

Viewing Guide for Constitutional Principle Video: Separation of Powers

Directions: Before watching the video, answer the pre-viewing questions. Fill in the blanks on Bill of Rights protections while you watch. After you have watched the video, answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.

Before you watch:

1. What do you think of when you hear the term “separation of powers?” Write down some key words and phrases associated with it.
2. When some complain that it is difficult for Congress to get anything done, or you hear terms like “government gridlock,” what comes to mind?

While you watch:

1. The three branches of government are _____, which makes the law, _____, which carries out the law, and _____, which interprets the law.
2. The Founders believed that for these powers to be concentrated in one person or branch, would be “the very definition of _____.”
3. Article I of the U.S. Constitution explains the powers and function of _____.
4. Article II of the U.S. Constitution explains the powers and function of _____.
5. Article III of the U.S. Constitution explains the powers and function of _____.
6. In Federalist 51, James Madison wrote about the need to enable government to control the governed, as well as for government to control _____.
7. The Constitution ensures that _____ is the most powerful branch of government.

After you watch:

1. What does the principle of separation of powers mean?
 2. The video begins with Professor Munoz's statement that the purpose of separation of powers is to "frustrate" government action. How would you put this in your own words?
 3. Why would the Founders have wanted to frustrate government action? Are those reasons still important today?
 4. How is James Madison's plan for "ambition to counteract ambition" reflected in our system of separated powers?
 5. What does our system of separated powers with checks and balances reveal about the Founders' understanding of human nature?
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