

# Pillars of the American Constitution Classroom Application

Constitutional Literacy Institute  
June 23rd, 2025

# Purpose of these sessions

The morning sessions are to increase our knowledge (Think like a Student)

The Quill sessions are to increase our own and our students research skills (Think like a Researcher)

The pedagogy sessions are to provide specific lesson plans (Think like a Teacher)

The classroom application sessions are to break down into ideas, concepts and units for students. (Think like a Teacher)

# Big picture Unit Outline of Constitutional Literacy

Monday- Foundations, Sources, and Big Concepts of CL  
(Knowledge)

Tuesday- Dispositions of CL, (Dispositions)

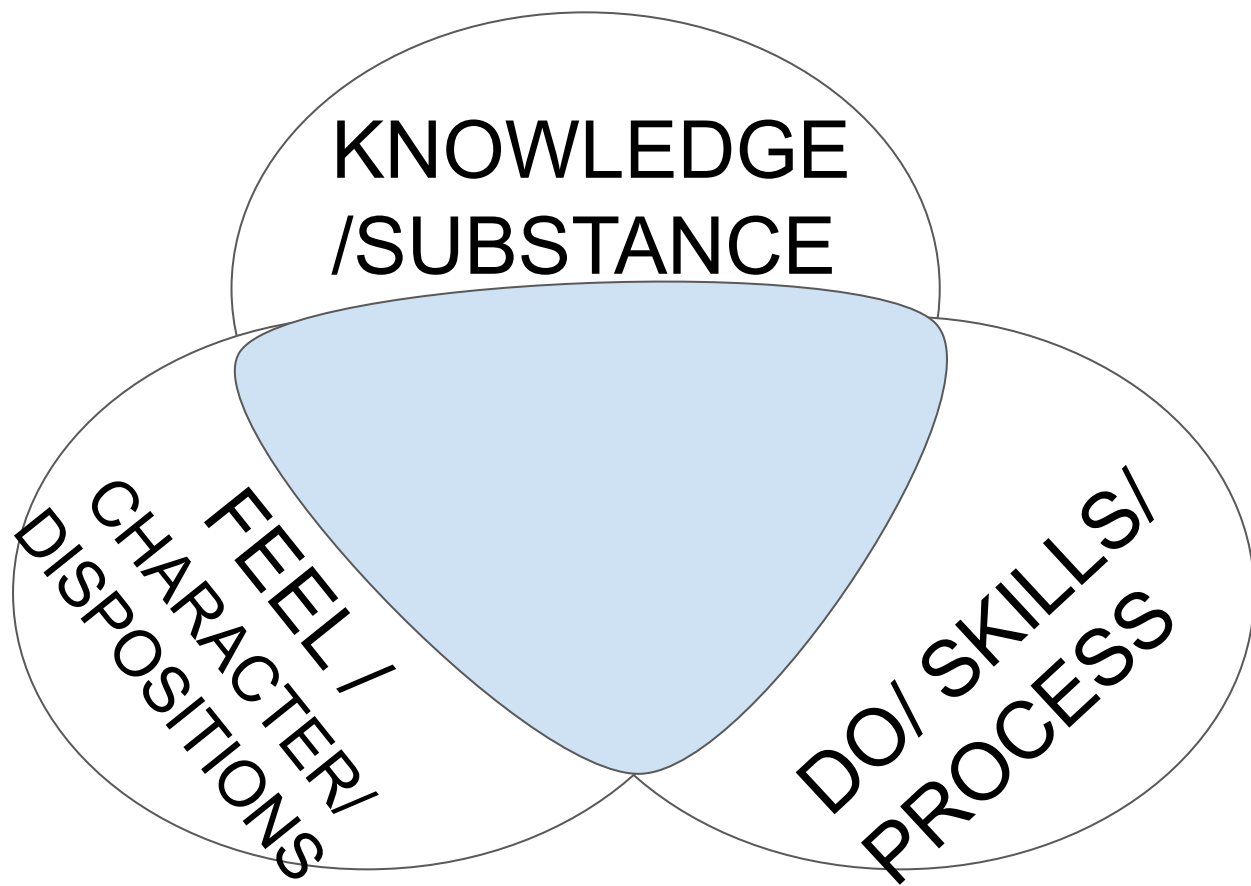
Wednesday- Process of CL (Skills)

Thursday- Contradictions and Controversial Topics of CL

Friday- Civility, Reflections and “Why’s” of CL

# Objectives for Today

- 1) Teachers will understand the four pillars of the American Constitution and theorize how to create a unit to address the four pillars.
- 2) Teachers will be theorize about the tensions and balances struck by our Constitution and come up with examples to share with students across multiple units.
  - a) Examples: Legislative vs. Executive, Democracy (Anarchy) vs Monarchy (Demigods), Individual Liberties vs Social Justice, Efficient vs Deliberative, Federalism, Checks and Balances, etc.



