



CIVILDISCOURSE

An American Legacy Toolkit

■ **Module:** Principles of the Constitution

Overview

Timeframe: 3-4 days / 50-minute sessions

Podcast and Video Alignment

60-Second Civics Podcast:

- [Need for a New Constitution](#)
- [Major Issues of the Philadelphia Convention - Separation of Powers](#)
- [Major Issues of the Philadelphia Convention - Representative Government, Executive Power, and Slavery](#)
- [Forms of Government](#)
- [Ratifying the Constitution](#)

Beyond the Legacy Video:

- [Principles of the Constitution](#)

Scholar:

Dr. Lester Brooks
American History Professor Emeritus
Anne Arundel Community College

American Legacy Text & Additional Texts

Primary Sources:

- [The Articles of Confederation \(1777\)](#)

Instructional Materials:

- [Beyond the Legacy Video Guide: Principles of the Constitution](#)
- [Paideia Seminar Plan – Articles of Confederation](#)
- [Structured Academic Controversy Plan – Principles of the Constitution](#)
- [SAC Note-Taking Graphic Organizer](#)

Inquiry Question

Do our constitutional principles still matter today?

Objective

Participants will learn about the constitutional underpinnings of the [Articles of Confederation](#) and how they relate to federal vs. state powers today to engage in a civil discourse model to expand their perspectives on the issue.

Vocabulary

- “be not infringed”
- [confederation](#)
- [equipage](#)
- [garrison](#)
- [impositions](#)
- [imposts](#)
- [judicial proceedings](#)
- [jurisdiction](#)
- [magistrates](#)
- [sovereignty](#)

Facilitator Background

The [Articles of Confederation](#) were a set of rules that governed the United States from 1781 to 1789. They were created during the American Revolution and served as the country's first constitution. The main goal of the Articles was to establish a loose alliance among the thirteen original states, giving them some power to work together while also protecting their individual rights.

Under the [Articles of Confederation](#), the central government had limited authority. There was no president or executive branch to enforce laws, and Congress was the only branch of government. However, Congress had very limited powers. It could declare war, make treaties, and settle disputes between states, but it couldn't collect taxes or regulate trade. Each state had one vote in Congress, regardless of its size or population.

While the [Articles of Confederation](#) provided some unity among the states, they had many weaknesses. The central government couldn't raise an army or collect taxes, which made it difficult to defend the country and pay off debts from the Revolutionary War. Additionally, there was no national court system to settle legal disputes between states. The lack of a strong central government led to disagreements and difficulties in making decisions that affected the entire country.

These weaknesses eventually led to the [Articles of Confederation](#) being replaced by the [United States Constitution](#) in 1789. The Constitution created a stronger central government with separate branches and the ability to collect taxes and regulate trade. The [Articles of Confederation](#) taught the founding fathers important lessons about the need for balance between states' rights and a strong federal government, paving the way for the formation of the modern United States.

Additional Resources: [Articles of Confederation \(full text\)](#)

Assess & Authentically Engage

Students demonstrate their understanding of constitutional principles by making real-world connections between the context surrounding the creation of the [Articles of Confederation](#) and that of the present-day United States and the role of constitutional principles today.