to slowly take more and more power away from the king



The Glorious Revolution

...sort of

The Glorious Revolution

- PARLIAMENT HAD BEEN GROWING MORE AND MORE POWERFUL
- Parliament removed king James from the thrown
- Parliament replace James with William and Mary????
- Now the parliament is even more powerful than the king...but not much

If you are getting rid of the king why replace him with two monarchs????

English Bill of Rights

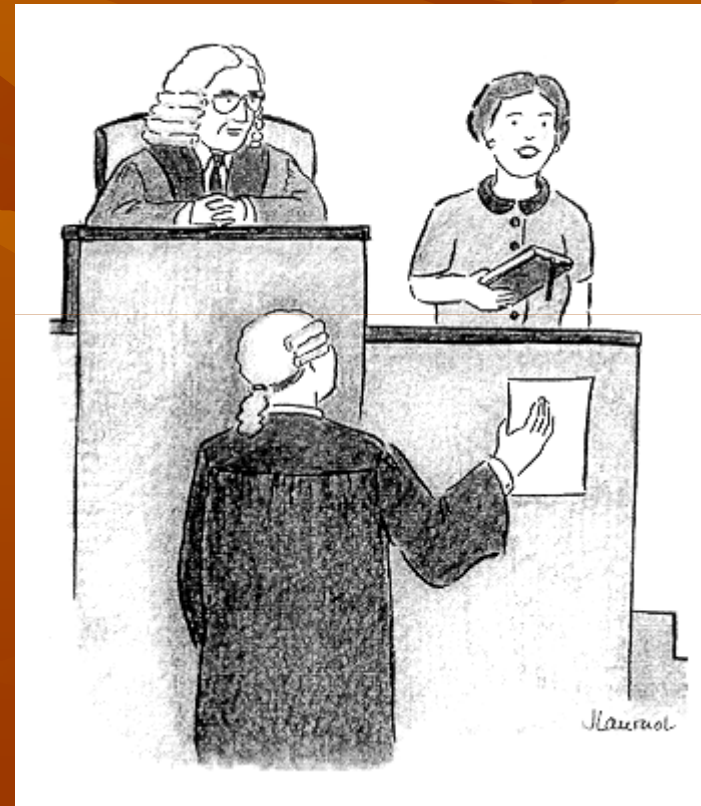
- No taxes w/out parliament's consent
- No interference with free speech
- No army in peace time
- No cruel and unusual punishment
- Can't contradict parliament

Constitution

- England has many written laws and rule however England has no written Constitution like we do
- English law is very dependant on the idea of common law, or legal tradition
- Common law uses past examples or precedent to decide what to do in a particular case (i.e. stealing a cow)
- American Law uses all of these ideas as well can you give me examples?

Examples of Common Law in the American Legal System

- Precedent:
 - Rowe vs. Wade
 - Brown vs. Board
- Common Law
 - Marriage
 - Land ownership



Bringing the English Heritage to America

- In the 1600's and 1700's England started establishing colonies in America
- Jamestown was the first permanent settlement in America (1607)
 - Led by John Smith
 - Founded by the Virginia Company with a charter from King James I
- 1619 House of Burgesses formed
 - 2 representatives from each county were selected to form the first legislature in the American colonies
 - ** had little power, but it was a start!!!

The Mayflower Compact

- 1620 : the Pilgrims (Puritans) arrived in Mass. And started the Plymouth colony
 - Sailed aboard the Mayflower
- Before the Mayflower reached America, the Pilgrims realized they needed governing rules
 - Drew up the Mayflower Compact
 - Signed by the 41 men on board

Conditions of the Mayflower Compact

- The government would make “just and equal laws... for the general good of the colony
 - Signers pledged to obey these laws
- Set up a direct democracy
 - All men could vote and the majority rules
- Mayflower Compact set up a tradition of direct democracy in New England still alive today
 - Vermont town meeting day

Early Colonial Governments

- Success of Jamestown and Plymouth led to the formation of other colonies
- By 1733, 13 English colonies existed in America
 - Each colony set up its own government
 - Each colony had a governor (either elected or appointed by the English King)
 - Each colony had a legislature
 - Most modeled after English Parliament
- As time passed, these legislatures took on more and more responsibility
 - England (now known as Great Britain) had their own problems at home
 - Colonists got used to running things their way with little British interference

The Fight for Independence

- Americans split into two groups
 - Patriots = favored independence
 - Loyalists = favored staying with Great Britain
- America moves towards independence...