

CENTER FOR THE CONSTITUTION  
AT JAMES MADISON'S MONTPELIER

Constitutional Theory Readings and Draft Agenda

Readings:

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Articles of Confederation
- The United States Constitution
- "Vices of the Political System of the United States," James Madison, 1787
- James Madison's letter to George Washington on April 16, 1787
- The speeches of James Madison and James Wilson during the Philadelphia Convention {July 5, 13, 14, 1787}
- James Wilson's speech on October 6, 1787
- *The Federalist* {Nos. 1, 10, 39, 51}
- "Introduction" in Eugene W. Hickok, Jr. The Bill of Rights: Original Meaning and Current Understanding, 1991
- *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), *Barron v. Baltimore* (1833), *Gitlow v. New York* (1925)

Draft Agenda:

**Friday:**

- Arrive
- Dinner
- Welcome and Agenda Overview

- Welcome to the Center for the Constitution
- Mission of the Center for the Constitution
- Agenda overview and logistics of the weekend

- Introductions
- Opening Activity

*Themes:* Liberty, Sovereignty, Order, Union, Justice, Power, Posterity  
*Essential Questions:*

- What is the purpose of our Constitution?
- What basic ideas about government are included in the Preamble?

**Saturday:**

- Breakfast
- Lecture / Discussion I, Part I: Origins of the Constitution
- Break

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- Lecture / Discussion 1, Part 2: Origins of the Constitution

*Themes Addressed:* Liberty and Sovereignty

*Essential Questions:*

- What is a Constitution?
- What is a republican government?
- What is a constitutional government?
- What is a good government?

- Lunch

- House Tour

- Break

- Breakout Discussions

- Group Report / Discussion 2, Part 1: The Creation of the Constitution

- Break

- Lecture / Discussion 2, Part 2: The Creation of the Constitution

*Themes Addressed:* Order, Justice, Power

*Essential Questions:*

- How was the government organized to prevent the abuse of power?
- What arguments surrounded the drafting and ratification of the Constitution?
- Why a Bill of Rights?

- Dinner

## **Sunday:**

- Breakfast

- Lecture / Discussion 3, Part 1: The Evolution of the Constitution and the Citizen

*Themes Addressed:* Union, Bill of Rights, Citizenship

*Essential Questions:*

- What are bills of rights and what kinds of rights does the United States Bill of Rights protect?
- What does it mean to be a citizen?
- Who is a citizen under the Constitution?
- Does the Constitution only protect the rights of citizens?

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- Break
- Breakout Discussions
- Group Report / Discussion 3, Part 2: The Evolution of the Constitution and the Citizen
- Lunch
- Lecture / Discussion 4: Constitutional Interpretation and Contemporary Issues

*Themes Addressed:* Posterity

*Essential Questions:*

- In what ways has constitutional interpretation evolved over the past 220 years?
- Is the Constitution open to interpretation?

- Evaluation and Wrap - Up