

# THE AMERICAN CIVIC TRADITION

Professional Development Seminar for Teachers

July 17-20, 2023

University of North Texas

Sponsored by the Constitutionalism and Democracy Forum  
and Jack Miller Center's Founding Civics Initiative

This four-day seminar series examines the theoretical ideas that informed the creation and development of America's political system and some of the contemporary challenges to the maintenance of American democracy. Topics include the Declaration of Independence, free speech in a democracy, slavery and the American founding, and major social and political movements in American history.

Participation in these *small*, seminar discussions is *selective*; tuition for participating teachers is *free*; fellows will receive a stipend of **\$400**; breakfast, lunch, refreshments, and reading packet provided.

## Goals of the Initiative

- Understand the texts and ideas that influenced the Founders during the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
- Study the perspectives of historical figures who were engaged in the central debates that shaped the United States.
- Consider how fundamental principles introduced at the Founding have influenced political and social movements throughout American history.
- Learn how to incorporate these primary sources and new knowledge into lessons for students.

## Faculty

Dr. Catherine Borck,  
Dr. Alexander Duff, and  
Dr. Richard Ruderman  
*University of North Texas*

Dr. Jeremy Mhire,  
*Louisiana Tech University*

Dr. Danton Kostandarithes,  
*Bolles School, Florida*

## Daily Schedule

Session I: 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.  
Session II: 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
\*\*Lunch\*\*  
Session III: 1:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## **Sample Guiding Themes and Questions**

*These seminars will be oriented around the discussion and exploration of shared questions. Ideas interact with politics and history—to see how, we follow out these and other similarly profound questions.*

### ***Natural Rights and the Social Contract***

What is the meaning of a state of nature and natural rights?  
To what extent is the Declaration influenced by the political philosophy of John Locke?

### ***Who Should Interpret the Constitution?***

Should constitutional interpretation be left solely to the Courts, or do the executive and legislative branches have a role to play?  
When should a decision on matters of constitutional interpretation be considered final?

### ***The Executive and Congress***

To what degree do liberal democracies need energetic executive power?  
What are the different characters of the Senate and the House?

### ***Federalism***

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a federal constitution?

### ***Slavery and the Constitution***

How did some of the Founders expect to see the problem of slavery resolved?  
How does Lincoln develop his argument against popular sovereignty with respect to slavery?

### ***Civil Rights Movement***

How should an individual deal with a law that he or she recognizes is unjust?

### ***The Future of our Constitution?***

How do the liberal, progressive, and conservative visions of the American future compare?

### ***Sample Texts, Authors, and Resources***

Declaration of Independence, and the US Constitution  
John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*  
*Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers*  
Letters and Speeches from James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry  
Letters and Speeches of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass  
Speeches from Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt  
Speeches from William Brennan and Antonin Scalia  
Speeches from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X  
Texts from William Brennan, Antonin Scalia, and many more . . .

### **Contact**

Dr. Catherine Borck  
Director, Constitutionalism and Democracy Forum  
University of North Texas  
Catherine.borck@unt.edu