

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period \_\_\_\_\_

**AP Government and Politics**

**THE US CONSTITUTION STUDY GUIDE**

Available at: [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org)

Directions: Read the US Constitution and complete the following questions directly on this handout.

**PART I: THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE CONSTITUTION**

1. Read each article of the Constitution. Summarize the general purpose or subject of each article in one sentence in the chart below.

Article I	
Article II	
Article III	
Article IV	
Article V	
Article VI	

Article VII	

2. Compare Article I with Article II. Which article is longer and more detailed?
3. Identify two powers denied from Congress in the Constitution.
4. How does the House of Representatives determine the rules of proceedings (the ability to have debates, amendments, etc.)
5. Identify two powers the Constitution prohibits from the States.
6. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for members of the House?
7. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for members of the Senate?
8. What eligibility requirements does the Constitution establish for the President?
9. The powers of the Constitution that are specifically granted to the branches of government or to office holders are called *expressed* powers.
  - a. Identify two expressed powers of the president.
  - b. What are the express powers of the vice president?
  - c. Identify two expressed powers of Congress.
10. According to the principle of checks and balances, each branch of the government must have control over the other branches. Look at the first three articles of the Constitution and identify one of each type of checks and balances. Indicate where each power is listed in the Constitution.
  - a. A power that the executive branch has over the legislative branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:
  - b. A power that the executive branch holds over the judicial branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:

- c. A power that the legislative branch holds over the executive branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:
  - d. A power that the legislative branch holds over the judicial branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:
  - e. A power that the judicial branch holds over the executive branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:
  - f. A power that the judicial branch holds over the legislative branch:  
This can be found in what article/section of the Constitution:
11. The *court of original jurisdiction* is the first court that hears a case. *Appellate courts* hear cases on appeal from lower courts. Although the Supreme Court functions primarily as an appellate court, it is the courts of original jurisdiction in certain kinds of cases. What are those?
12. According to Article I of the Constitution, who has the power to declare war?
13. What power does the Constitution give the President in the area of war?

## **PART II IMPORTANT CLAUSES**

1. Where is the "Commerce Clause" and what does it say?
2. Where is the "Necessary and Proper Clause" and what does it say?
3. Where is the "Supremacy Clause" and what does it say?
4. How might these clauses above have impacted the power of the federal government?
5. Where is the habeas corpus clause and what does it say?
6. What is habeas corpus?
7. Where are bills of attainders discussed and what does it say?
8. What is a bill of attainder?
9. Where are ex post facto laws discussed and what does it say?
10. What is an ex post facto law?
11. Where is the full faith and credit clause and what does it say?
12. There are two "due process" clauses. Where are they? What does "due process" of law imply?
13. Where is the "equal protection clause"? What does this imply?

## **PART III. MAJORITY AND SUPERMAJORITY**

The Constitution requires a simple majority for some actions and a supermajority for others. A simple majority means more than half, while supermajority requirements can involve a 2/3 majority or a 3/4 majority. Most elections in the United States require a plurality, or the most votes, but not necessarily a majority.

1.
  - a. What bodies have the power to override a presidential veto?
  - b. What margin is required to override a presidential veto?
  - c. Where in the Constitution is the veto power described?
  
2.
  - a. What body has the power to ratify treaties?
  - b. What margin is required to ratify treaties?
  - c. Where in the Constitution is the ratification power described?
  
3. *To impeach* means “to bring charges against” or “to indict”.
  - a. What body has the power to impeach the president?
  - b. What vote is required to impeach?
  - c. What is the standard for impeachment?
  - d. Where in the Constitution is the impeachment power described?
  
4.
  - a. If no candidate for the presidency wins a simple majority of the total number of electoral votes, what body has the power to choose the president?
  - b. What margin is required to choose the president?
  - c. Where in the Constitution is the Electoral College described? (Hint: there are two parts)
  
5. The Constitution specifies a three-fourths majority for just one process. What?
  
5. The Constitution has comparatively little to say about the structure and composition of the Supreme Court. Identify two aspects of the Court’s structure and composition that the Constitution does not specify. (The Constitution does specify these two basic aspects of structure and composition for the other two branches).
  
6. What are two ways that amendments to the Constitution can be proposed?
  
7. What are two ways that amendments to the Constitution can be ratified?

#### **Part IV. THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Some parts of the Constitution require a simple majority, others a supermajority, while still others protect citizens from the will of the majority. The first ten amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights protect citizens from the will of the majority. In other words, no majority could vote to take these rights away. Read each amendment to the Constitution and answer the questions below.

1. Outline the general purpose of all 27 Amendments.

Amendment 1	
Amendment 2	
Amendment 3	
Amendment 4	
Amendment 5	
Amendment 6	
Amendment 7	
Amendment 8	
Amendment 9	
Amendment 10	
Amendment 11	
Amendment 12	

Amendment 13	
Amendment 14	
Amendment 15	
Amendment 16	
Amendment 17	
Amendment 18	
Amendment 19	
Amendment 20	
Amendment 21	
Amendment 22	
Amendment 23	
Amendment 24	
Amendment 25	
Amendment 26	
Amendment 27	

2. Which amendment(s) of the Constitution protect the rights of women?
3. Which amendment (s) of the Constitution protect the rights of African Americans?
4. How were US Senators chosen before the Seventeenth Amendment?
5. The Twenty-Fifth Amendment describes the sequence of events that would install the vice president as acting president against the will of the president. Outline that sequence of events.