Unit 1: What Are the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System?

1. “The American war is over: but this is far from being the case with the American revolution.”* To what extent, if any, did revolutionary principles influence constitution-making during the founding period?

   ● What problems, if any, does the principle of consent present when creating or amending constitutions?

   ● To what extent, if any, are revolutionary principles evident in modern times?


2. Parliament passed the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679. What is habeas corpus, and to what extent, if any, is it essential to the principle of limited government?

   ● How has the writ of habeas corpus evolved in the United States?

   ● Under what circumstances, if any, might the writ of habeas corpus place an unreasonable burden on the government?
Unit 2: How Did the Framers Create the Constitution?

1. What were the major disagreements among the fifty-five delegates during the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and how were they resolved?
   - What issues, if any, were not resolved and what were the consequences?
   - What changes, if any, should be made to the Constitution?

2. One Founder claimed that representatives should “refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country.”* Do you agree or disagree with this claim?
   - What alternative systems of representation were considered by the Founders?
   - What alternative systems of representation, if any, should be considered in the twenty-first century?

Unit 3: How Has the Constitution Been Changed to Further the Ideals Contained in the Declaration of Independence?

1. “I do not think the United States would come to an end if we lost our power to declare an Act of Congress void. I do think the Union would be imperiled if we could not make that declaration as to the laws of the several states.”* What impact has judicial review had on federalism?
   
   ● Is judicial review a countermajoritarian practice? Please support your position.
   
   ● What limits, if any, would you place on the practice of judicial review?


2. “There is nothing I dread So much, as a Division of the Republick into two great Parties, each arranged under its Leader, and … in opposition to each other.”* What issues led to the formation of the original political parties?
   
   ● To what extent have those issues persisted in American political parties?
   
   ● What are the advantages and disadvantages of a unified or divided government?

Unit 4: How Have the Values and Principles Embodied in the Constitution Shaped American Institutions and Practices?

1. “It would be inconsistent with the Constitutional separation of the Executive & Legislative powers to let the prerogative [pardon power] be exercised by the latter.”* What were the Framers’ reasons for giving the president the pardon power, and do you agree or disagree with them?

   ● According to the Framer James Wilson, if the president abuses the pardon power, “he can be impeached and prosecuted.”** Do you agree with Wilson? Why or why not?

   ● In your opinion, what constitutes “high crimes and misdemeanors”?


2. Members of Congress are not only legislators but they “are also inquisitorial and should meet frequently to inspect the conduct of the public Officers.”* How effectively do you believe Congress has used its investigatory power?

   ● Explain the differences, if any, between Congress’s power to investigate and the power of oversight. Which power, in your opinion, is more significant?

   ● How effectively do you believe Congress has used its oversight powers?

Unit 5: What Rights Does the Bill of Rights Protect?

1. A result of the decision in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* is that “any parent/guardian … can refuse to let their child go to school beyond the 8th grade or learn about a subject by saying it’s against their religious beliefs.”* Do you agree or disagree with this result of the decision? Why or why not?

   ● What words, if any, are found in the U.S. Constitution or in state constitutions that protect the right to an education?

   ● How have courts balanced religious beliefs with other rights?


2. “A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference.”* Do you agree or disagree with Thomas Jefferson?

   ● What are the advantages and disadvantages of a national bill of rights as compared to state bills of rights?

   ● What are the differences between positive and negative rights, and which are more important to the preservation of liberty?

UNIT 6: What Challenges Might Face American Constitutional Democracy in the Twenty-first Century?

1. Thomas Hobbes noted that life in a state of nature is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.”* How has the human condition changed over time, and how is that change reflected in our expectations of government?

   - Should the principles of natural rights or classical republicanism guide policy changes designed to improve the condition of all people?
   - What are the most pressing domestic and global challenges facing Americans today and in the future? What policies can you suggest to address them?


2. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence … by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”* Do you agree or disagree? Why?

   - What disagreements did the Founders have about a standing army, and are they relevant today?
   - To what extent should there be an international U.S. military presence?