



The 2018 Summer Institute for K-12 Teachers

Summary on Our Constitution: The Bill of Rights

This year for our Summer Institute for K-12 teachers, The Rendell Center partnered with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to offer an engaging weeklong seminar entitled “Our Constitution: The Bill of Rights”. Held this past July, 35 teachers from across the U.S. joined us at Lafayette College (Easton, PA) to examine how our nation’s Founders’ vision for the Bill of Rights has been interpreted and revised by the Supreme Court. Led by our Summer Institute Director, Dr. Bruce Murphy, the seminar’s discussions and materials helped attendees to gain a better understanding of our Bill of Rights protections today, how we arrived here, and where the Court might be going. Feedback from the event was outstanding, as evidenced by comments from attendees such as:

- *“I found this seminar absolutely riveting. Over the summer, I had developed a rough outline for the new class that I am teaching this year, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. Preparing for and attending the seminar fundamentally challenged and changed my understanding of the Bill of Rights and I had to completely rework the curriculum to reflect my new understanding. I think everyone involved in this experience were brilliant and engaging.*
- *This seminar was an amazing experience! The lead scholar was not only beyond knowledgeable, he was friendly and accessible to all manner of questions. The guest lecturers were both thought provoking and masters in their fields; they brought insight and commentary to relevant and meaningful topics. The master teacher was patient, helpful, and a fantastic resource in all things technical and logistic. The mock trial was, for me, a highlight of the experience; to be able to put into practice much of the content we had been studying as well as incorporate a topical case—and in the setting we were offered--was a GIFT, it was unforgettable, and I LOVED every nerve-jangling minute of it!! I loved the seminar; it was for me intimidating, challenging, mind-stretching, and inestimably valuable. THANK YOU--I cannot wait to challenge myself in another!!*
- *Overall, my week in Easton, Pennsylvania was among the most profitable professional development experiences in my teaching career. The lead instructor is infectiously passionate and incredibly knowledgeable about the U.S. Supreme Court, and during many of his lectures I thought excitedly about the potential applications to my own lesson plans. The trip to Philadelphia was magnificent all around; participating in a moot court with Judge McKee was an experience I will probably remember for the rest of my career, and the evening program, with dinner at a historic restaurant and a private tour of Independence Hall, all in the company of a former Pennsylvania governor, is a testament to the organizational skills of Beth Specker and The Rendell Center.*