

Preamble Assignment Instructions

The Current Preamble

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

- Purposes
 - Introduces the document
 - States the Constitution’s purpose and objectives
 - Provides inspiration
 - Establishes authority
 - Assures the country that the flaws in the Articles of Confederation are being addressed
- Designed for a time and place: our country as it was then

Your Preamble

Our country is in a much different place now than it was in 1787, with different issues and needs, and existing in a much different world. You will want to write a preamble that, at a bare minimum, reflects those differences. You will also want to write a preamble that provides the moral underpinnings for the country you want us to become.

As listed above, a preamble is meant to introduce the document that it precedes.¹ Given that you will not be writing the constitution that accompanies it, please provide a carefully drafted context for your preamble, identifying any major changes you feel are necessary to the:

- The values and moral underpinnings of our Constitution
For example, do you want to replace order, liberty, and equality as the primary values or add to them.
- Our Constitutional structure or processes
For example, do you believe it would be appropriate to: add some provisions for direct democracy; reduce the checks and balances; increase or decrease the power of the states relative to national powers; increase or decrease the powers of one branch relative to the other two; add or reduce non-democratic features; or specifically address some of the major issues of today, including gun rights, abortion, the role of money in politics, etc.

The specific purposes of your preamble, its structure and length, are all up to you. The preamble, itself, must be at least as long as our current one, and no longer than one page: typed; single spaced; in 12 point; and using a standard font, such as Times New Roman (serif font) or Arial (sans-serif font). The context that you provide should be part of the same overall document that you submit, and can be of any length.

¹ Our current preamble is not actually considered as part of our Constitution, as it does not prescribe any structure or responsibilities.

Submit only one copy for your entire team, signed by all team members.

Sources

Feel free to use information you gained in your interview and conversations with other persons, as well as on-line and written resources. You can ask ChatGPT or other large language models specific questions, but you cannot have them write your preamble for you. You may submit a draft of your preamble for review by your interviewee or others, to get their feedback and suggestions. In short, you are submitting this document and are responsible for it, but you can use any appropriate input. Please credit any major sources. (I have reviewed a sample of constitutional preambles from other countries, and found them to be of poor quality and unhelpful for this assignment.)

Individual or Team Effort

You may do this assignment on your own, or as part of a team of up to three members. Remember, though, no one who was on your interview team can also be a part of your preamble team. This is intended to broaden the perspectives of which you can take counsel (remember that the numerous delegates attending the Constitutional Convention from the 13 states brought a wide range of perspectives to their deliberations, which went on for almost five months over the summer of 1787).

Due Date: At the beginning of your class on January 25, 26, or 27.

Value: 30 Points. All team members who participate fully in the creation of your preamble will receive the same score. You will be graded on the quality of the context you provide, the overall quality of thought that went into your preamble, and the extent to which your preamble meets the following purposes:

- Introduces the document
- States the Constitution's purpose and objectives
- Provides inspiration
- Establishes authority
- Assures the country that the flaws in our current Constitution (as you perceive them) are being addressed.