GEORGIA

Discuss the development of Georgia as a colony. In the discussion you should include the influence the environment had on Georgia's development and the impact this influence had on the American value system in general.

I. **Concept number one:** Discuss the motivations for the development of the colony of Georgia.

   A. Georgia, founded in 1733, was the last colony to be established by the English in North America.

   B. Georgia resulted from a combination of factors that initially had no connection but which were merged by time and place so that each reinforced the other.

   1. The first was the defense of South Carolina's frontier against the Spanish.

   2. The second major reason was introduced by James Oglethorpe and his philanthropic friends who wished to use the new colony as a haven for debtors languishing in English prisons.

      a. However, once the charter was issued, the original concern for debtors disappeared, as the Trustees sought instead the "worthy poor."

      b. The charity colonists were small tradesmen or artisans who represented many occupations. As the Trustees themselves expressed it, they would take "such as were in decayed Circumstances, and thereby disabled from following any Business in England...."

   3. Finally, the last objective was a mercantilist experiment in the area of agriculture production. Silk and wine were the only two agricultural products advocated by the Trustees that received any serious attempt at production.

      a. The Trustees believed that Georgia could save England the £500,000 paid out annually for silk imported from Italy and France and that 20,000 persons could be employed in Georgia, with an additional 20,000 people in England who would work up the silk into finished products.
b. The agricultural experiment was to meet with the same result in Georgia as it had in the rest of the Southern colonies--failure. Rice became the major crop after the Trustee period.

c. The Trustees felt the people they sent over would become a "self-sufficient peasantry raising silk and wine."

II. **Concept number two:** Discuss the organization of the colony of Georgia and the harsh restrictions that were placed on its early settlers.

A. The Trustees of Georgia were prominent men in English society who were able to obtain grants of public money in order to transport and settle the "worthy poor."

B. The Trustees were bound to philanthropic or humanitarian action by the charter, which forbade them from owning land, holding any office of power or trust, or receive any income from their efforts in the colony--making Georgia different from all other proprietary colonies. The Trustees were to control the colony in this manner for 21 years, at which time they would turn the colony back to the Crown and Georgia would become a royal colony.

C. The Trustees' greatest efforts towards settling Georgia came in its first decade, mainly before the Spanish War for the Austrian Succession (1743-1748) and the harsh restrictions frightened off prospective colonists.

D. The implementation of the restrictions can best be illustrated by the agricultural planning and land granting policies the Trustees used to try to achieve their threefold program--defense, philanthropy, and mercantilism.

1. The **land policy,** which limited the poor unfortunates to 50 acres of land and those who paid their own way over to Georgia 500 acres, might be called the most important **control mechanism** the Trustees' possessed to promote their ideas.

   a. By 1752 some 245,984 acres of land had been granted in 2,840 individual grants. Only 329 of these grants exceeded 50 acres in size.

   b. Not until June of 1752 were grants of more than 500 acres made.

2. "The worthy poor" were not allowed **economic freedom,** for they might lose their property; hence, land was not granted in **fee simple** so that they could not mortgage or sell it.

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3. As Georgians were to be citizen-soldiers to defend the empire's frontiers, land would only be granted and inherited in tail-male, which would insure a soldier for each 50 acre grant.

4. A prohibition against slavery was also linked to the threefold objective. Poor unfortunates could not afford slaves and should not live in a slave society, for this might discourage them from working. (With the permission of the English Parliament, the Trustees of Georgia revoked their prohibition on slavery in October 1749.) From a military viewpoint, slaves could not be soldiers because they might desert to the enemy. Several results of the Trustees land policy are obvious:

   a. First and perhaps foremost, because the policy limited land ownership, it kept many good settlers from coming to Georgia, especially Carolinians who would have been in many ways the best colonists.

