


**Module 1: American Beginnings - 1607 to the 1750s**  
**Topic 2 Content: Religious Influence on Government and Society Notes**


**Introduction**

## Religious Influence on Government and Society

Religion had a major influence on the Puritan government, the role of the family, and rights of women in northern society. In this interactivity, click each of the symbols to explore the ways in which the Puritan religion influenced both the government and the society.



The icons are: 1. A silhouette of a town with several buildings and a church steeple. 2. A silhouette of a church with a cross on top. 3. A silhouette of a family consisting of a man, a woman, and two children. 4. A silhouette of a woman. 5. A silhouette of a classical building with a pediment and columns.



The logo for whro EDUCATION, featuring the word 'whro' in a stylized font with a leaf-like graphic above the 'o', and the word 'EDUCATION' in a smaller font below it.

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**City Upon a Hill**

## City Upon a Hill

While aboard the *Arabella*, John Winthrop expressed his opinions to help to bind the Puritans together. He claimed that the Puritan society “shall be as a City upon a hill, the eyes of all people are on us.” His sermon discussed the importance of the Puritans remaining together in unity. In the Puritan society, political power was spread to stockholders and to all adult males who belonged to the Puritan church. This included an estimated 40% of the colonies’ men. All voting men annually cast their ballots to elect members of a lawmaking body called the General Court. The General Court held the power to choose a governor.





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**Church and State**

### Church and State

The government and Puritan church developed a very close relationship. Active members of the Puritan church were also active members of government. These members believed it was their duty to carry out God's will, not only in their personal lives, but in government as well. As a result, Puritan law made certain sins punishable. For example, one Puritan law stated that "No person...shall spend his time idly or unprofitably."





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**Importance of Family**

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Family was extremely important to the Puritans. The first settlers of Virginia did not travel as families; however, the Puritans did. Puritans kept a watchful eye on families and how they interacted. Puritan leaders had the authority to place disobedient children in different homes. Quarreling husbands and wives were legally required to seek marriage counseling. If their arguing continued, offenders could end up in the stocks or the pillory.



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**Direct Democracy**

## Direct Democracy of Town Hall Meetings

In the early days of the Puritan government, each church congregation operated as its own political unit. All adult male church members had voting rights, and therefore had an influence in decision-making. This practice of direct democracy in the churches was adopted by the civil government. However, as the population of the Puritan colony grew, the town hall meetings of Puritan government changed to a representative format.




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**Women in Society**

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