

Greetings, Applicants!

Process for joining the 2026-2027 Constitution Team

If you complete the steps outlined in this document your application will be considered for the 2026-2027 Constitution Team. Your academic essay, personal essay and interview will help determine the team.

Constitution Team is an intense academic experience, after school activity and competition that appeals to students interested in government, social justice, history, politics, law, activism, social change, public speaking, competition, as well as independent and collaborative learning. The team is divided into 6 units (of up to 6 students each), and each unit studies a different aspect of the Constitution. There are no prerequisites. The focus is as follows:

Unit 1 - Philosophical and historical foundations (Locke, Montesquieu, the Magna Carta, etc.)

Unit 2 - Framing the Constitution, the Constitutional Convention of 1787, how and why it was written

Unit 3 - How we have changed the Constitution to achieve the ideals of the Declaration of Independence?

Unit 4 - How our government works, separation of powers between the branches of the government

Unit 5 - Bill of Rights, civil rights and civil liberties (freedom of speech, religion, press, trials, etc.)

Unit 6 - Current events, history and future of democracy, civic engagement, citizenship

The class builds to a regional and then state competition in January. In which students participate in mock Congressional hearings. You are testifying on your area of expertise in front of a panel of judges. Each unit will prepare responses for 3 questions ahead of time regarding their unit of study. For each question, you will write and rehearse a 4-minute prepared statement. You will then be quizzed by the judges for 6 minutes on your unit's focus, current events and your prepared statement. If we are successful at regionals we go on to state, and if we win we have the opportunity to compete at Nationals in Washington D.C. (which we have done 16 of the past 21 years). Constitution Team is an enormously rewarding experience. There is nothing else like it at Grant. If you get pleasure from learning for the sake of learning, then this is the class for you!

Steps

1. Write an academic essay, not to exceed 1,000 words, in response to the prompt set forth below.
2. Write a personal essay following the instructions outlined below.
3. Participate in a short interview with Ms. DiPasquale (teacher) and Head coaches Shelley Larkins and Tim Volpert. Interviews are held in May (TBD) after school and in person.
4. Larry Burke, our style coach, will host a mandatory workshop in May (TBD). You will be participating in a public speaking session with other applicants. This meeting will be scheduled in advance and held after school.

1.) Academic essay prompt

Instructions: Please keep a couple of things in mind:

Our constitution creates a **federal system of government**, where power is shared between the states and the national government. Examine the Constitution (this means reading it carefully a few times!) and **explain** with at least five citations to the Constitution (one for each topic) how the Constitution:

- 1) restricts the states; 2) restricts the national government; 3) empowers the states; 4) empowers the national government; and 5) provides for the states to participate in the national government.
- Using either Federalist #45 or #46 (or both) explain why the founders believed a federal system of government was advantageous.

A system of federalism sometimes creates conflicts between the states and the national government. In the closing portion of your essay identify a current conflict that illustrates the tension inherent in a federal system.

Keep in mind, your essay needs to contain your own thoughts and your own words. Anybody can google and find what others have written, don't simply lift others thoughts and place them into your essay. This doesn't mean that what you think must be something no one else has ever said about it and something highly sophisticated. It just means we want you to think about it. **Second**, on the Constitution Team, precision of

thought and attention to detail in writing is important - (we do not expect perfection). However, double check your work for bad grammar, spelling errors and incomplete sentences. This essay is not a barrier, we are interested in learning how you think about the issues.

Finally, in accordance with academic integrity expectations, please do NOT ask current or former Con Team members for help. If you have any questions, please reach out to Ms. DiPasquale in room 210 or email me at adipasquale@pps.net

2.) Personal essay prompt Due April 1, 2026

- 1) Why are you applying to the Constitution Team? This class requires members to read assigned texts and complete textbook homework over the summer. It requires a lot of time and effort outside of the scheduled class-why do you want to be part of it?
- 2) Why do you want to spend this much of your senior year devoted to one activity? Given what you know about the team, please also explain how you would contribute to the success of the team.
- 3) What other extracurricular activities are you planning on participating in as a senior? Are there specific days and times when you are absolutely 100% for sure unavailable?

Time Commitment: A scheduled class period. Mandatory Wednesday meetings at Grant from 6:30-8:30 p.m. As a unit you determine with your coaches an additional meeting time of 2 hours during the weekend. Beginning mid December we will meet every Sunday from 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Submitting your essays

Submit your essays in one PDF document electronically to Ms. DiPasquale at adipasquale@pps.net or drop them off in Ms. DiPasquale's mailbox in the main office. **Make sure to include your email address, so we can contact you. If you need more time please let me know. Don't hesitate to email me with any questions.**

Due on April 1, 2026

Good luck! Go Grant!