INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION
PROFESSOR WEAVER
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Course Goals and Objectives: This course is designed to give students a comprehensive introduction to the U.S. constitutional system, as well as to the U.S. approach to "rights," in particular the right to freedom of expression.

Topics to be Covered.
I.   The U.S. Declaration of Independence in historical perspective.
II. The Events That Led to the Creation of the U.S. Constitution.
III. The Structure of the Federal Government (separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, and the role of the courts).
IV. The Relationship between the Federal Government and the States (the system of dual competencies, and the Supremacy Clause).
V.   The American Concept of Rights (the Bill of Rights) and Due Process (both procedural and substantive).
VI. The American Approach to Freedom of Expression.
  1. Justifications and Philosophical Approach.
  2. Categorical Approach and Balancing (child pornography, obscenity & fighting words).
  3. American Exceptionalism (defamation, privacy, advocacy of illegal action, intentional infliction of emotional distress, content neutrality).
  4. Prohibition Against Prior Restraints.
  5. Public Forum Doctrine
  6. Evolving Standards Regarding Media and New Technologies (the press, radio, television, satellite and cable television).
  7. The Implications of the Internet for Democracy.
VII. The Religion Clauses (the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause).