

# THE CONSTITUTIONAL TRADITION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

DATE STARTED \_\_\_\_\_ DATE COMPLETED \_\_\_\_\_

**PREREQUISITE:** American Government 1 course (or equivalent civics course).

**HOW TO DO THIS COURSE:** Do the steps one at a time, in order. When you finish a step, put your initials and the date on the sign-off line on the right. A split line means to get a pass (and an initial) from another student or from your Academic Supervisor if it says that. Essays are turned in to the Academic Supervisor.

**PURPOSE:** Understand the constitutional tradition that led up to the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments, and the importance of that tradition in both national and international affairs; be able to evaluate political issues based on that understanding.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 35 hours.

## MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THIS COURSE

Study booklet, *The Constitutional Tradition*, with these data sheets (DS):

9039      9040      9041      9042

Exams: 9043, 9044 (answers), 9045 (review) 9046 (answers)

Other texts/references:

*A History of US, Book 11 Sourcebook and Index*, Joy Hakim, paperback 2007 (ISBN-10: 019532725X, ISBN-13: 978-0195327250); hardcover (ISBN-10: 0195189035, ISBN-13: 978-0195189032). Any edition is okay.  
*We the People*, Lynne Cheney, 2008, paperback (ISBN-10: 1442444223, ISBN-13: 978-1442444225); hardcover (ISBN-13: 978-1416954187, ISBN-10: 141695418-X)

*TIME: The Constitution—The Essential User's Guide*, eds. of *Time Magazine*, 2012, hardcover (ISBN-10: 1603209999, ISBN-13: 978-1603209991)

*The Constitution of the United States and The Declaration of Independence* pocket version, <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/sku/052-071-01545-1>, ideally enough for each student to keep. (\$1.50 each)

The following online audio with diagrams, all by Craig Seibert, 2009. Available on youtube.com and elsewhere online:

“Understanding the Declaration of Independence—Nine Key Concepts Everyone Should Know” (10 mins.)

“How the Declaration of Independence and Constitution Work Together” (4 mins.)

“Understanding the U.S. Constitution Part 1—Five Key Concepts Everyone Should Know” (8 mins.)

“Understanding the U.S. Constitution Part 2—Five Key Concepts Everyone Should Know” (7 mins.)

## NOTE TO ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR

*The Constitution of the United States and The Declaration of Independence* pocket version, published by the U.S. Government printing office, is recommended for all readings of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Ideally students could keep their copies once finished with the course.

## A. THE CONSTITUTIONAL TRADITION

1. READ: Data Sheet (DS) #9039 The Constitutional Tradition Course Introduction. \_\_\_\_\_
2. DEMONSTRATION: Show the definitions of
  - a) constitution \_\_\_\_
  - b) tradition \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. READ: DS #9040 Four Major Types of Government. \_\_\_\_\_
4. DEMONSTRATION: Show the four major types of government. \_\_\_\_\_
5. ESSAY: What examples can you think of or find of the four major ideas about government? Which of them most appeals to you? Why? Are there any others you think might be workable under certain circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_
6. READ: DS #9041 The Magna Carta: Limiting the Power of Government. \_\_\_\_\_
7. READ: *A History of US: Sourcebook and Index* (HUS), “1. Magna Carta (1215),” pp. 11–12. \_\_\_\_\_
8. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: Discuss with one or more students or adults your thoughts on the historical significance of the Magna Carta and compare your thoughts with theirs. As part of this, do your own research on what others have to say about this subject, using any sources you choose. Then write up your conclusions in a concise essay that addresses the historical significance of the Magna Carta, citing any ideas not considered general knowledge or not your own. **Supervisor pass** \_\_\_\_\_
9. READ: HUS, “14. Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence* (1776),” p. 37 only. \_\_\_\_\_
10. ESSAY: Not all colonists were willing to separate from England. According to historians, an estimated 15–20% were Loyalists (called “Tories” by the revolutionaries) who supported England and opposed American independence. Many of them were badly treated by the revolutionaries, who thought of themselves as the “Patriots”; some were expelled from the colonies and had to move to England or Canada. From what you now know or from any research you care to do, what reasons might the Loyalists have had for believing as they did? If you had been a colonist, do you think it’s possible you might have been on the Loyalist side? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

11. READ: *The Constitution of the United States and The Declaration of Independence (CUS)*, the first two paragraphs of the Declaration, pp. 35–36. Make sure you understand these terms, many of which are not used in the way we usually understand them today: *bands*, *powers* (used in two different ways), *station*, *unalienable*, *instituted*, *train*, *usurpations*, *despotism*, *sufferance*, *candid*.

