RS Notes: The Enlightenment

**Path to the Enlightenment**

* Enlightenment- 18th century philosophical movement
* Isaac Newton- everything was a giant machine.
  + If you could discover the natural laws, you could understand natural laws of human society.
* John Locke- every person is born with a tabula rasa (blank slate)
  + People are molded by their experiences
    - Using these ideas people thought that you can understand the natural laws that all institutions should follow and create an ideal society.

**Philosophes & Their Ideas**

* Philosophe- French for philosopher
  + Not all were French, but most were
  + They were writers, professors, economists, journalists, and social reformers.
* To philosophes the role of philosophy was to change the world.
* Rational criticism was to be applied to everything, including religion and politics.

**Montesquieu**

* Montesquieu came from the French nobility.
  + He studied governments to find the natural laws governing social and political relationships.
  + He published *The Spirit of the Laws*
  + He identified 3 types of government
    - Republics- small states
    - Despotism- large states
      * Rule by a tyrant
    - Monarchies- moderate states
* English government:
  + 3 branches
    - Executive- Monarch
    - Legislative- Parliament
    - Judicial- Court system
* Separation of powers- the three branches limit and control one another through a system of checks and balances.
  + Allows for greatest freedom and security for the state.
* Sound familiar? - Our government is based off of his analysis of the English government.

**Voltaire**

* Voltaire is best known for his criticisms of Christianity and his belief in religious toleration.
* He created Deism
  + Deists believe the world is like a clock that God created and set according to his natural laws, and then let run without his intervention.

**Diderot**

* Denis Diderot’smost important contribution to the Enlightenment was the *Encyclopedia, or Classified Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*.
* He edited this 28-volume collection of knowledge to “change the general way of thinking.”
  + Many of its articles attacked old French society and argued for religious toleration and social improvements to make society more humane.
  + It helped to spread Enlightenment ideas.

**Economics**

* Adam Smith was the founder of modern economics.
  + Physiocrats- if people were free to their own economic self-interest, society would prosper.
    - **Laissez-faire-** “To let do” – government should not interfere with the economy.
* Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations-* government had only three legitimate functions:
  + protecting society from invasion (army)
  + defending citizens from injustice (police)
  + maintaining public works like roads and canals that private individuals could not afford.

**Later Enlightenment**

* Jean-Jacques Rousseau- *Discourse on the Origins of the Inequality of Mankind*
  + people formed governments and laws to protect their private property, but the government relationship enslaved them.
* *The Social Contract* - he presented the idea of a **social contract** in which members of society agree to be governed by the general will
* *Emile*- Rousseau argued that education should nurture, not restrict, children’s natural instincts.
  + he believed that emotions, as well as reason, were important to human development.

**The Spread of Ideas**

* These ideas were most known to the upper class
  + More books available= more people can read
  + Magazines and newspapers first appeared in 1702
  + **Salons**= Nobles, thinkers, artists, and government officials attended
    - Discussed philosophical ideas
    - Women who hosted these could influence political opinion