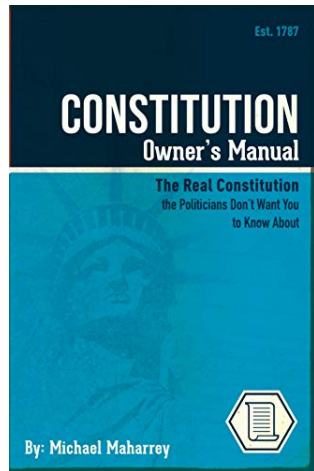


ECE American Politics
Dr. Lizzi
Summer Reading: Fall 2026



Please read *Constitution Owner's Manual* by Michael Maharrey. Written in 2020, this book serves as a thorough yet concise introduction to **originalism**, one of the main theories of how lawmakers, judges, and citizens believe the Constitution should be interpreted. It should be noted that before you start reading, the author presumes you have at least a rudimentary understanding of the Constitution. I recommend you keep a copy of the Constitution at hand while you read so you can reference it if necessary. The full text can be found nearly anywhere, but attached here is [a pdf version](#) from an old textbook that has many helpful annotations.

Looking ahead, we will compare and contrast originalism with **textualism** and **living constitutionalism**. A major element of this course will include deciding where you stand on these theories, and which is most appropriate for ensuring an American political process that is both successful and fruitful.

Make sure you check out a copy of the book from the school library before you leave for summer break.

Task: For the first day of class, prepare an **outline** that synthesizes the following questions into a controlling idea and claim. After discussing and reviewing your outlines in class the first week of school, you will then write a 3-5 page scholarly paper. Make sure you are ready with your outline on the first day of class, and that you're prepared to engage your classmates in academic discussion. Please see the attached rubric for more specific guidelines about how you will be assessed and the requirements for this assignment.

1) AUTHOR'S PURPOSE & CLAIM: What is the author's purpose in writing? Identify and evaluate Maharrey's claim, and argue whether or not he's been successful in supporting his central contention. Focus on the author's analysis of the Constitution that you find most compelling and relevant for Americans to consider in 2026. Be as critical as is appropriate – in other words, you might ask: is there anything Maharrey is not considering? What weaknesses exist in his argument, if any?

2) REINTERPRETATION OF AN ISSUE: Based in part on your response to the first question, choose **one** contemporary American political issue and reflect to what extent your position has changed (not at all, partially, significantly, etc.) as a result of the author's writing. Examples of issues you might choose include: freedom of speech, abortion, climate change, citizenship, war powers, gun rights, the Supreme Court, or something else. Why has your perspective on this changed (or not changed)? Include evidence of outside research demonstrating that you are familiar with the state of this topic as it exists in American politics in 2026.

Don't be afraid to take a bit of a risk in your interpretation and claim. The most important guideline to follow is to thoroughly explain your ideas and use evidence from the text (**page numbers are required**), current events (outside sources), and modern history.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out; my email is jlizzi@region1schools.org. Please see the rubric on the second page for more information.

CRITERIA	ACCOMPLISHED	PROFICIENT	NYP
INITIATION	<p>The author:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a clear purpose for writing that aligns with the success criteria of the assignment. This purpose is immediately evident to the reader. demonstrates a deep understanding of the target audience and establishes a voice that is appropriate for this audience. The author's voice is unique, distinct, and original. The writer's voice is consistently present throughout the piece. establishes and maintains a tone that is appropriate to the nature of the assignment, which enhances the overall quality of the writing. states an easily identifiable claim that is clear, concise, arguable, and offers new knowledge to the reader. 	<p>The author:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents a vague purpose for writing that may require a closer reading by the reader to fully grasp. demonstrates an understanding of the target audience and establishes a voice that is appropriate for this audience. The author's voice is present throughout the piece, but may be inconsistent at times. maintains the tone established in the introduction, but it may waver in places. The author alternates between informal and formal tone. the claim is recognizable, arguable, and relevant. 	<p>The author:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not identify a clear purpose, or the purpose does not match that of the assignment. does not demonstrate an understanding of the target audience. The author does not establish a voice that is consistently carried throughout the piece, or this voice is unoriginal. [Note: Using the words or ideas or others without attribution is plagiarism.] uses a tone that is not appropriate for the audience and/or purpose for writing. The tone is offensive, or disrespectful to the subject matter or audience. does not put forth a recognizable claim, or is irrelevant, inaccurate, or a statement of fact.
SUPPORT	<p>The work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a substantial amount of well-researched, relevant, and detailed evidence to support the claim. is based on an exceptionable variety of credible sources from which conclusions are drawn. features insightful commentary on the sources which effectively strengthens the arguments presented. 	<p>The work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains adequate research and somewhat relevant evidence that support the claim. is based on a variety of credible sources. features occasional commentary on the sources that strengthens the arguments presented. includes citations, when 	<p>The work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains little to no research or relevant evidence to support the claim. is based on minimal sources, and/or the sources included are not credible. features little to no commentary on the sources, which does not strengthen the arguments presented. includes no or insufficient

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes citations, when necessary, in the style appropriate for the assignment and course. No errors in formatting. 	necessary, that are in the style appropriate for assignment and course. There may be a few problems with formatting.	citations , or there are major problems with formatting. [This is plagiarism.]
EXPRESSION	<p>The work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is exceptionally well-written and purposely organized, making it engaging and easy for the reader to understand. uses exacting word choice and varying sentence structure that furthers the reader's understanding. is free of the distractions caused by grammatical or spelling errors. 	<p>The work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is generally understandable and adequately organized, but not particularly engaging. demonstrates attempts to use specific, appropriate vocabulary. may include some clarity issues, and/or grammatical or spelling errors that cause occasional distractions. 	<p>The work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lacks clarity and purposeful organization. demonstrates no attempts were made to use specific, academic vocabulary. contains excessive grammatical and spelling mistakes that make it nearly impossible for the reader or audience to understand or engage with the content.
CLOSURE	<p>The reader is left certain that the writer's defined purpose has been entirely fulfilled. The piece concludes in a way that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully explores the ongoing relevance or broader implications of the thesis, or; emphasizes the meaning or lesson to be taken away from the essay, or; vividly describes the impact or effect that the experience being written about had on the writer. 	<p>The reader is left convinced that the writer's purpose has been adequately fulfilled. The piece concludes in a way that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> broadly identifies the ongoing relevance or broader implications of the thesis, or; suggests the meaning or lesson to be taken away from the essay, or; generally describes the impact or effect that the experience being written about had on the writer. 	<p>The reader is left unconvinced or confused about the writer's purpose. The piece's conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to effectively identify the ongoing relevance or broader implications of the thesis, or; fails to imply a meaning or lesson to be taken away from the essay, or; Does not describe the impact or effect that the experience being written about had on the writer.