Objectives

- Read this powerpoint
- Identify the social and economic European philosophers of the 18th century
- Understand the differences in their various beliefs and the role of government in society
Scientific Revolution

- Scientific Revolution introduced reason and the scientific method as the basis of knowledge
- People now viewed the world differently
- 1700s: scientific successes (e.g., vaccine against smallpox) convinced educated Europeans of the power of human reason and intellect
- **Natural law**—rules discovered by reason—could be used to study human behavior and solve society’s problems (e.g., social, economic, political)
- Scientific Revolution sparked another revolution in thinking known as the **Enlightenment**
Enlightenment

- Described by German philosopher Immanuel Kant
- Kant believed that using **natural laws** to explain human behavior would “enlighten”, or open us up, to new ideas – almost like a light bulb that “illuminates” the room when the switch is turned on
- The enlightenment period triggered the writings and beliefs of many new philosophers who “enlightened” Europe and beyond
Thomas Hobbes - philosopher

- 17\textsuperscript{th} century English thinker
- Wrote \textit{Leviathan}
- People are naturally cruel, greedy, and selfish
- Unless controlled by an absolute monarchy, people will rob, steal, and oppress each other
- According to Hobbes, people enter into a \textbf{social contract} with their government
- What is the agreement?
- People \textbf{surrender their freedom in exchange for an organized society}
John Locke

- Another 17th century English political philosopher who wrote *Two Treatises of Government*
- Locke believed that people are basically reasonable and moral
- People have certain **natural rights**, including the right to **life, liberty, and property**
John Locke (continued)

- Locke rejected absolute monarchy
- He believed that the best kind of government had a limited power
- Locke even argued that people could overthrow their government if the government violated their natural rights
- Locke’s beliefs would later influence the leaders of the American Revolution
Philosophes

- French word for *philosopher*
- *Philosophes*, or French Enlightenment thinkers, believed that the use of reason could lead to reforms in government, law, and society
- Ideas spread through France, Europe, and worldwide
Baron de Montesquieu

- Proposed the ideas of **separation of powers** and of checks and balances as a way to protect liberty
- Montesquieu’s ideas would deeply affect the framers of the United States Constitution
- He authored *Spirit of the Laws* (1748)
- He believed the best way to protect liberty was to divide government into an **executive, legislative, and judicial branch**. Does this sound familiar?
- Each branch would serve as a check on the other two branches of government
Voltaire

- Outspoken critic of French monarchy
- He exposed the abuses of power and defended the **freedom of speech**
- Using his pen, Voltaire battled **inequality, injustice, and superstition**
- He offended the French government and the Catholic Church
- The French government imprisoned him and burned his books
Denis Diderot

- Edited a 28 volume *Encyclopedia*
- The *Encyclopedia* included articles on human knowledge, explaining new ideas on topics such as government, philosophy, and religion
- Many philosophes published their beliefs in the *Encyclopedia*
Jean Jacques Rousseau

- Published *The Social Contract* (1762)
- Argued that people were naturally good for the most part but were corrupted by the evils of society
- Believed that minimal government controls were necessary to control society
- Only freely elected governments should impose these controls on people
- Rousseau argued that the good of the community is more important than individual interests
Women and natural rights

- The slogan *free and equal* did not include women.
- Women’s “natural rights” before the Enlightenment included staying at home and care for the family.
- Women began to protest their exclusion from society.
Mary Wollstonecraft

- British social critic
- Wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- Argued for equal education for boys and girls
- Education would allow women to participate equally with men in society
Adam Smith

- Economic philosopher (physiocrat) who focused on natural laws to reform economic systems
- Smith favored a free market economy while rejecting government regulation of the economy
- Smith urged a policy of *laissez-faire*
- *Laissez-faire* is an economic theory that opposes government regulation or interference in the economy
Adam Smith

- Keep the government out of the market
- Market forces of supply and demand will determine market conditions/prices – not the interference of the government
- Smith authored *The Wealth of Nations* (very famous economic book)
There will be a warm-up/quiz tomorrow at the beginning of class that verifies that you have read and understood the material in this powerpoint.