REPUBLIC OF THE  
UNITED STATES

CONSTITUTION (C)

PROTESTANT  
REFORMATION

EUROPEAN  
ENLIGHTENMENT

CLASSICAL  
REPUBLICANISM

AMERICAN  
EXPERIENCE

CIVIC VIRTUES/ DISPOSITIONS (c)

# ELEMENTS OF CONSTITUTIONAL UNLITERACY

(SKILLS/PROCESS)

PROTESTANT  
REFORMATION

EUROPEAN  
ENLIGHTENMENT

LIBERALISM  
REPUBLICANISM

AMERICAN  
EXPERIENCE

KNOWLEDGE/  
SUBSTANCE

CIVIL CHARACTER/DISPOSITIONS (c)

REPUBLIC OF THE  
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CIVIC VIRTUES/ DISPOSITIONS (c)



# Four Pillars

Who/ what are the most important theories, or thinkers, documents, of events that can or should be covered to highlight the Four pillars of Protestant Reformation, European Enlightenment, Classical Republicanism, Founders Experience?

**What are the lessons or concepts each bring that influences our Constitution and who/what do you use?**

# Four Pillars

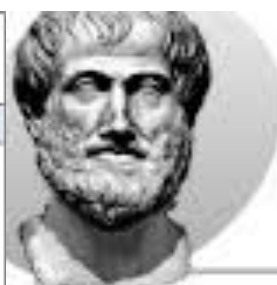
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Examples- Montesquieu- Spirit of Laws, Separation of Powers, Locke- Natural Rights, **Smith- Capitalism**, **Aristotle- Golden Middle Way** also **Aristotle's Regimes**, **Cicero- Liberalism**, **Puritans- Freedom of Religion**, **Rousseau- Social Contract**, **Beccaria- Criminal Justice**, **Wollstonecraft- Women's Rights**, **Blackstone- Common Law**, **Revolution and Declaration**, **Paine- Common Sense**, **Articles of Confederation**, **State Constitutions**, Interaction with Natives (**Iroquois**). etc.

### Aristotle's Concept of the Golden Mean

Deficiency (-)	BALANCE	Excess (+)
cowardice	COURAGE	rashness
stinginess/miserliness	GENEROSITY	extravagance
sloth	AMBITION	greed
humility	MODESTY	pride
secrecy	HONESTY	loquacity
moroseness	GOOD HUMOR	absurdity
quarrelsomeness	FRIENDSHIP	flattery
self-indulgence	TEMPERANCE	insensibility
apathy	COMPOSURE	irritability
indecisiveness	SELF CONTROL	impulsiveness



### Aristotle's Basic Forms of Government

	Correct	Deviant
<b>One Ruler</b>	Monarchy	Tyranny
<b>Few Rulers</b>	Aristocracy / Republic	Oligarchy / Plutocracy
<b>Many Rulers</b>	Direct Democracy	Anarchy

# Enlightenment


Magna Carta

British Revolution

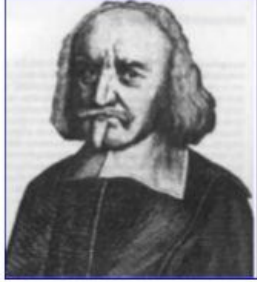
English Bill of Rights

**Enlightenment Thinkers**

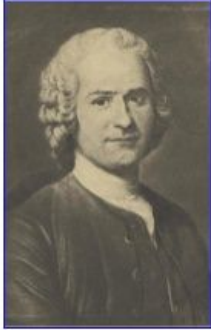
**Voltaire - 1650 – 1722**



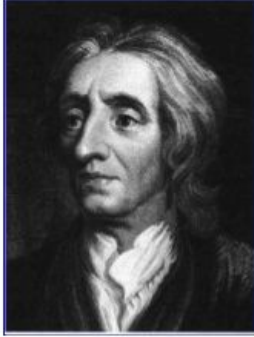
**Thomas Hobbes - 1588- 1679**



**Rousseau - 1712 – 1778**



**John Locke - 1632–1704**



**Montesquieu 1689–1755**



# Cato- Better to Die than Live in Tyranny



Joseph Addison, 1713 *Cato*



# Founders Experience

Salutary Neglect

Mayflower Compact and  
Colonial Charters

Interaction with Natives  
Iroquois Confederacy

Articles of Confederation

Declaration of Independence

State Constitutions

American Revolution

Common Sense

Shays Rebellion

Iroquois Confederacy

# Tensions and Contradictions Framework

We will spend this week identifying, describing and exploring many of America's influences and values. We as individuals are living, complex, complicated, and often contradictory. Sometimes, depending on our circumstances, we react in emotional or logical ways. As individuals we are in a fight to build ourselves up, or tear ourselves down. We have the seeds of greatness, love, and kindness as well as the seeds of destruction, hate and selfishness. Which you are you going to be today?

