

Connecting the Enlightenment to the U.S. Constitution, 1550-1789 – Chart Information

Philosopher	Interpretation of Main Ideas
1. <u>Thomas Hobbes</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As reflected in <i>Leviathan</i> (1651) the English Civil War (1642-1649) convinced Hobbes all individuals were selfish and wicked. • According to Hobbes, to escape self-destruction, individuals must give up all individual rights to the government; therefore a social contract comprised of absolute monarchical rule was best suited to guarantee civil society.
2. <u>John Locke</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written two years after England's Glorious Revolution, Locke's <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (1690) espoused a more positive view of human society than Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i>. • As reflected in his writing, Locke's key ideas centered on the natural ability of humans to govern their own communal affairs, a social contract based on consent of the governed, and the right of revolution if the government violates this contract.
3. <u>Mary Astell</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to the writing of Locke, Astell was concerned with individual natural rights and popular sovereignty; however, unlike Locke and as reflected in <i>A Serious Proposal to the Ladies</i> (1694) her work focused on equality for women, specifically in the private sphere. • Astell advocated for women's education as a mechanism to create social equality.
4. <u>Charles de Montesquieu</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montesquieu supported the English form of government and advocated separation of powers within government as a means to keep certain levels from becoming too powerful. • <i>On the Spirit of Laws</i> (1748) prompted the inclusion of separation of powers and checks and balances within the U.S. federal system.
5. <u>Jean Jacques Rousseau</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to Locke, Rousseau's work also focused on natural rights and the construction of civil society. • In <i>The Social Contract</i> (1762) Rousseau argued society corrupted individual natural

	<p>goodness; therefore unlike Hobbes, Rousseau’s version of the social contract advocated a direct democracy in which individuals give up a limited number of rights for the common good.</p>
6. <u>Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voltaire (pen name) authored numerous essays, books, and plays on history and philosophy; his writing utilized satire to criticize the French government to the extent that he was imprisoned and exiled to England. • As reflected in <i>Dictionnaire Philosophique</i> (1764) Voltaire advocated freedom of speech and religious toleration, key ideas found in the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
7. <u>Cesare Bonesana Beccaria</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating that punishments should fit the crime, Beccaria’s <i>Crimes and Punishments</i> (1764) called for a fair criminal justice. • Arguing in favor of fair criminal trials and against the use of torture, his ideas are embodied in the 5th, 6th, and 8th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
8. <u>Mary Wollstonecraft</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wollstonecraft’s <i>The Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> (1792) mirrors the writing of France’s Olympe de Gouges by one year. • Arguing for women’s social and political equality, Wollstonecraft disagreed with Rousseau that women’s education should be secondary to men’s; further women should not only aspire to the “womanly” professionals, but actively should be involved in politics.