

What is “We the People?”

- The *We the People* curriculum is a course of instruction on the history and principles of the United States constitutional democratic republic.
 - It is part of the field of study known as *jurisprudence* – or the study of law and legal philosophy.
 - How does this course fit into the definition of *jurisprudence*?
- Goals of the American legal system:
 - Protecting basic human rights
 - Promoting fairness
 - Helping resolve conflicts
 - Promoting order and stability
 - Representing the will of the majority
 - Protecting the rights of minorities

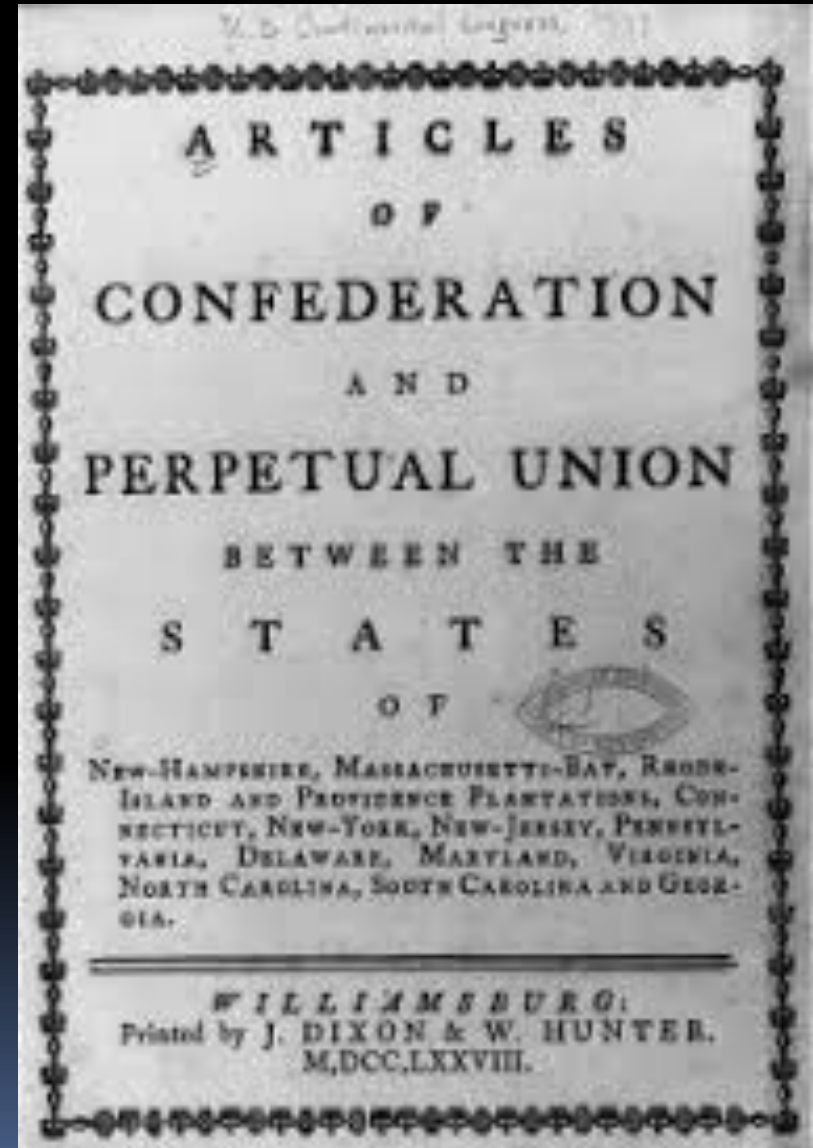
The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)

- Justification for the American Revolution
- Philosophy for government
- Thomas Jefferson – borrowed from John Locke
- Proof read by Adams and Franklin
- List of grievances against King George III
- Not the first time... colonies had warned Britain before
- Jefferson calls out abuses of British government
- a treasonous document



The Articles of Confederation (1781-1788)

- America's first written form of national government
- Strong enough for war, but too weak for peace
- No power to tax, no chief executive, no national judiciary,
- States remained sovereign
- No power to regulate commerce
- Accomplishments:
- Treaty of Paris (1783)
- Northwest Ordinance (1787)



The U.S. Constitution (1789-)

- Debate over ratification was intense – federalists vs. antifederalists.
- Established a bicameral legislature – Senate and House
- Created a chief executive with power
- Created a Supreme Court
- Limits the powers of the national government
- Longest peace keeping, middle-class-building governing document in world history
- The Bill of Rights (1791) added as a bargaining tool for ratification
- Left the institution of the “sleeping serpent” in tact



English Common Law

- A brief review of history:
 - Our judicial heritage from England
- The U.S. Constitution
 - Article I: Congress
 - Article II: Presidency
 - Article III: Supreme Court
 - Article IV: Relations Among States
 - Article V: Amendment Process
 - Article VI: Supremacy Clause
 - Article VII: Ratification Process
 - The Bill of Rights (1791)
 - Other Seventeen Amendments
- The rule of law in American society
 - The Supremacy of the Law
 - The Creation of the law
 - Examples of the rule of law



A word from Chief Justice Roberts..

- Answer the following questions as you view the interview:
 - Which president appointed Chief Justice Roberts to the Supreme Court?
 - Does the Chief Justice have any extra power?
 - Why is the “Rule of Law” so important?
 - Why did the Founding Fathers create a Supreme Court?
 - Why are there so few details in Article III of the U.S. Constitution?
 - How do cases reach the U.S. Supreme Court?
 - Explain the significance of “written opinions.”

