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| Document | Author | Main Points |
| Declaration of Independence | Thomas Jefferson (primary)   * Authorized by Second Continental Congress | * Declared Independence from Britain * Identified Natural Rights- Life, Liberty, Pursuit of Happiness and govt’s job to protect them * Influenced heavily by John Locke   + Consent of the Governed   + Limited Government   + Social Contract Theory |
| Articles of Confederation | John Dickinson   * Authorized by Second Continental Congress | * Confederal Government; Weak- Congress not given many powers * Unicameral Legislature   + Each State = 1 vote   + 2-7 Delegates * No Executive/ No Judicial |
| U.S. Constitution | Written by Constitutional Convention | * Outlines the structure of the government * Three branches of government * Relationships between states * Amendment process? * 27 Amendments (including the Bill of Rights) |
| Federalist #10 | James Madison  Federalist Papers | * Factions are inevitable * Large Republic is the best form of government to address factions |
| Federalist #51 | Madison or Hamilton  Federalist Papers | * Power is divided between three branches of government * Power is divided between national/ state government * Checks and Balances * All keep power from becoming too centralized- prevent one person/ one group from taking over the government * “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. ...” * “you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.” |
| Brutus #1 | Robert Yates  Anti- Federalist | * Constitution gives too much power to central government   + Necessary and Proper Clause   + Supremacy Clause * Can do away with State Governments * Standing Army in peacetime is a destruction of liberty * Once you give up power the only way to get it back is by force- “Many instances can be produced where the people have voluntarily increased the powers of their rulers; but few, if any, in which rulers have willingly abridged their authority.” |
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| Federalist #78 | Alexander Hamilton  Federalist Papers | * discusses the power of judicial review * Argues that the federal courts have the duty to determine whether acts of Congress are constitutional and to follow the Constitution when there is inconsistency. * Hamilton viewed this as a protection against abuse of power by Congress. * “It only supposes that the power of the people is superior to both (legislative and executive); and that where the will of the legislature, declared in its statutes, stands in opposition to that of the people, declared in the Constitution, the judges ought to be governed by the latter rather than the former. |
| Federalist #70 | Alexander Hamilton  Federalist Papers | * Argues for a strong executive leader, as provided for by the Constitution, as opposed to the weak executive under the Articles of Confederation. * “energy in he executive is the leading character in the definition of good government.” |
| Letters from a Birmingham Jail | Martin Luther King | * Justice * “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. ...” * “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed” |