INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

The Constitution of the United States is without question the most important legal document in the American pantheon. It establishes the basic structures of our system, establishes its ground rules, and serves as the source of reference for constitutionally acceptable behavior and policies. Even as a legal document, however, its meaning and application have been a constant source of controversy (with the ultimate arbiter being the Supreme Court of the United States). But the Constitution is far more than a mere legal document. Americans have grafted onto it political, economic, social, and even intellectual meanings that go to the heart of American life. As far back as the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that “Scarcely any question arises in the United States which does not become, sooner or later, a subject of judicial debate.” In particular, these debates are over the meaning and intent of Constitutional provisions.

Most controversies that reference the Constitution must inevitably grapple with an interpretation of its origins and founding. While most Americans view the Constitution as a sacred text, what is somewhat less known is the fact that its creation was subject to its own set of legal, political, economic, social, and intellectual disagreements that shaped its ultimate form. An understanding of the historical complexities and nuances related to the founding of the American Republic can provide an important baseline for our own interpretations of this central document.

This course will address such matters with some sophistication and depth. At base, however, this is a leadership course. Our task will be to explore leadership themes at several levels. First, we will attempt to glean from the events and debates surrounding the making of the Constitution the underlying assumptions of the Framers and their opponents. This is critical to the study of leadership because from one’s diagnosis of the problem as well as one’s assumptions and premises flow important conclusions. For example, diagnosing the challenge facing America in the 1780s as either the result of too much democracy, or, on the other side, the oppressive practices of an elite class, will clearly shape one’s proposed solutions. So, too, assumptions about whether the people are capable of governing, who should lead, and the like, will structure one’s “leadership solutions.” In addition, differences in the underlying priorities of basic values have a similar impact.
A second level of leadership analysis will utilize the framing of the Constitution as a leadership case study. Historical case studies are often ideal vehicles for studying the dynamics of the process because much of the “chaff” (i.e., the confusions and uncertainties, the press of day-to-day activities, etc.) which surrounds all leadership decisions has been mercifully blown away by the passage of time, and we are better able to see the “wheat” (the more important influences and causative factors). The framing of the Constitution is especially rich in leadership insights because it combines several different leadership scenarios. The years prior to the Philadelphia Convention were (or were perceived to be, at any rate) a time of crisis for the political, economic, and social system. How these macro leadership challenges were negotiated (differently by different groups, I may add) provides much fodder for our discussions. The Convention itself introduces a different sort of leadership discussion. In addition to tracing the members’ proposed solutions to the problems facing America (as they diagnosed them), there is also the opportunity to reflect on small (55 members or fewer) group processes. Then, when we turn to the ratification debates and the Bill of Rights, we will explore strategies and processes related to more formal “campaigns,” for and against.

Finally, as with any course in the Jepson School, we will want to reflect on what, if any, lessons can be extrapolated from our studies and discussions. At the very least, we should be more informed citizens as we witness, and take part in, the debates about our core institutions and values. Hopefully, our dialogue and approach will also lead to a more conscious approach to the leadership implications of our activities as well, to include more effective participation in our political processes. Most important of all, it is the goal of this course to get you to re-think and to analyze critically your own assumptions and premises. Make no mistake: you are not necessarily expected to change your thinking, but in the traditions of a good liberal arts course you should at least challenge your accepted ways of seeing the world.

TEXTS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading Assignments

The reading assignments for each class period appear in the following pages. All of our work this semester will be centered around these reading assignments. Since the course will proceed with as much discussion and other proactive classroom activities as possible—and with as little lecturing as I can get away with—it is IMPERATIVE that you complete the assigned readings prior to each class. Failure to come to class prepared will adversely affect your participation grade.

Class Participation/Attendance

The heart and soul of this course will be the active participation of all members of the class. You will be expected to attend all class meetings, and to enlighten us with your active participation. Attendance will be recorded. Unless you have a legitimate reason for being absent (which must be communicated to the instructor prior to class), your class participation grade will be adversely affected.

While I have an appreciation for the educational possibilities of personal computers and other electronic devices in the classroom, my experience has been less satisfying. Use of electronic devices during class sessions is prohibited unless a convincing rationale is presented to and accepted by the instructor.

“Writing-to-Learn” Activities

Often during the term you will be asked to reflect thoughtfully upon our readings in an informal written format. Usually this will take the form of “reaction papers.” These will be one page or less, and not formal. Rather, you will simply be asked to engage something in the readings that strikes you as interesting, something with which you disagree, etc. Such written reflections upon the readings and issues arising from them will serve as the basis for class discussion. They will be handed in at the opening of most class periods and will form a portion of the evaluation of your class participation. On occasion, there may be (ungraded) in-class opportunities to address specific issues as a prelude to class debate.

