

Dear students in U.S. History,

For summer work, I do not want to assign any particular titles for you to read, and there will not be a written piece required when you come to school in the fall (in whatever fashion we do that). I would like you to pay attention to the news this summer, though, and given the complexity of the nation and the world at the moment, that will be challenging enough. (David Brooks, in [this essay](#) in the *New York Times*, suggests we are facing five crises simultaneously. You might not agree with everything he says, but he makes an interesting case.)

At a minimum, the challenges presented by the coronavirus; the protests (around the nation and around the world) regarding African-Americans, law enforcement, and justice; and a very consequential upcoming election give us a lot to think about—more than in a more ordinary summer.

So let's try to get back to some basics as we ponder these things. I think one theme that provides a way to think about different challenges is to look at the U. S. Constitution. How might you apply constitutional thinking to these challenges? The election is applicable in an obvious way—we are required by the Constitution to choose a president every four years—but there are constitutional implications in place with regard to the coronavirus concerns and the protests around police work too.

As you are taking in the news this summer, try to look for the words “Constitution” (the U. S. one), “constitutional,” and “unconstitutional.” Once you start looking I think you'll find more instances than you would have guessed. Try to make note of instances where these words are used, and practice thinking about what they mean.

Have a great summer!

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