Greek and Roman democracy

1. The Athenians were the first in the world to practice political campaigning.
	1. History of aristocratic rule in Athens.
	2. Solon’s reform (594 BC) to relieve social tension
	3. The reform of Cleisthenes (508-502 BC): Council of 500 (executive) and the people’s assembly;
	4. Persian Wars (499-479 BC): and greater democracy (background to Xenophon’s observations)
	5. Pericles (r.461-430 BC): tyrant or politician?
		1. Constant fights with other aristocrats (Cimon, Thucydides, etc)
		2. Weakening aristocratic control: the archons and areopagus (ex-archons) were replaced by jury by lot.
		3. Pay to non-elected offices, job provision, parties, etc to keep people to his side.
	6. Definitions of democracy and political systems: expectation of political participation.
	7. Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC): definition of polity and ideal state
2. The decline of Athens
	1. The Delian League and growth of Athenian power
	2. The Pelopponesian War (461-445BC; 430-404 BC) and Athenian defeat
	3. The death of Socrates and end of Athenian democracy
	4. The Macedonian conquest of the Hellenistic world: Alexander the Great (356-323 BC)
3. The rise of the Roman Republic:
	1. Beginning of Rome: settlement on the Latium Plain on the Tiber river.
	2. Founding myth of Rome: Romulus and Ramus, descendants of Aeneas.
	3. Collective aristocratic rule: following the overthrow of Etruscans (Tuscany) (6th century BC), no more kings in Rome.
	4. Roman society: patricians (clan leaders).
	5. Roman expansion and the call for greater plebian political participation
		1. 165 BC: Italian peninsula
		2. 146 BC: the Mediterranean Sea
		3. 1 Century BC: Greek world and Asia Minor
4. The Roman political structure: checks and balances of interests: compare the Roman political system with the American political system of checks and balances. There was less direct interaction between the different branches of the Roman government as in its U.S. counterpart. Much less vetoing was going on between the consuls and the senate. So the consuls enjoyed almost exclusive power in the battlefield, and the senate almost exclusive power in budget and expenditure decision making. Since the senate represented for a long time the aristocracy, the consuls, the king of bygone times, and the assemblies, the people, the division of power among the three enabled all three interest groups to have some power while limiting their power at the same time. Below is a chart of the powers owned by the branches of the Roman government.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Consuls | * summon the assemblies, introduce measures requiring a vote,
* and have authority over the execution of the decisions of the majority.
* nearly autocratic powers as regards preparations for war and the general conduct of military affairs in the field, including appointments, punishments, and wartime expenditures.
 |
| Senate | * complete authority over all revenues and expenditures (except for the consuls’ expenditures during wars.
* Public investigation of crimes
* Civil law court
 |
| Tribunes | * Representatives of the people’s assemblies who held equal power with the consuls after 287 BC
* Like consuls, tribunes could propose laws to the people’s assembly.
 |
| People’s assemblies | * Serve as law court over big cases involving high officials and cases of capital punishment.
* Elect officials
* Ratify laws
* Decide on war and peace
 |

Limitations of powers:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| consuls | * Senate can check on the consuls’ power at war by (not) allocating supplies
* Senate decision on whether to continue with the consul at war after a year.
* People ‘s assemblies ratify treatie and conclude peace, central to the consuls’ war efforts
 |
| senate | * Need people’s assemblies for big legal cases involving capital punishment.
* Senate resolutions have to be approved by all tribunes
 |
| People’s assemblies | * Need senate to allocate public funds and give approval to the use of public resources (rivers, harbors, gardens, mines, lands).
* Most legal case judges were appointed by the Senate.
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**Reference: Separation of powers under the U.S. constitution** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation\_of\_powers\_under\_the\_United\_States\_Constitution)

**Checks and balances**

Separation of powers is not absolute; it is instead qualified by the doctrine of checks and balances. [James Madison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison) wrote that the three branches "should not be so far separated as to have no constitutional control over each other." **The system of checks and balances is designed to allow each branch to restrain abuse by each other branch.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**Legislative**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative) | [**Executive**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Executive_%28government%29) | [**Judicial**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial) |
| * Writes and enacts laws
* Enacts taxes, authorizes borrowing, and sets the budget
* Has sole power to declare war
* May start investigations, especially against the executive branch
* Often appoints the heads of the executive branch
* Sometimes appoints judges
* Ratifies treaties
 | * May veto laws
* May refuse to spend money allocated for certain purposes
* Wages war (has operational command of the military)
* Makes decrees or declarations (for example, declaring a state of emergency) and promulgates lawful regulations and executive orders
* Often appoints judges
* Has power to grant pardons to convicted criminals
 | * Determines which laws apply to any given case
* Determines whether a law is unconstitutional
* Has sole power to interpret the law and to apply it to particular disputes
* May nullify laws that conflict with a more important law or [constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution)
* Determines the disposition of prisoners
* Has power to compel testimony and the production of evidence
* Enforces uniform policies in a top-down fashion via the appeals process, but gives discretion in individual cases to low-level judges. (The amount of discretion depends upon the [standard of review](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_of_review), determined by the type of case in question.)
* Polices its own members
* Is frequently immune to arbitrary dismissal by other branches
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