   This policy also prevented most settlers, charity or adventurer, from realizing their full economic potential or from freely using the land resources of the colony as they wished.

   b. Secondly, the population for the colony dropped drastically after 1741. During the first eight years of the colony, the Trustees sent over 1,810 charity colonists and another 1021 more came over on their own for a total 2831.

   By the 1752 census the population had dropped down to 1,735 whites and 349 blacks. Hence, the harsh restrictions and lack of opportunity were taking their toll on the colony's economic, political and social stability.

   (i) For example, many settlers, after several bad crop years, abandoned their lands and went to Savannah or left the colony entirely. Had they owned their land in fee simple, they could have sold or mortgaged it to secure the needed capital to tide them over the bad years or to improve their land enough to make it pay.

   (ii) Much land simply remained unused. By 1738 some 58,995 acres had been granted but only 1,000 acres were reported as being under cultivation.
5. Politically the colony was poorly organized with no representative government. The government was entirely in the hands of the Trustees except that the command of the militia was vested in the governor of South Carolina.

a. Given the intelligence of the Trustees, this insistence upon retaining all authority in their own hands is strange because it went against colonial experience.

b. By the time Georgia was founded, there was a well worked out system of colonial government in which colonists participated. Yet the Trustees ignored this system and the English tradition of self-government.

c. The only explanation for this is that the Trustees must have felt the only way their priorities could be carried out is if they ruled the colony and that the success of their objectives made up for any negative consequences of lack of self-government.

d. Yet the insistence by the Trustees upon retaining power in London is one of the things that almost ruined Georgia. The Trustees did not understand the importance of the government to the colonists and their participation in it.

e. For the colony to succeed, the colonists needed to face their own problems, and grow economically and politically. The Trustees never understood that human self-development is important and cannot be directed and molded from without.

f. This inflexibility plus the failure to allow the colonists to participate in the government was the Trustees' greatest political failure.

III. Concept number three: Discuss how the environmental influence in America led to the rejection of once acceptable restrictions. Also show how the rejection of these restrictions in Georgia and the process of rejection leads to understanding the development of the American value system.

A. In England when the "worthy poor" were invited to settle in Georgia and were told about the restrictions before they came over, they did not have a problem with them since they were unable to enjoy most of these rights in England.
B. However, by the time the "worthy poor" had come to Georgia and had a chance to settle, they found it impossible to live off only 50 acres of land and to be without slaves.

1. The model of South Carolina to the north, with its large plantations and slave labor which provided a chance for social mobility for its residents, proved to be an undermining influence creating dissatisfaction and a higher level of expectations.

2. Because the American environment in the form of abundant land provided opportunity for economic and social advancement, the level of expectations changed for the "worthy poor" and Americans in general.

   a. The colonists who settled in America soon developed an appetite for government participation and economic self-determination.

   b. As a result of their experiences in Georgia and other colonies, a different set of values and ways of doing things developed in the American colonies which were quite different from Europe.

3. Hence, the significance of the American environment and its impact on the American mind and the American value system was that the availability of land created opportunity for those who were willing to work for it and had the ability and talent to make the most out of their environment.

C. There was a renewed interest of settlers in Georgia at the very end of the Trustee period. This stemmed from the ending of the Spanish War in 1748 and the abandonment by the Trustees of their earlier and more visionary ideas and tight controls for Georgia.

1. As the Trustees gave up control, plantations and economic growth become more like that of South Carolina.

2. Had the Trustees allowed human selfishness freer reign from the beginning, the colony would have filled up more rapidly and would have experienced greater economic success.

3. But the Trustees said more than once, this was not their aim in settling Georgia. Aid to the unfortunate and security for the southern English frontier in North America were more noble aims, even though they interfered with the settling of the colony.
4. A choice was necessary, and the Trustees held to their choice for almost two decades until they were convinced that their scheme would not work.

5. By 1750 many of the Trustees no longer cared about their dream for Georgia or even about what happened to the colony. In July of 1752 the Trustees convened for the last time and passed their authority over the colony to the English government and Georgia became officially a royal colony.