You can find good glossaries for the Declaration (as well as the Constitution and its Amendments) online. As of this writing, this is one of the most useful:

<http://www.mcwdn.org/dof/decgloss.html> \_\_\_\_\_

12. DEMONSTRATION: Show

a) Paragraph 1 of the Declaration. \_\_\_\_\_

b) Paragraph 2 of the Declaration (sentence by sentence). \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

13. READ: CUS, the remainder of the Declaration, pp. 36–39. \_\_\_\_\_

14. ESSAY: Does it seem to you that all of the grievances listed in the rest of the Declaration are just and reasonable, or do you think they may have been exaggerated for some reason? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

15. VIDEO: If available online, listen to Craig Seibert’s audio with diagrams: “Understanding the Declaration of Independence—Nine Key Concepts Everyone Should Know” (10:44 minutes). If not available on youtube.com, search online by title. \_\_\_\_\_

16. PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

a) Memorize the first clause of the “self-evident truths” section of the Declaration of Independence (through “the pursuit of Happiness”), as originally written by Thomas Jefferson: \_\_\_\_\_

“WE hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

b) Recite the clause you memorized to someone who isn’t familiar with the Declaration of Independence. Then read the rest of the paragraph aloud and explain to the person why these self-evident truths are

important. Answer any questions as best you can. Write up the result. \_\_\_\_

**Supervisor pass.** \_\_\_\_\_

17. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: Imagine that there is a person, group or government that in some way unfairly suppresses your individual rights, or the rights of your family or group. Then write your own Declaration of Independence that states logically, and without attacking the other person or group, the reasons you should be entitled to those rights. Be as convincing as you can. \_\_\_\_\_

**B. THE U.S. CONSTITUTION**

1. READ: *We the People*, from the beginning through p. 6. Make sure you understand the definition of *Articles* and *Confederation*. *Confederation* is defined in the HUS Glossary, but both terms are well defined here (as of this writing): [thepeoplesguidetotheusconstitution.com/glossary](http://thepeoplesguidetotheusconstitution.com/glossary) as well as elsewhere online. \_\_\_\_\_

2. READ:

- a) HUS, the introduction to “16. *Articles of Confederation* (1778),” pp. 42 through the top of 43. \_\_\_\_
- b) Art. I. through Art. IV, pp. 43–44 (skip the first paragraph of the Articles). \_\_\_\_
- c) Art. XI. through Art. XIII, p. 50. \_\_\_\_

3. ESSAY: Although the Articles of Confederation is usually remembered only for the fact that it failed, it contained some points that were incorporated later into the U.S. Constitution and found to be successful. What strengths and weaknesses did you notice in the particular Articles you read? \_\_\_\_\_

4. READ: *We the People*, pp. 9–32. \_\_\_\_\_

5. READ: HUS, the introduction to “20. *The Constitution of the United States* (1787),” p. 58 to the first paragraph of the Constitution, p. 59. \_\_\_\_\_

6. READ: You will be reading the full U.S. Constitution including its Amendments. There are various glossaries that can be found online that are helpful in understanding the terms in the Constitution. One that has been found to be helpful is:  
<http://thepeoplesguidetotheusconstitution.com/glossary/>.

If you need additional help in understanding difficult passages, the course textbook *TIME: The Constitution – The Essential User’s Guide* has explanatory notes for most sections.

7. READ: CUS, the first paragraph of the Constitution, known as the Preamble, p. 1. \_\_\_\_\_
8. DEMONSTRATION: Show the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. \_\_\_\_\_
9. READ: CUS, Article I of the Constitution about the legislative branch of government, pp. 1–9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. ESSAY: Based on what you learned in American Government 1 or elsewhere, or on what you can find through your own research, list one example for each of the 10 Sections of Article I of how that Section has been applied in real life (or how it should have been applied—or could have been applied—in response to some situation). \_\_\_\_\_
11. READ: CUS, Article II of the Constitution about the executive branch, pp. 9–12. \_\_\_\_\_
12. ESSAY: Based on what you learned in American Government 1 or elsewhere, or on what you can find through your own research, list one example for each of the four Sections of Article II of how that Section has been applied in real life (or how it should have been applied—or could have been applied—in response to some situation). \_\_\_\_\_
13. READ: CUS, Article III of the Constitution about the judicial branch, pp. 12–13. “Equity” in the term “. . . in Law and Equity,” here means “a system of rules and principles, based on fairness and justice. Equity supplements common law<sup>1</sup> and statute law in the United States and British Commonwealth by covering cases in which fairness and justice require a settlement not covered by the common law. In the United States, law and equity are usually administered by the same court.”  
*World Book Dictionary* \_\_\_\_\_
14. ESSAY: Based on what you learned in American Government 1 or elsewhere, or on what you can find through your own research, list one example for each of the three Sections of Article III of how that Section has been applied in real life (or how it should have been applied—or could have been applied—in response to some situation). \_\_\_\_\_
15. READ: CUS, Article IV, pp. 14–15. Make sure you understand the term *republican*. \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> “Common law” is “law based on custom and usage, but confirmed by the decisions of judges, as distinct from ‘statute law.’ ” *World Book Dictionary*