Individual Writing Assignment

Linked to the group project (below) there will be an individual paper assignment. Each student will be assigned a topic or theme that we have been tracing during the course of the term. In this paper assignment you will be asked to draw from our assigned texts, and especially our assigned “primary” sources—The Federalist Papers and The Anti-Federalist Papers—in order to develop a thorough argument. Some students will be asked to take the “Federalist” stance on the
assigned issue; others will develop the “Anti-Federalist” point of view. This paper will make you an “expert” on this topic during the upcoming Ratifying Convention (see below). The paper will be 8-10 pages in length and conform to the usages of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Details will be forthcoming.

Group Project

Our study of the making of the Constitution will culminate in a two-day “ratifying convention” in which the pros and cons of the proposed Constitution will be thrashed out. The class will be divided into four groups—two Federalist groups and two Anti-Federalist groups. Each group will meet and bring together the outlines (see below) of the group members’ respective individual papers and will stitch together an organized “brief” of their upcoming argument. This “brief” in itself will be short (no more than 2-3 pages), but it is intended to give the other participants due notice of the arguments to be presented. The briefs will be shared prior to the Convention. Again, more details will be forthcoming.

Examinations

There will be two examinations in this class: a midterm and a final. You will be expected to write well-organized, insightful, analytical, and substantive essays in response to the questions posed. The expectations will be discussed more thoroughly at a later date.

GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group project</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THEMES AND ASSIGNMENTS

[NOTE: The assigned readings must be completed prior to the designated class period. Because the course of class discussion is unpredictable, we may fall behind the printed syllabus. When needed, the instructor will indicate the necessary revisions to the schedule.]
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

August 22   No Assignment

II. THE PERCEPTION OF THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

A. The Federalist Perception

August 24  
Assignment:  
Wood, *Creation*, Chap. 1, pp. 3-45

August 29  
Assignment:  

August 31  
Assignment:  
Wood, *Creation*, Chap. 4, pp. 125-161  
Virginia Constitution of 1776 (to be distributed)

September 5  
Assignment:  
Wood, *Creation*, Chaps. 5-6, pp. 162-238, 254-255

September 7  
Assignment:  
Wood, *Creation*  
Chap. 7, pp. 259-262, 266, 268-270, 275-276, 281-283, 290  
Chap. 8, pp. 306-309, 318, 328-329, 336-338, 342-343  
Chap. 9, pp. 344-389

September 12  
Assignment:  

B. The Anti-Federalist Perception

September 14  
Assignment:  
Holton, *Unruly Americans*, Chaps. 1-4, pp. 21-82

September 19  
Assignment:
Holton, *Unruly Americans*, Chaps. 5-7, pp. 85-123

September 21
Assignment:
Holton, *Unruly Americans*, Chaps. 8-10, pp. 127-176

### III. THE CONSTITUTION

September 26
Assignment:
Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men*, Chaps. 1-5, pp. 3-104

September 28
Assignment:
Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men*, Chaps. 6-10, pp. 105-199

October 3
Assignment:

October 5
Assignment:
Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men*, Chaps. 16-19, pp. 296-368

October 10
**FALL BREAK**

October 12
Assignment:

### IV. RATIFICATION

#### A. The Federalist Argument

October 17
Assignment:
Wood, *Creation*, Chap. 13, pp. 519-564

#### B. The Anti-Federalist Argument

October 19
Assignment:
Main, *Anti-federalists*, Chaps. 1-3, pp. 1-71

October 24

**NO CLASS**

October 26

**MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

October 31

**Assignment:**
Main, *Anti-federalists*, Chaps. 4-5, pp. 72-118

November 2

**Assignment:**
Main, *Anti-federalists*, Chaps. 6-8, pp. 119-186

November 7

**Assignment:**
Wood, *Creation*, Chap. 13, pp. 519-523, 526-529, 536-538, 541 (review)

C. **The Process of Ratification**

November 9

**Assignment:**
Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men*, Chaps. 20-21, pp. 369-411

**INDIVIDUAL PAPER OUTLINES DUE**

November 13 [MONDAY]

**CONVENTION BRIEFS MUST BE SHARED WITH PEERS AND INSTRUCTOR. 5 P.M.**

November 14

**RATIFICATION DEBATE**

November 16

**RATIFICATION DEBATE**

V. **THE BILL OF RIGHTS**

November 21

**Assignment:**
November 23
THANKSGIVING

November 28
Assignment:
Goldwin, *Parchment*, Part III, pp. 105-184

VI. CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

November 30
Assignment:
Wood, *Creation*, Chap. 15, pp. 593-615
Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men*, Epilogue, pp. 412-423

INDIVIDUAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 2 AT 5 P.M.

FINAL EXAMINATION TBA