AP Gov Foundational Documents

AP U.S. Government · 40 cards

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QUESTION	ANSWER
How many foundational documents does the AP U.S. Government course require from 2026-27?	13. Added in fall 2026: Emancipation Proclamation, Federalist No. 39, Gettysburg Address, Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations.
In which free-response question must you cite a foundational document as evidence?	The argument essay. Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the foundational documents listed in the prompt.
Who was the main drafter of the Declaration of Independence?	Thomas Jefferson, helped by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. Adopted on July 4, 1776.
Which unalienable rights does the Declaration of Independence name?	“Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” It restates John Locke's philosophy of natural rights.
Which phrase of the Declaration of Independence grounds popular sovereignty?	Governments derive “their just powers from the consent of the governed.” The people may alter or abolish a government that destroys their rights.
In which year were the Articles of Confederation ratified?	1781 (drafted in 1777). The first national government: a “firm league of friendship” among sovereign states.
How was Congress organized under the Articles of Confederation?	One house, one vote per state. Major laws needed 9 of 13 states; amendments needed all 13.
Which powers did the national government lack under the Articles of Confederation?	No executive, no national courts, no power to tax or to regulate interstate commerce. Nor the exclusive power to coin money.

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Which event of 1786-1787 exposed the military weakness of the Articles of Confederation?	Shays' Rebellion, an uprising of indebted Massachusetts farmers. Congress had no army to put it down, which pushed the call for a stronger government.
When was the U.S. Constitution signed?	September 17, 1787, at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. Ratified in 1788, once nine states had approved it.
When was the Bill of Rights ratified, and why was it added?	1791: the first ten amendments. Promised to win over Anti-Federalists who feared a government without listed rights.
Which four principles in the Constitution keep government limited, according to the AP course?	Separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, republicanism.
Who wrote Federalist No. 10, and when was it published?	James Madison, under the pen name Publius, in November 1787. Part of the essays urging New York to ratify the Constitution.
How does Federalist No. 10 define a faction?	A group of citizens, majority or minority, united by a common passion or interest. That interest goes against the rights of others or the good of the community.
What remedy for faction does Federalist No. 10 propose?	Control its effects, not its causes, through a large republic run by elected representatives. Many competing factions make it hard for one majority to oppress the rest.
According to Federalist No. 10, what is the most common and durable source of factions?	“The various and unequal distribution of property.” Madison holds that the causes of faction are “sown in the nature of man.”
Who is Brutus, author of Brutus No. 1?	An Anti-Federalist pen name, long attributed to Robert Yates; some historians now credit Melancton Smith. The essay appeared in October 1787, addressed to the citizens of New York.

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What is the main argument of Brutus No. 1 about the size of the country?	A free republic cannot work over so large a territory with such varied interests. Too few representatives, too far from the people: the direct answer to Federalist No. 10.
Which clauses of the Constitution does Brutus No. 1 attack?	The Necessary and Proper Clause and the Supremacy Clause, with the power to tax. Together, he warns, they would let the national government absorb the states.
Who wrote Federalist No. 39, and when?	James Madison, in January 1788. Title: “Conformity of the Plan to Republican Principles.”
How does Federalist No. 39 define a republic?	A government that derives all its powers, directly or indirectly, from the people. Run by officials who serve for a limited time or during good behavior.
Is the Constitution national or federal, according to Federalist No. 39?	“Neither a national nor a federal Constitution, but a composition of both.” The House represents the people (national), the Senate represents the states (federal).
What is the main argument of Federalist No. 51?	Separation of powers and checks and balances let each branch resist the others. Madison, February 1788: “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”
Complete Madison in Federalist No. 51: “If men were angels…”	“…no government would be necessary.” Since men are not angels, government must be able to control itself.
What is the “double security” for rights in Federalist No. 51?	Power is divided between two governments, national and state, then among separate branches within each. Federalism adds a second layer to separation of powers.
What kind of executive does Federalist No. 70 defend?	A single, energetic president rather than a council. Hamilton, March 1788: unity brings decision, speed and clear accountability.

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Complete Hamilton in Federalist No. 70: “Energy in the executive is…”	“…a leading character in the definition of good government.” He ties it to defense against foreign attacks and to the steady administration of the laws.
Why does Federalist No. 78 call the judiciary the least dangerous branch?	It has “neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment.” Hamilton: no control of the sword (executive) or the purse (Congress).
Which tenure for federal judges does Federalist No. 78 defend?	Appointment for life, “during good behavior.” Independence from elections lets judges protect the Constitution against the other branches.
Which power of the courts, later established in Marbury v. Madison (1803), does Federalist No. 78 defend?	Judicial review: courts can declare void any law contrary to the Constitution. The Constitution, the will of the people, outranks an ordinary law.
When did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation, and whom did it free?	January 1, 1863: enslaved people in the states in rebellion. It did not apply to the loyal border states.
On which presidential power did Lincoln base the Emancipation Proclamation?	His power as commander in chief, as a war measure against the rebellion. A course example of how presidents justify the use of their powers.
Which amendment made the abolition of slavery permanent after the Emancipation Proclamation?	The Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in 1865. The start of civil rights for the formerly enslaved.
When and where did Lincoln deliver the Gettysburg Address?	November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the soldiers' cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It opens with “Four score and seven years ago.”
Which closing words of the Gettysburg Address express popular sovereignty?	“…government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” It also restates that the nation is dedicated to the proposition that “all men are created equal.”

QUESTION	ANSWER
Who wrote The Wealth of Nations, and when?	Adam Smith, Scottish economist and philosopher, in 1776. The same year as the Declaration of Independence.
Which core value of U.S. political culture does The Wealth of Nations illustrate in the AP course?	Free enterprise: self-interest and competition allocate resources efficiently, with limited regulation. “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner.”
When and why did Martin Luther King Jr. write the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”?	April 1963, jailed after nonviolent protests against segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. An open reply to eight white Alabama clergymen who had criticized the protests.
How does the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” justify breaking a law?	An unjust law, one that degrades people or is imposed on a minority without a voice, need not be obeyed. It must be broken openly and nonviolently, accepting the penalty: civil disobedience.
In which AP Gov topic is the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” named as a required document?	Topic 3.10, Social Movements and Equal Protection (Unit 3). An example of how citizens use protest and civil disobedience to change policy.