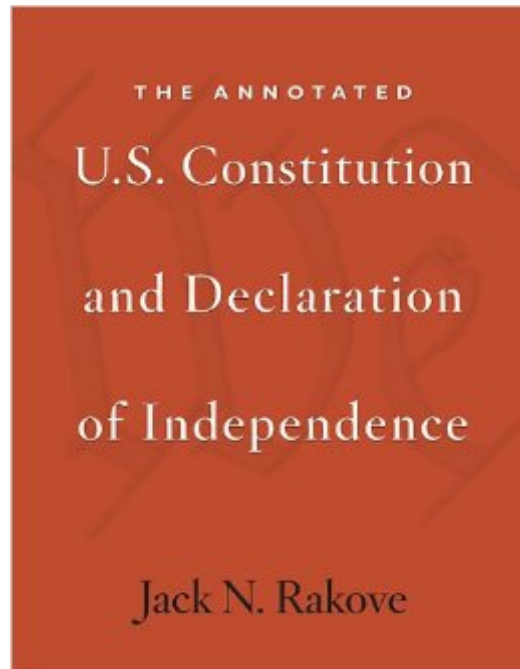


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The Annotated U.S. Constitution And Declaration Of Independence



Synopsis

Here in a newly annotated edition are the two founding documents of the United States of America: the Declaration of Independence (1776), our great revolutionary manifesto, and the Constitution (1787â88), in which âWe the Peopleâ forged a new nation and built the framework for our federal republic. Together with the Bill of Rights and the Civil War amendments, these documents constitute what James Madison called our âpolitical scripturesâ and have come to define us as a people. Now a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian serves as a guide to these texts, providing historical contexts and offering interpretive commentary. In an introductory essay written for the general reader, Jack N. Rakove provides a narrative political account of how these documents came to be written. In his commentary on the Declaration of Independence, Rakove sets the historical context for a fuller appreciation of the important preamble and the list of charges leveled against the Crown. When he glosses the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the subsequent amendments, Rakove once again provides helpful historical background, targets language that has proven particularly difficult or controversial, and cites leading Supreme Court cases. A chronology of events provides a framework for understanding the road to Philadelphia. The general reader will not find a better, more helpful guide to our founding documents than Jack N. Rakove.

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Customer Reviews

This handsome volume contains the texts of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, all Constitutional amendments, annotations/commentary by the distinguished historian Jack Rakove,

and a nice introductory essay. The bibliography is excellent. Rakove's introduction and comments provide the basic historical context and contemporary meanings of each component discussed and Rakove does well in providing important information while keeping the commentary brief. There is some reference to important legal history and Supreme Court decisions. Some aspects discussed by Rakove will be surprising to many readers, such as his emphasis on the Declaration as statement about national, rather than individual freedom. Rakove is not afraid of expressing his opinions on controversial subjects, which given his great knowledge of the subject, is welcome. In general, he is skeptical of dogmatic originalism. While you have to look in some of the footnotes, he directly attacks practices like the Reagan-BushII signing statements, which strike him as an effort to flout Presidential responsibilities. He is critical also of what he refers as the Court's recent "creation" of an individual right to bear arms.

The content of the book is good. However it is the worst formatted kindle book I have ever read. The footnotes are mixed in with the text and most are before the paragraph they are related to. It is sometimes hard to keep straight the text of the constitution, the comments, and the footnotes. None of the images are in the kindle version. If you want to read this book buy the printed book.

This is a very small book with annotations too short and selective to be of much utility. Wikipedia even, if less authoritative, gives more insights, provides greater background, suggests more directions for deeper inquiry, and comes closer to achieving political neutrality than this nearly pocket-size softback. Little flavor of the history and little richness of the controversies emanates from the annotations -- which are really just (inadequate) footnotes. The book was produced by a scholar who of course deeply appreciates the subject matter -- it's unlikely that anyone with a lesser name than Rakove would manage to sell many copies of this book -- but barely satisfies as even an outline. While I would recommend not spending money on this little volume, it warrants two stars since if you knew nothing of the basis and impact of a particular provision, this might tell you what (in Wikipedia, for instance) to look further into. But were you to watch Rakove spend an hour on camera with Brian Lamb, you would become far more informed, and intellectually entertained, than you are likely to be with this book. One takes away the idea that this was just meant as an easy little money-maker for the author, and not designed to be of great use.

Do not buy the Kindle version for either iPhone or PC. The captions for the illustrations are there, but the illustrations are not. Instead, the captions say to refer to the print edition to see the

illustration. What is the purpose of having a Kindle version if you have to refer to the print edition? Also, the footnotes actually are inserted in the midst of the text, in many instances before the footnoted text. The continuity of the text is non-existent.

Very disappointed with the Kindle version of this book. It does not contain any of the pictures or illustrations mentioned in the book. You are enticed by the verbiage under the picture/illustration, enough to wet your appetite, but there is no picture/illustration.

Being neither American nor a Jurist Jack Rakove's historical approach suited me well. He gives an overview of the events preceding the Declaration of Independence and the problems facing the Continental Congress which resulted in the writing of the Constitution. His later remarks on the various amendments provide a running commentary of constitutional development up until today. In addition Rakove provides an extensive timeline as well as a bibliography so that anyone who'd like to address questions more in-depth will find that easy. All in all a thoroughly recommended introduction.

Professor Rakove provides a useful tool for the general reader for study of the specific language of the Constitution and entry into "original" meanings, intent, background, circumstances. For example, the 2nd Amendment was provided to ensure that the states would be able to muster an adequate militia (just as the language literally says) since the country had, and intended, no standing army. The concept of guns for individual defense really wasn't that much of a consideration (although it was a reality given fear of indians). A firearm at that time was regarded more as a useful and necessary tool to put food on the table. If it were written today it likely would refer to the right to own/operate a cell phone or automobile. Moreover, registration is not prohibited: the states needed to know who had firearms so they could be called out when needed. If "originalists" such as Justice Scalia were true to their professed belief it should be restricted to the technology of the day and logical, foreseeable developments: muskets, etc. Unfortunately, it is the right wing of the court that is more often the "activist" side via its frequent hypocrisy and intellectual dishonesty. My main criticism of this book is that I'd like to see more information and source references.

This little text is a great in-depth look at the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that's very accessible for readers. I love it!

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