16. ESSAY: Write what you think the purpose is for each of the four Sections of Article IV. \_\_\_\_\_
  17. READ: CUS, Article V, p. 15. \_\_\_\_\_
  18. DEMONSTRATION: Show Article V. \_\_\_\_\_
  19. READ: CUS, Article VI, pp. 15–16. \_\_\_\_\_
  20. DEMONSTRATION: Show Article VI. \_\_\_\_\_
  21. READ: CUS, Article VII, pp. 16–17. \_\_\_\_\_
  22. DEMONSTRATION: Show Article VII. \_\_\_\_\_
  23. VIDEO: If available online, listen to Craig Seibert’s audio with diagrams: “How the Declaration of Independence and Constitution Work Together” (4:06 minutes). If not available on youtube.com, search online by title. \_\_\_\_\_
  24. VIDEO: If available online, listen to Craig Seibert’s audio with diagrams: “Understanding the U.S. Constitution Part 1—Five Key Concepts Everyone Should Know (8:24 minutes). If not available on youtube.com, search online by title. \_\_\_\_\_
  25. PRACTICAL APPLICATION:
    - a) Memorize the Preamble to the Constitution (below): \_\_\_\_  
 “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”
    - b) Recite the Preamble to someone who isn’t familiar with the Constitution, and explain the six core purposes of the Constitution as outlined in the Preamble. Answer any questions as best you can. Write up the result. \_\_\_\_
- Supervisor pass.** \_\_\_\_\_

## C. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

1. READ: CUS, The Bill of Rights, which consists of the first ten Amendments to the Constitution, pp. 21–23. (If you wish to, consult *TIME: The Constitution—The Essential User’s Guide* or any other source on any of these, or on any of the later Amendments.) \_\_\_\_\_

2. DEMONSTRATION: Show Amendment I through Amendment X. (10 demonstrations) \_\_\_\_\_
3. ESSAY: Answer one of the following questions in a well-organized essay of 250 words or more:
  - a) Which one of the first ten Amendments (the Bill of Rights) do you consider most important today? Why? \_\_\_\_
  - b) Which one of the first ten Amendments do you consider to be most endangered? Why? \_\_\_\_

**Supervisor pass.** \_\_\_\_\_

4. READ: CUS, the remainder of the Amendments to the Constitution, pp. 23–34. \_\_\_\_\_
5. ESSAY: Briefly state the purpose of each Amendment after Amendment X. \_\_\_\_\_
6. VIDEO: If available online, listen to Craig Seibert’s audio with diagrams: “Understanding the U.S. Constitution Part 2—Five Key Concepts Everyone Should Know” (7:48 minutes). If not available on youtube.com, search online by title. \_\_\_\_\_
7. CLAY DEMONSTRATION: Show how the Declaration of Independence and Constitution work together. **Supervisor pass.** \_\_\_\_\_

## D. FINAL APPLICATION SECTION

1. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: Do the Constitution Review Drill (DS #9042) with another student. \_\_\_\_\_
2. PRACTICAL APPLICATION: Now that you have read the full text of the original Constitution and know something about the documents and the history of the Constitutional tradition, choose one of the following:
  - a) Research a current issue that relates to some part of the Constitution you have studied up to now (or to one of its predecessors), and write a clear, logical essay of 500 words or more on how one or more principles in that document are or are not being correctly applied in relation to that issue. Also, tell how you think the situation should be addressed, and why. Your paper must have a proper thesis statement which must be backed up by specifics, and must include a summary statement that gives your own recommendations. \_\_\_\_
  - b) Write a clear, well-organized letter about what has most impressed you in what you learned about the Constitution (or one of its predecessors) up to now, and decide who should know what you have to say. If you

prefer, you can discuss an issue instead, as in a) above, but make sure to keep it to no more than one page, and make sure you state exactly what you want your reader(s) to do about it. You may write to a newspaper, the President, a Senator or congress person, or someone else. After the letter is passed (for application of what you have studied), get it mailed or emailed. \_\_\_\_

- c) Do an artistic presentation in whatever form (video, music, poetry, painting, short story, poem, etc.), for three or more people, that conveys your own feelings or ideas about the Constitution or one of its predecessors.

**Supervisor pass.** \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the steps of this course. I understand what I studied and can use it.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The student has completed the steps of this course and knows and can apply what was studied.

Academic Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

This student has passed the exam for this course.

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_