

WEEK 5 INTRODUCTION TO READINGS

John Locke, Second Treatise of Government (1698)

John Locke was born in 1632 to a provincial family active in commerce and in local administration, a typical family of the emerging Puritan middle or bourgeois class. He spent much of his life as a student and researcher at Oxford University. While at Oxford, he met the Earl of Shaftesbury, a prominent politician who served as English Lord Chancellor after 1672. Their close association resulted in Locke's appointment to a variety of public positions, including Secretary on the board of proprietors for the colony of Carolina and of the Council of Trade and Foreign Plantations. In the former position, Locke helped draft the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, which stated that "Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever."

In 1671, Locke became a founding shareholder in the Royal African Company, which held a monopoly (in Britain) over the African slave trade. This position, combined with the secretaryship of the Council of Trade and Foreign Plantations, meant that Locke had detailed knowledge of the workings of colonial trade and plantations.

Locke's Second Treatise has conventionally been viewed as an ideological justification for the Glorious Revolution and more specifically of the reform of the relationship between King and Parliament in England. Indeed, after the Glorious Revolution, Locke gained even more political influence. He played a central role in the creation of a new Board of Trade (1696) and more generally in the development of colonial policies. Locke died in 1704.

Letters from the Governor of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Assembly (1742), and Two Reports by Conrad Weiser (1743)

Conrad Weiser illustrates one of the most characteristic traits of the modern world: creolization. After living with the Mohawks for sixteen years and being adopted into the Mohawk tribe, Weiser entered into negotiations between Euro-Americans and American-Americans in the service of the Iroquois Empire. Thereafter, he served as an agent for a number of the governments of the Anglo colonies. The Six Nations, or "United Nations," to which he refers were the Seneca, Cayuga, Mahican, Mohawk, Oneida, and Onondaga.

WEEK 5 QUESTIONS

John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government (1698), Chs. 1-5, 9-11.

1. According to Locke, under what conditions are people in a "state of nature"?
2. What example(s) does Locke give of this state?
3. According to Locke, why do people act to leave, or end, the state of nature?
4. How does Locke distinguish between the state of nature and the state of war?
5. According to Locke, under what conditions is enslavement of a person justified?
6. What can be inferred about Locke's beliefs about enslaved Africans, if his views on slavery are to be reconciled with his role in the slave trade?
7. Locke holds that the earth's resources were, at the beginning of human existence, the common property of all. Yet he also argues that private ownership of resources can be just and fair. Explain how Locke accounts for the formation of legitimate private property.

Governor George Thomas, "Letter to Conrad Weiser" (1742); Pennsylvania Assembly, "Letter to the Governor" (1742); and Conrad Weiser, "Report" (1743) and "Report of his Journey to Onondago" (1743)

1. At one point, Weiser reports that something occurred to "surprize" him. What had occurred?

2. Based on these documents, what can you conclude about the completeness, or lack thereof, of Anglo-American domination of Native Americans?