



“Introduction to the Constitution” Series

Lecture 4: “Bureaucratic versus Constitutional Government”

Presented by Larry Arnn, President, Hillsdale College

In his fourth lecture, Dr. Arnn describes the fundamental differences between modern, bureaucratic government and the constitutional order.

The study guide below is designed to aid in the comprehension of the lecture, as well as provide a basis of discussion for group learning.

Lecture Notes:

Comprehension Questions

1. What is self-contradictory claim of the nineteenth century progressive concept of “History”?
2. Why did Frank Goodnow, the president of Johns Hopkins University, think that “teachers shouldn’t take themselves too seriously”?
3. According to Dr. Arnn, what are two examples of good laws from the early history of the United States?
4. a. Fill in the blank: related to Question 3, one of those laws is considered one of the four “_____ laws” of the United States.
4. b. What are the other three “_____ laws” of the United States? (Note: Dr. Arnn does not cover this in his lecture, you will need to look this up on your own.)

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between centralized, bureaucratic rule and constitutional rule?
2. What are some things that were once handled by constitutional means that are now handled by bureaucratic means?
3. Read the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and contrast it with more recent, larger pieces of legislation.
4. In what ways does the separation of powers interfere with modern, bureaucratic government?
5. Is a return to constitutional rule possible?

Comprehension Question Answers

1. Everything is subject to time, circumstance, and change.
2. Teachers take themselves too seriously because students are going to end up being determined by the economic conditions in which they live.
3. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Homestead Act of 1862
4. a. Organic Laws
4. b. The Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States

Additional Notes: