



# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT



## LESSON 23

### OUTLINE

#### CONSTITUTION OVERVIEW 3 OF 4

##### Overview of the Articles of the U.S. Constitution

- **Article I: The Legislative Branch**

- Establishes Congress as a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives.
- Explanation of "bicameral" versus "unicameral" houses.
- Purpose of Congress: Originally, the Senate represented the states, while the House represented the people.
- The federal government's primary role: handling external affairs (according to Federalist 45 by James Madison).

- **Article II: The Executive Branch**

- Defines the powers and responsibilities of the President.
- Limited Powers: The article allocates fewer powers to the President compared to Congress.
- Much of Article II focuses on the legislative role in shaping the executive branch and outlining qualifications for the presidency.

- **Article III: The Judicial Branch**

- Establishes the judicial branch as the least powerful of the three branches.
- Judiciary is unelected and its power is limited; it can be checked by the legislative branch through impeachment.
- Separation of powers ensures that the judiciary cannot interfere with legislative or executive powers.

- **Article IV: States' Relations**

- Governs the relationship between states and how they interact within the Union.
- Ensures states "stay in their lane" and outlines the limits of state authority when approaching federal powers.
- Discusses how states join the Union and work together.



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- **Article V: Amending the Constitution**

- Defines the process for amending the Constitution.
- Purpose of Amendments: The founders believed amendments should be rare and primarily to reclaim power for the states and people as society becomes more liberty-minded.
- Modern misconceptions about Article V: Amending the Constitution is not a solution for controlling an out-of-control government.

- **Article VI: Federal Responsibilities and the Supremacy Clause**

- Clause 1: Transfers existing debts to the new union.
- Clause 2: The Supremacy Clause, which establishes the Constitution and federal laws as the supreme law of the land, binding on the states.
- Clause 3: Requires all federal officeholders to take an oath to support the Constitution.

- **Article VII: Ratification of the Constitution**

- Defines the process for adopting the Constitution.
- Requires ratification by nine states for the Constitution to become law, establishing that the states are the creators of the Constitution, not the people through a democratic vote.
- The eventual ratification by all thirteen states (excluding Quebec) created the more perfect union and made the Constitution the supreme law of the land.



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##### Conclusion

- **Article I** establishes a bicameral Congress, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and details the legislative branch's role. Congress was designed to represent the states in foreign affairs.
- **Article II** defines the limited powers of the President and the executive branch. Much of it focuses on the role of the legislative branch in shaping the presidency.
- **Article III** creates the judicial branch, which was intended to be the weakest branch, with limited powers and no elected officials.
- **Article IV** focuses on the states, how they interact within the union, and the limits of their authority relative to the federal government.
- **Article V** outlines the process for amending the Constitution. The founders believed amendments should be rare and primarily aimed at returning power to the states and the people.
- **Article VI** includes the Supremacy Clause, declaring the Constitution and federal laws as the supreme law of the land, and requires federal officials to take an oath to uphold the Constitution.
- **Article VII** describes the ratification process, requiring nine states to adopt the Constitution, affirming that the states are the creators of the Constitution.



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#### Discussion/essay questions

1. Article I - Bicameral Congress:

- Why did the founders create a bicameral Congress with both the House of Representatives and the Senate? How do their roles differ in representing the people and the states?

2. Purpose of Congress and Federalism:

- What was the original intent of Congress in relation to foreign affairs, as explained in Federalist 45 by James Madison? How does this affect the relationship between the federal government and the states?

3. Article II - The Executive Branch:

- Why did the founders limit the powers of the President in comparison to Congress? What is the significance of the executive branch having fewer powers outlined in the Constitution?

4. Article III - Judicial Branch:

- Why was the judicial branch designed to be the least powerful branch of the federal government? How does this structure support the concept of checks and balances?

5. Article IV - States' Relations:

- What role does Article IV play in defining the relationship between the states and the federal government? How does it ensure that states "stay in their lane"?

6. Article V - Amending the Constitution:

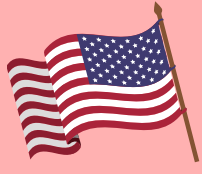
- What were the founders' views on amending the Constitution, and why did they believe amendments should be rare? How does this compare to the modern view of constitutional amendments?

7. Article VII - Ratification of the Constitution:

- Why does Article VII emphasize that the Constitution was created by the states, not the people? What does this reveal about the process of ratification and the role of the states in shaping the Constitution?

8. Separation of Powers:

- How does the separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches help protect individual liberty and prevent the concentration of power in one branch?



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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice

1. What does Article I of the U.S. Constitution establish?
  - A) The executive branch
  - B) The judicial branch
  - C) The legislative branch (Congress)
  - D) The supremacy of federal laws over state laws
2. What is the significance of a bicameral Congress?
  - A) It creates two separate governments for the states
  - B) It divides Congress into the House of Representatives and the Senate, representing the people and the states, respectively
  - C) It allows states to opt out of the federal government
  - D) It ensures that laws are passed by popular vote only
3. According to Federalist 45, what is the primary purpose of the federal government?
  - A) Regulating domestic affairs
  - B) Controlling state governments
  - C) Representing the states in foreign affairs
  - D) Ensuring equal distribution of wealth among states
4. In comparison to Article I, why is Article II shorter?
  - A) The President has limited and specifically defined powers
  - B) The President is more powerful than Congress
  - C) The Constitution originally didn't provide for a President
  - D) Article II was added after the ratification of the Constitution
5. What is the main reason the judicial branch was designed to be the least powerful?
  - A) Because it does not have an enforcement role
  - B) The judiciary consists of elected officials
  - C) It operates independently of checks and balances
  - D) Judges serve shorter terms than legislators



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6. What does Article IV of the Constitution focus on?
  - A) Amending the Constitution
  - B) The powers of the judicial branch
  - C) Relations between the states and how they interact within the union
  - D) The responsibilities of the President
  
7. What is the purpose of Article V of the Constitution?
  - A) Establishes the judicial review process
  - B) Describes the process for amending the Constitution
  - C) Defines the roles of state governments
  - D) Details the powers of the President
  
8. What does the Supremacy Clause in Article VI state?
  - A) State laws are superior to federal laws
  - B) The President has supreme authority over Congress
  - C) The Constitution, federal laws, and treaties are the supreme law of the land
  - D) Judicial decisions override legislative actions
  
9. What does Article VII of the Constitution deal with?
  - A) The creation of new states
  - B) The ratification process for the Constitution
  - C) The establishment of the Supreme Court
  - D) The amendment process for the Constitution
  
10. Why did the founders believe the Constitution should not be frequently amended?
  - A) They believed the original document was perfect and needed no changes
  - B) Amendments should be used to limit the federal government's power over time
  - C) The process of amending the Constitution was too complicated
  - D) They intended for the Constitution to be a temporary document



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#### ANSWER KEY

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. A
6. C
7. B
8. C
9. B
10. B