

Greek vs roman government assignment



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Early Greco-Roman governmental systems have influenced American politics in countless different ways. The United States currently has a democratic republic, using ideas such as separation of powers, checks and balances, popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and the duties and responsibilities of citizens from Greek's democracy and Rome's republic. These concepts protect the rights of the individual person as well as the governing body in a whole. Without the contributions made by Greece and Rome, American government would not be the same.

Greece's early ideas of separation of powers within a democracy have been integrated into American governmental systems. In Athens, a democracy was established in 508 B. C. when Cleisthenes overthrew the aristocrats (Document 4). This government was a direct democracy, where members of the Assembly, which was made up of all free male citizens over the age of twenty one, voted on every issue (Document 3). The Assembly also elected the Council, Board of Generals, Board of Officials, and the Juries. The Council was made up of five hundred members who served for one year. This body suggested ideas for the assembly to vote for.

In addition to the council, there was the Board of Generals, who led the army and the navy, as well as proposing ideas to the assembly on military affairs. Furthermore, there were also the Board of Officials and the Juries, who were involved with court cases. The Board of Officials directed the courts of justice while the juries combined were judges and jurors. Each trial, at least two hundred and one juries were chosen to participate. These branches of the Athenian democracy could be compared to the separation of powers currently utilized in the United States' government.

For example, ancient Greece's Council is akin to the legislative branch in American government. Congress has the power to write bills that will be considered to be turned into laws, much like the Council had the power to propose ideas to be deliberated by the Assembly. Similarly, the executive branch of the U. S. Government is comparable to the Council in ancient Greece, just as the legislative branch could also be similar to the Assembly. In the United States' government, the president has the authority to suggest notions to the legislative branch, again analogous to how the Council can put forward ideas to the Assembly.

In addition, the Board of Officials is seemingly related to the existing judicial branch being employed in the United States, with concepts of judges and jurors resolving court cases. Evidently, many concepts of separation of powers have been derived from ancient Greece's democracy. Not only did ancient Greece contribute to the concept of separation of powers, numerous elements of this principle have originated in ancient Rome. The theory of separation of powers in ancient Rome commenced in 509 B. C. when the Roman Republic was established (Document 1).

Since the Roman Empire was so immense, it would have been nearly impossible to employ the same type of direct democracy being used in ancient Greece (Document 5). Instead, Romans elected representatives to make decisions in the government, therefore making it a republic. There were six different governing bodies in the Roman government, the most important being the senate. Comparable to the United States' legislative branch, the Senate passes laws, though they additionally elect officials and advise the Consuls. Every year two consuls were elected by the Assemblies.

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The Consuls served as chief executives of the government and also were the commanders of the army, similar to the President of the United States. As well as the Consuls and the Senate, there were the Assembly of Centuries and the Assembly of Tribes (Document 6). The Assembly of Centuries was comprised of the patricians, the wealthy land owners in ancient Rome, while the Assembly of Tribes was made up of plebeians, the middle class. The Assembly of Centuries elected the magistrates, whose jobs were to interpret and execute laws.

Conversely, the Assembly of Tribes appointed the Tribunes, who had the power to veto the magistrates. Similarly, in the United States' government there are two branches of Congress; the House of Representatives and the Senate. Compared to the Assemblies, the House of Representatives is related to the Tribunes while the Senate is alike the Magistrates. In both systems of government, the two houses control the power of each other, employing the system of checks and balances. Conclusively, the United States' government has been positively influenced by the early contributions in the Roman Republic made in separation of powers.

As well as the concept of separation of powers, ancient Rome also employed a system of checks and balances. In a political system, it is important to have checks and balances so that each branch of government can check the power of the others. In ancient Rome, the Senate had the power to advise the Consuls. However, the Assemblies were allowed to veto this advice. Furthermore, although the magistrates had the right to interpret and execute laws, the Tribunes could veto the act. This system was set up to ensure that the patricians would not overpower the plebeians.

Likewise, Roman citizens also held the power to veto the magistrates. If a Roman citizen believed a decision made by a magistrate was unfair, they could take the case to *provocatio* court, appeals court, and attempt to appeal the decision (Document 7). In the United States today, the government exploits a complex system of checks and balances. For example, the President has the power to veto a decision, but the legislative branch may override that veto. Also, a President may appoint federal justices, except they must be approved by the Senate.

These are just a few of many ways that the United States utilizes a system of checks and balances somewhat like the system developed in the ancient Roman Republic. Another concept derived from ancient Rome is the rule of law. In ancient Rome, emperor Justinian created a law code which included Public, Private, Natural, and Civil Law, as well as the Law of Nations. These laws governed how people lived their life, just as the United States Constitution governs the lives of the citizens. The Roman Private Law could be compared to the Bill of Rights, both of which protect the rights of individuals.

In addition, the Public Law corresponds with the Articles within the Constitution. These rules pertain to how the government should be administered (Document 9). Not only were these laws written in Justinian's Code, they were also recorded in the Twelve Tables of Law. The rule of law was another contribution made to the United States' government by the example of the Roman Republic. Finally, political systems involving popular sovereignty and the responsibilities of citizens was an additional precedent set by ancient Greece and Rome governments.

Basically, popular sovereignty is a principle that states that the power from governments come from the people. This idea was integrated both into Greece's democracy and Rome's republic. In Greece, if no one was in the Assembly, there would not be anyone to vote on issues brought up by the Council. Furthermore, if the people did not vote on representatives in the Roman Empire, there would not be anyone to make decisions in the government. In both types of government, popular sovereignty was used to govern society.

Not only does the government rely on the people to keep it running, the people rely on the government to show them what their duty is as a citizen. For example, in Athens it was expected that citizens not mind the private matters of others, but at the same time not be lawless (Document 2). In other words, neighbors were supposed to mind their own business unless the other person appears to be breaking a law. Although this was an unwritten law, one could expect disgrace when breaking it. The same philosophy holds true in America's society today.

People are supposed to mind their own business unless someone's actions are in violation of the law. This is a simple philosophy that was evident in ancient Greek and Roman society which still holds true today in American society. There were many influences in American government made by ancient Greek and Roman political systems. Some of the ideas used in Greece's democracy and Rome's republic were popular sovereignty, checks and balances, separation of powers, the rule of law, and the duties of citizens. These fundamental concepts remain to be the basis of the United States' government today.