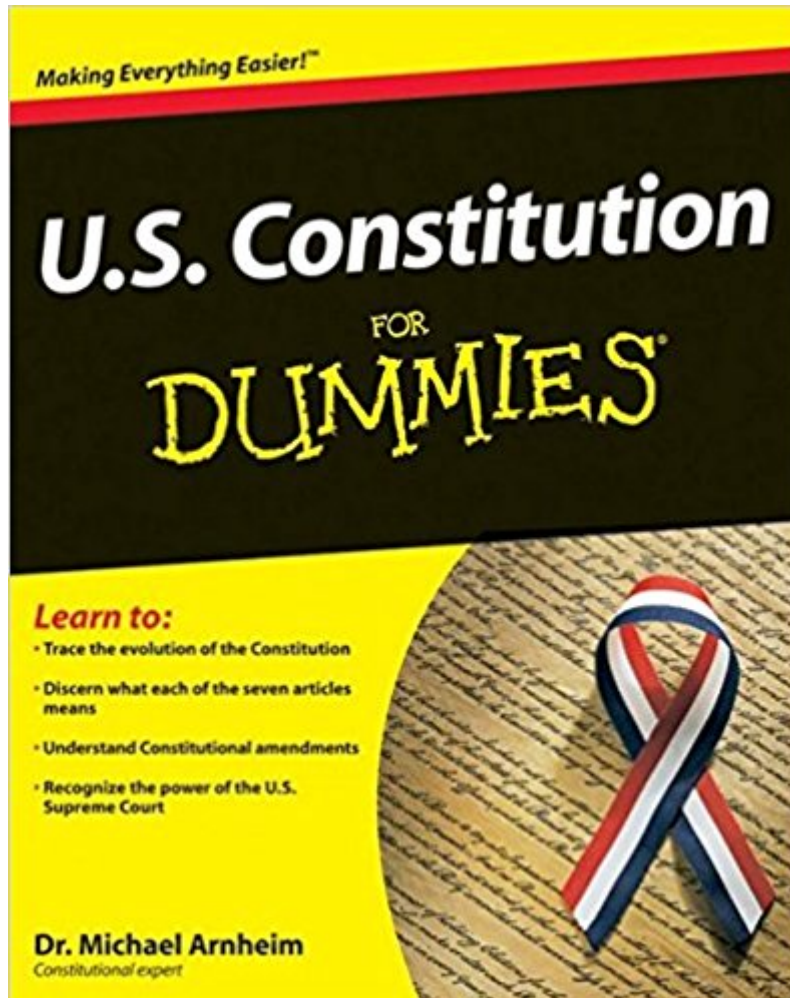




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U.S. Constitution For Dummies



Synopsis

An in-depth look at the defining document of America Want to make sense of the U.S. Constitution? This plain-English guide walks you through this revered document, explaining how the articles and amendments came to be and how they have guided legislators, judges, and presidents and sparked ongoing debates. You'll understand all the big issues â " from separation of church and state to impeachment to civil rights â " that continue to affect Americans' daily lives. Get started with Constitution basics â " explore the main concepts and their origins, the different approaches to interpretation, and how the document has changed over the past 200+ years Know who has the power â " see how the public, the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court share in the ruling of America Balance the branches of government â " discover what it means to be Commander in Chief, the functions of the House and Senate, and how Supreme Court justices are appointed Break down the Bill of Rights â " from freedom of religion to the prohibition of "cruel and unusual punishments," understand what the first ten amendments mean Make sense of the modifications â " see how amendments have reformed presidential elections, abolished slavery, given voting rights to women, and more Open the book and find: The text of the Constitution and its ammendments Discussion of controversial issues including the death penalty, abortion, and gay marriage Why the word "democracy" doesn't appear in the Constitution What the Electoral College is and how it elects a President Details on recent Supreme Court decisions The Founding Fathers' intentions for balancing power in Washington

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Michael Arnheim is a practicing British barrister, mediator, and academic, as well as the author of a text on British constitutional law. He consults with various U.S. firms on constitutional issues.

The author covers every article and amendment, and he makes every attempt at explaining concepts like judicial review and enumerated powers in layman's terms. While the book contains sections marked "In My Opinion," which the author gives the reader permission to skip, the reader finds the author's take on various Supreme Court decisions throughout the text. In fact, the book is as much an argument for strict constructionism as it is a comprehensive review of the Constitution. (Justice Antonin Scalia is quoted many times throughout this book. And Ted Cruz wrote the foreward.) The author too often brushes off Living Constitution arguments, calling various 5-4 conservative court decisions "imminently sensible," as though anyone would have reached the same decision, even though four justices took the other side. As other reviewers have noted, the structure of the book is not as straightforward as one might expect. The author is constantly referring the reader to other sections of the book, and some topics and cases are mentioned several times. At first, I found this frustrating, and I still wonder if another structure might have been more effective. However, the author wants to show how different parts of the Constitution work in tandem to produce the government we've got. For instance, he explains the philosophy of incorporation very well (even though he clearly hates it), but explaining it involves taking amendments out of order and analyzing them side by side. So while he takes the amendments in order, in his discussion of each amendment he includes relevant portions of other amendments. His handling of the 5th and 14th amendments is a good example of this: the discussion of each amendment is in a different chapter, but since each one has a Due Process clause, he compares the amendments to better explain what due process is all about. Same thing with amendments 10 and 14. This is my first "for Dummies" book, so I can't compare it to other books in the series. It seems to me that this book might be too technical for someone who wants a quick, no-frills summary of the Constitution. (In addition to the "In My Opinion" sections, there are also sections called "technical stuff," where the author really gets into the weeds on some heavy issues. He says the reader can skip these sections, as well, but even so, I think that the book isn't really for "dummies" at all.) And I find the idea of packaging an unabashedly right-wing analysis of the constitution as an unbiased intro for laymen kind of creepy (but really smart). Still, I'm glad I read this book. I learned a lot from it. If you want an in-depth but fairly plainspoken introduction to the Constitution and don't mind having to filter out the author's conservative throwaway lines, you'll enjoy the book. And to the author's credit, I'm a dyed-in-the wool lefty, and his arguments on certain points really made me think.

I picked up this book as a crash course for a US Government class. 80% of what I needed to know I found in this book in plain English. I was very pleased with the price as well as the purchase overall.

Excellent book. Informative, understandable, and enjoyable to read.

Very informative. Loved it and will read it again and again. Great book. Everyone should read this book. Greatly written.

This is an excellent book for someone who has not had any schooling in the Constitution. I am just an average working man with a high school/tech school education but I do care about the direction our country is headed. This book explains the Constitution and many aspects of how government should operate so that even I can understand it. It is a big help to me to let me know if our elected officials are operating within the Constitution. The author does give his opinion on many of the controversial issues of the past and present but he makes it clear that it is his opinion only. He also gives the possible reasoning behind opposing viewpoints and actions in which he disagrees. It is not simply an ideological one sided book but something anyone could learn a lot from regardless of your political views. The book does not go to great depth but I don't think you could expect that from a "Dummies" book. Overall, a great book for beginners.

good to know your rights

U.S. Constitution presented me with one of the more interesting perspectives of one of the founding documents since reading, "The Ant-Federalist Papers." How many know of the Corwin Amendment?

Perfect timing to buy this.

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