The same can be said about the identity of America. America's Identity as we have seen is living, complex, complicated and often contradictory. Depending on circumstances or history she has done both great and terrible things. As a nation of citizens are we building ourselves up, or tear ourselves down? We have the seeds of greatness, love, and kindness as well as the seeds of destruction, hate and selfishness. What is the American of today, and what is her future?

## WHAT TENSIONS DID WE HEAR TODAY?

Hannibal Problem- Deliberative or Dictatorial

Checks and Balances- Institution or Party

David Ramsey- Union or Resistance

Anti-Federalists-State Constitution Influence vs European Thinkers



# Tensions or Dialectics/ Binaries

Dialectic/Binaries- Two things that are in a person or place that 1) appear to oppose each other and that 2) COMPROMISE and educate/ build each other and 3) works to find COMPROMISE resulting in both identity traits being strengthened and refined.

Synonym- Interaction, Communication, Hip

Examples- Teacher vs. Student, Individual vs. Family (if willing to COMPROMISE), Individual Rights vs Good of Society, Monarchy vs Oligarchy vs Democracy, Liberal vs Conservative, Justice vs Mercy, Originalism vs Living Constitutionalism

# Conflicts, Contradictions, False Binaries

Contradiction/ False Binaries- Two things that are in a person or place that 1) oppose each other that 2) cannot work or will not work together and 3) will eventually destroy or damage the person or place where the contradiction exists.

Synonym- Hypocrisy, conflict, paradox

Examples: Good vs Evil, Facts vs Conspiracy, Freedom vs Slavery, (which eventually led to the Civil War), Individual vs Family (if it cannot or will not COMPROMISE) Teacher vs Student

“Why is it useful to find binaries? They are the sites of uncertainty, or more than one point of view. As such, they are the breeding ground of ideas. . . . When you find a binary opposition in an essay, a film, or a political campaign, you locate the argument, the struggle that the film, essay, or political campaign is having with itself, the place where something is at issue”

-Writing Analytically, by Rosenwasser and Stephen

List of 47 binaries are found in Myth of Left and Right- Lewis and Lewis p.44-45

# Student example- Farewell Address 2023

My advice to the President is to remember balance. Don't sit idle. You have power; use it, and use it wisely. At the same time, don't become a dictator. The biggest fears of America's founders were a **monarchy and anarchy**- two polar opposites. America's government, a representative democracy, is in the center. As a matter of fact, most of the best times in America involved centered dialectics. One dialectic the President most needs to focus on is the balance between **action and morals**. Herbert Hoover had wonderful morals. He was an amazing business manager and humanitarian. Hoover promoted **capitalism and economic power to businesses**. These policies might have been okay, had Hoover not been president during the Great Depression. Hoover refused to offer financial aid from the federal government, which meant nothing was done to solve the depression. He refused to shift his dialectic to fit current needs. Hoover's successor, FDR, pulled the dialectic back toward **government**, but not to the extreme, he still believed in rugged individualism. This eased a lot of the tension caused by the Great Depression, and things began to get better. Keep centered. America is full of compromises between **federal and state governments, government and business**, and many more dialectics. Remember that it is your job to maintain these balances. A centered country is less likely to divide.

# Student Example- Oral History Report 2025

I know this probably isn't anywhere near the same scale of fear that was felt because of the Vietnam War, but I remember when the Ukrainian and Russian Wars started and that fear of "are we going to have to get involved" and "what if 'bad guy' wins, will he come for us next?" In a much smaller way I almost understood the fear that they must have had because of communism. Personally, I do not think we should have joined the war. We didn't change the outcome, they still became communist, but wasted so much money, resources and vietnamese land and crops. We could have still helped South Vietnam by giving them supplies and resources, but I think stepping into the war entirely was too much. I also wish we went in with the "protect" mindset instead of the "defeat" mindset, we would have probably saved so many Vietnamese lives and land if we did.

# Discuss- THE CONSTITUTION IS NOT A UNIT

What are some tensions or binaries (dialectic or conflict) of America and when can they be discussed?

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Preamble- We the People (National) of the United States (Federal)

Example- Federalism- Local vs State vs Federal

Rural vs Urban, Can be discussed within the Jefferson (DR)/Hamilton (Federalist) debate on the future of America. Or again in the 1920's

Voting and Representation- Direct vs State- Constitutional Convention, 17th Amendment, Electoral College

Individual Liberty and Social Justice- Civil Rights of 1950's-60's

What else?

What we learned today? Or current issues