

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HS471 and HS472

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT 2024-25

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Required Readings:

1) The United States Constitution

(A transcript is available online at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution.>)

Purpose: To introduce the course, each student will read and take notes on the United States Constitution. Students will read the text of the U.S. Constitution which is our government's framework. We will do this in order to be prepared for the expectations of our American Government course and with the goal of being informed citizens after graduation.

Directions: Prepare to write handwritten responses to the questions below on the first day of class. We suggest that you make annotations on a printed copy of the U.S. Constitution, take handwritten notes about the document (and other research if you are curious about concepts you read about) to prepare for the in-class assignment outlined below. No materials other than the Constitution, your own reading/annotating, your own note taking and your own summarizing of the texts will be allowed to be used in class the first day. **There will be no typed notes allowed, come prepared.**

On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this work.

Signature

I do not know of any violations of the Honor Code.

Signature



The United States Constitution...Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences with detailed written responses. Also, be sure to note with a parenthetical citation the Article and Section of the portion of the Constitution referred to in the response. YOU ARE LIMITED TO 5 SENTENCES FOR EACH RESPONSE. BE CLEAR AND CONCISE WITH YOUR WRITING, NO FLUFF. (5 points each, 50 points total)

United States Constitution transcript at the National Archives and Records Administration (You are welcome to print a copy, purchase a pocket Constitution for your use in class, or use the one we gave you!):

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html

1. When the Framers of the Constitution met at Philadelphia in 1787, they faced several difficult tasks. One of these tasks was: Create a new central government that would be strong enough to meet the needs of the day and would, at the same time, preserve the already existing States. How did the Framers complete this task?
2. The concept of popular sovereignty, born in the American Revolution and woven into the U.S. Constitution, recognizes the power to govern resides with the people. Citing at least two examples from The Constitution, where in the document is popular sovereignty codified into law?
3. The Framers of the U.S. Constitution intended to create a central government for the United States stronger than the Articles of Confederation provided. Yet they also intended to limit the powers of the government. How did the concepts of checks and balances and separation of powers help the Framers achieve the establishment of a limited government?
4. The principle of judicial review does not appear specifically in the Constitution. However, the Framers intended for the federal courts to have this power. What specific statements in the Constitution relate to the principle of judicial review?

5. Throughout history many civilizations have had autocratic governments led by a king or dictator. When the colonies broke away from England and King George III we established a form of government that attempts to prevent the rise of an autocrat. Cite at least one example from the Constitution and its Amendments that prevent autocracy. How does that provision prevent the consolidation of power with one person?

6. The people of the United States are often adverse to being told what to do from a far off place. This is no wonder, recognizing the American Revolution against being governed from England. How does the U.S. Constitution establish federalism and prevent all governance coming from Washington D.C.?

7. Judicial restraint is a concept that refers to the courts, most prominently the U.S. Supreme Court, refraining from decisions that change the interpretation of current law. What Constitutional basis is there for this concept?

8. Judicial activism is a concept that refers to the courts, most prominently the U.S. Supreme Court, using its power to change the interpretation of current law. What Constitutional basis is there for this concept?

9. Slavery was an institution that was once legal under the United States Constitution. If we are still governed by the same document, how is it that now it is illegal? What provision in the U.S. Constitution allows for the document's own improvement?

Choose only one of the following to respond to:

10. Removing the provisions you have already mentioned, what is the most important provision of the Constitution? Be sure to explain why.

11. Removing what you may have already mentioned, What is the most important improvement our society has made to the U.S. Constitution? Be sure to explain why.