

Outlining Foundations of Freedom: Principles of Democracy

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Essential Questions: What do Americans mean by *democracy*, and how has the meaning of *democracy* changed over time? How have the principles of freedom and democracy interacted with one another in United States history? What kind of relationship exists between democracy and freedom?

1. Introductions
2. Opening Discussion: When did the U.S. become a functional democracy?
3. Definitions and Distinctions: How does Fareed Zakaria define American democracy? What does he mean by “illiberal democracy”?
4. Historical Example #1: How democratic was the U.S. Constitution at the time of its ratification?
5. Democracy and Positive Freedom: Imagine a society that only emphasized negative freedom. What might it look like? Imagine a society that only emphasized positive freedom. What might it look like?
6. Historical Example #2: How does the issue of public education illustrate the distinction between negative and positive liberty, and why have Americans considered public education so central to democracy?
7. Processing: Write a short paragraph that uses several of the key concepts below to define the historical meaning of democracy in the United States, especially taking into account the complex relationship between democracy and freedom.
8. Application: Identify an issue that you already teach about that you can use to help your students develop an understanding of the interplay of democracy and freedom in the U.S.
9. Closing Discussion: Is more democracy always a positive development?

<u>Basic Concepts</u>	<u>Advanced Concepts</u>
Democracy	Popular Sovereignty
Representation	Republicanism
Constitution	Constitutional Law vs. Statutory Law
Individual Rights	Negative Liberty vs. Positive Liberty
Equality and Opportunity	Classical Liberalism vs. New Deal Liberalism

Recommended Readings

Carter, Ian. "Positive and Negative Liberty." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Fall 2008 Edition. Edited by Edward N. Zalta.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/liberty-positive-negative>

This short essay provides a helpful introduction to the positive and negative concepts of liberty, as promoted by philosopher Isaiah Berlin. It's too advanced for students, but it suggests some useful ways of thinking about the tensions between unrestrained individual liberty and socially enabled opportunity—such as public education—in a democratic society.

Centinel. "Centinel? Criticizes the Proposed Constitution, October 1787." Edited by David Voelker. <http://www.historytools.org/sources/Centinel-1787-edited.pdf>

This brief primary source may be accessible to high school students. "Centinel" attacked the proposed federal Constitution for being undemocratic and likely to lead to an aristocracy.

Huston, Reeve. "What We Talk about When We Talk about Democracy." *Common-Place*, Oct. 28 2008. <http://www.common-place.org/vol-09/no-01/huston>

This short essay provides a useful overview and definition of American democracy.

Parenti, Michael. "The Constitution as an Elitist Document." In *How Democratic is the Constitution?* edited by Robert A Goldwin and William A. Schambra, 39–58. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1980.

While not especially historical, this essay provides a sharp critique of the Constitution as undemocratic.

Rakove, Jack N. *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*. New York: Vintage, 1997. See especially chapter 3, "The Madisonian Moment."

Rakove provides an excellent analysis of James Madison's concerns and agenda as he participated so ably in the Philadelphia convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution.

Wood, Gordon. "Democracy and the Constitution." In *How Democratic is the Constitution*, edited by Robert A Goldwin and William A. Schambra, 1–17. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1980.

This essay provides an insightful historical analysis of the question: how democratic was the Constitution?

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*. New York: Norton, 2004 & 2007.

This book is an extended version of the essay below, expanded to critique hyper-democracy in the U.S. Readers should be aware of the author's strong pro-market values, which sometimes taint his historical analyses, but this is a provocative and interesting book.

Zakaria, Fareed. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." *Foreign Affairs* (November 1997).
<http://www.fareedzakaria.com/ARTICLES/other/democracy.html>

This essay is a great starting point for clarifying the nature of American democracy and its relationship with other forms of government around the world.