

SS236 Unit 1 Discussion | Sample

The French Enlightenment philosopher, Baron de Montesquieu, wrote a widely influential book, *The Spirit of Laws (1748)*. Montesquieu theorized within this text that a separation of powers (this was quite controversial concept within divine rule, monarchical France) would create a check and balance system between each 'branch' without allowing one entity to become too powerful. Delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia used Montesquieu's idea when they included Articles I, II, and III within the U.S. Constitution. The delegates wrote Articles I (Legislative), II (Executive), and III (Judicial) to include specific powers within each branch of government. (O'Connor, Sabato, & Yanus, 2014)

The English philosopher John Locke had arguably the greatest impact on the new Constitution. Unlike Hobbes or Rousseau, Locke's social contract theory held that certain rights were inalienable. (O'Connor, Sabato, & Yanus, 2014) Governments are created by the people to protect these rights, and the people can overthrow that government if it fails to do so. Locke's beliefs had a major impact on not only the drafting of the Constitution, but also the subsequent inclusion of the first ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution - collectively known as the Bill of Rights. (O'Connor, Sabato, & Yanus, 2014)

American Government: Roots and Reform, 2014 Edition, Eleventh Edition, by Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato, and Alixandra B. Yanus.