



# The Center for the Study of American Constitutionalism

## Mission Statement

The Center's mission is to explore the meaning of liberty in the American constitutional system, with specific emphasis on the Founders' commitment to limited and responsible government that promotes individual liberty, free markets, and a strong national defense. We seek to produce publications that examine these issues and to enhance the educational opportunities for Utah State students interested in these issues.

## Approach of the Center

The Constitution speaks of securing "the blessings of liberty." But what is liberty? The word has a multitude of possible meanings. The guiding principle of the Center is that the constitutional meaning of liberty is the classical liberal understanding of the term, as interpreted and refined by America's Founders: The Constitution promotes two broad objects, the protection of private or individual rights and the promotion of the general welfare, with particular concern for national security. The Center seeks to examine these original objects of the Founders' Constitution; the origins of these objects, how they have been defended, and how they have been respected or transformed over time.

## Support The Center

The Center is committed to building a strong program of teaching, research, and community events and engagement. As new ideas and energy are central to the continued success of any program a key goal of the Center is the establishment of an endowed chair for an annual visiting scholar position.

If you are interested in supporting the Center in any way, please contact Professor Anthony Peacock.

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## The Center has Three Areas of Activity

One of the issues the Center seeks to explore is the variety of meanings that have been given to "liberty" from ancient times to the present. Such inquiries are necessary to articulate and clarify the various half-articulated and unclear ideas of liberty that often dominate public debate. Such inquiries are necessary also to grasp fully the august history and continuing power of the word "liberty."

The second kind of inquiry the Center will pursue concerns the specific meanings of liberty found in the United States Constitution as disclosed in the Founding debates, Supreme Court decisions, leading commentaries on the Constitution, and American political practice and history. What are the objects, in particular the highest objects, of the American Constitution? What is the connection between liberty and the rule of law? The common law? The basic structure of the Constitution and Bill of Rights? What specific rights and freedoms does the Constitution protect? How are private or individual rights to be reconciled with the general welfare or questions of national security? Do questions of national security or the preservation of the Union trump all other concerns in the constitutional order? If not, what is the order to be given to the Constitution's objects?

The third area of activity of the Center is to keep the community abreast of current Supreme Court decisions and especially their impact on questions of liberty.