

Module 2: The Constitution Topic 4 Content: The Principles

Introduction



Glover Mint: There are several fundamental principles contained within the United States Constitution. This episode will serve as a review of these fundamental principles. Jamie Madson joins us in the studio with *The Constitutional Connection*.

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The Constitutional Connection



Jamie Madson: Thank you Glover. The fundamental principles contained within the Constitution of the United States include the following:

- consent of the governed,
- limited government,
- separation of powers,
- checks and balances,
- federalism, and
- rule of law.

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Consent of the Governed

The graphic is divided into two main sections. On the left, a dark grey vertical bar contains six yellow-outlined rectangular boxes, each containing a principle of the Constitution. The top box, 'Consent of the Governed', is highlighted with a white border. The other boxes are 'Limited Government', 'Separation of Powers', 'Checks and Balances', 'Federalism', and 'Rule of Law'. On the right, a yellow header bar contains the title 'Consent of the Governed'. Below this is a portrait of Thomas Hobbes on the left and John Locke on the right. Below the portraits is a light grey box containing a bulleted list of four points.

- The Constitution is a social contract.
- A government's power comes from the consent of the governed.
- This idea was supported by the thinkers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.
- Was a revolutionary idea in its time.

Jamie Madson: The U.S. Constitution is a social contract. This means that one of the fundamental principles behind it is the idea that a government's power comes from the consent of the governed. This is an idea that was supported by the thinkers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. The belief that governments could only gain power with the permission of the people was a revolutionary idea in an age where many governments assumed their power based on force or divine right.

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Limited Government

Consent of the Governed

Limited Government


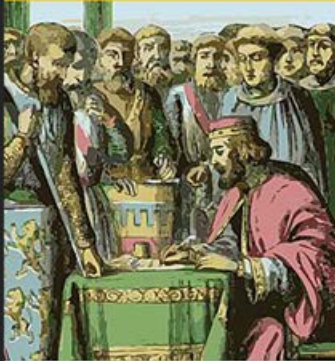
Separation of Powers

Checks and Balances

Federalism

Rule of Law

Limited Government



- The principle of limited government can be traced back to older documents, like the Magna Carta.
- No ruler or ruling body is absolute in its power.
- Governments are subjected to some form of limitation or restriction.

Jamie Madson: The principle of limited government was not introduced in the Constitution. The Magna Carta was an attempt by the British nobility to limit the absolute power of the King in 1215. The basic idea behind limited government is that no ruler or ruling body is absolute in its power, but is instead subjected to some form of limitation or restriction.

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Separation of Powers

Separation of Powers

- Essential powers of government should be separated from each other.
- This idea was supported by Montesquieu.
- The Constitution creates three separate branches of government.
- Each branch of government represents a power outlined by Montesquieu.

Jamie Madson: The idea that the essential powers of government should be separated from each other in order to prevent corruption was supported by the European philosopher Montesquieu. He argued that any consolidation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers could lead to an abuse of power. The Founding Fathers were well aware of this concept while drafting the Constitution and created three separate branches of government, each representing one of the government powers outlined by Montesquieu. The powers of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches are detailed in Articles I, II, and III respectively.

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Checks and Balances

The graphic is divided into two main sections. On the left, a dark grey vertical bar contains a list of six principles in white text, each enclosed in a light grey rectangular box. From top to bottom, the principles are: 'Consent of the Governed', 'Limited Government', 'Separation of Powers', 'Checks and Balances', 'Federalism', and 'Rule of Law'. The 'Federalism' and 'Rule of Law' boxes are highlighted with a yellow border. On the right, a yellow header bar contains the title 'Checks and Balances'. Below this is a dark grey area featuring a yellow triangle. The top vertex of the triangle is labeled 'Legislative', the bottom-left vertex is labeled 'Executive', and the bottom-right vertex is labeled 'Judicial'. Below the triangle, a light grey area contains a bulleted list of three points explaining the purpose of the three-branch system.

Checks and Balances

Legislative

Executive **Judicial**

- Separating the government into three branches prevents the government from gaining too much power.
- The framers wanted to prevent one branch from becoming too powerful.
- Each branch of government exercises some control over the other two.

Jamie Madson: The goal of separating government into legislative, executive, and judicial branches is to prevent the government from gaining too much power. The framers were also concerned that one of these branches might become too powerful. To prevent this, each of these branches exercises some control over the other two. This creates a system of checks and balances that prevents one branch from dominating the other two.

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Federalism

The graphic is divided into two main sections. On the left, a dark grey vertical bar contains six white rectangular boxes, each with a principle of government. From top to bottom, they are: 'Consent of the Governed', 'Limited Government', 'Separation of Powers', 'Checks and Balances', 'Federalism', and 'Rule of Law'. The 'Rule of Law' box is highlighted with a yellow border. On the right, a yellow header bar contains the word 'Federalism' in bold black text. Below this is a historical illustration of three men in 18th-century attire. Below the illustration, a light grey box contains three bullet points.

Federalism

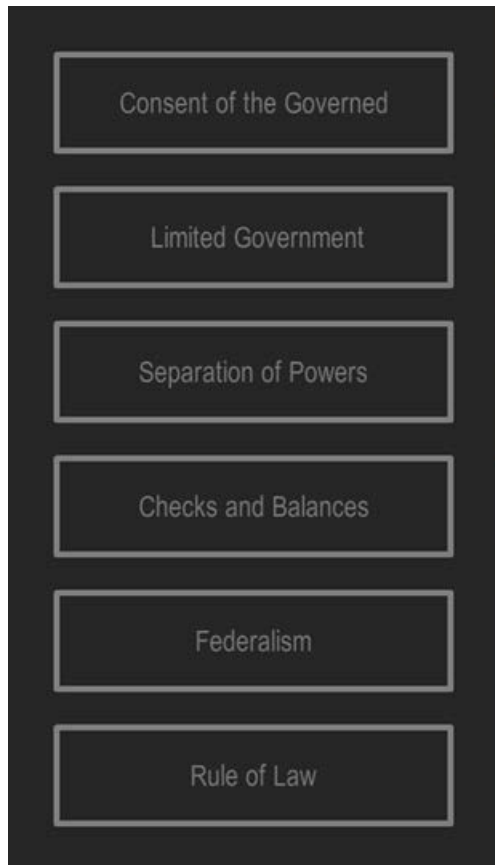
- The Founding Fathers sought a balance of national and regional government power.
- They attempted and failed to create a confederal government with the Articles of Confederation.
- The Constitution organizes powers into a federal system of government.

Jamie Madson: After experiencing oppressive rule under England's unitary system of government, the Founding Fathers sought a balance of power between the national and regional governments. They attempted to create a confederal government with the Articles of Confederation, which failed because the national government was too weak to be effective. The U.S. Constitution organizes powers into a federal system of government, with the powers divided between the national government and the state governments.


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Rule of Law



Rule of Law



- The Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
- This is clearly stated in Article VI.
- All individuals are accountable to the law and required to obey it.
- This idea can be traced back to the English Petition of Right.



Jamie Madson: The American government operates under the premise that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land. This principle is clearly stated in Article VI. This means that all individuals are accountable to the law and required to obey it. This philosophy can be traced all the way back to English Petition of Right, which made it so that everyone, including the monarch, was required to follow the laws of the land.

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Ending of Episode



Glover Mint: The drafters of the Constitution pulled their inspiration from many sources, including historical English documents, colonial legislation, and the influential philosophers of the day. Thank you for joining us today on WUSG News.