The Empire of Liberty

PS 142A.3
The Empire of Liberty

- Direct rule over Western territories
- Open
  - Once population level reached, every territory could petition to become a state
- Equality of individuals
  - New citizens through new states treated the same as original citizens
The *Fragile* Empire of Liberty

- The 13 colonies should never have held together as a single country.
- Northwest Ordinance created a “peace pact” that stuck, permitting new territories to enter on equal status.
- Country eventually broke in two over industrialization and, reciprocally, slavery.
Origins of the Revolution

- Prior to the Seven Year’s War, security in North America was an imperial responsibility.
  - Colonies paid few taxes to Britain
- Bankrupted by the war, Britain attempted to impose taxes on the colonies to offset expenses.
  - Stamp Act (1765). All printed materials (legal documents to playing cards) had to be printed on paper purchased in London and carrying an embossed revenue stamp.
  - Townshend Acts (1767-1768): raise revenue to pay colonial officials.
  - Tea Act (1773): created monopoly for East India Company
Fractures within the Federation

- 13 colonies governed separately under different charters.
  - Not all states had the same rights and powers.
  - Pennsylvania was a personal possession of William Penn. Maryland was the proprietary property of Lord Baltimore.
- Prior to the revolution, no tradition of common action.
  - First Continental Congress held 1774
Fractures within the Federation

- Colonies settled by different peoples from different regions of Europe.
Fractures within the Federation

- Colonies externally-oriented with little “internal” trade.
  - Exported primary products and raw materials to Europe
- River systems would suggest 4-5 states.
  - Ports are strategic choke points (locationally specific assets)
  - Europe developed along rivers
Balance of Power: States by Population (1780)

- In any union, the balance of power between units is crucial.
- States highly unequal in size.
- Constitutional compromise.
Competition for Territory

Colonies claimed land beyond the Appalachians.

Particularly difficult were competing claims in the Northwest Territory.

Northwest Ordinance (1787)
Louisiana Purchase and Westward Expansion
Civil War and Slavery

- Missouri Compromise (1820)
- Balance of political power between industry and agriculture.
- Early expansion in Caribbean thwarted.
- Civil War (1861-1865)