

## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE FEDERALIST AND ANTIFEDERALIST PAPERS

These study questions are intended to encourage you to think about the readings carefully and to help you to prepare for in-class discussion. I recommend that you examine the study questions before reading the text, and that you keep the study questions at hand while reading. You are not expected to turn in answers to the study questions.

A note of clarification: Most of these essays were originally published under various pen names. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and some others often wrote under the pen name of “Publius,” which you will find sometimes referred to in the Antifederalist documents.

### **Please read especially carefully the following:**

- Federalist Paper #8 (“The Consequences of Hostilities. . .”)
- The last four paragraphs of Antifederalist paper #38 (beginning from “In answer to the second. . .”)
- The entries by Centinel and The Yeomanry of Massachusetts in Antifederalist paper #40 (beginning from “What then are we to think. . .”)

Be sure to also bring these documents to class.

For those of you who have jobs on one of the papers, you will find the question I am hoping you will address in your job **in bold** under the appropriate document below.

### **General questions — Mulling over the materials**

1. On the basis of these documents, what would you say were the main points of controversy over the Constitution?
2. In what ways is the American Revolution referred to in these documents, directly or indirectly?
3. What comparisons do the Federalists use to promote the Constitution? What do you think is the purpose of these comparisons?
4. Are there differences in the language or style of the Federalist versus the Antifederalist papers? If so, what are those differences, and what conclusions might you draw from them?

## **Federalist # 8**

According to Alexander Hamilton,

1. Why would war between the states of the Union be more destructive than wars in Europe?
2. What would be the consequence of war between the states?
3. Why have the people of Great Britain avoided being deprived of their liberties?
4. What does all this have to do with the need for the American people to accept the Constitution?

## **Federalist #10**

1. What does Madison mean by faction?
2. What do you think Madison might be referring to when he refers to the “unsteadiness and injustice with which a factions spirit has tainted our public administrations”?
3. Why, according to Madison, is it impossible to eliminate faction?
4. According to Madison, which one poses the greater danger to a just republican government—the sinister designs of a minority, or the selfish pursuits of a majority? Why?
5. What does Madison mean by a republic, and how is a republic in his view superior to a democracy? How does that superiority come about?
6. How is the Union (the national government) superior to the states?

## **Federalist #39**

1. How does Madison define a republic?
2. Why does he think it important to show that the Constitution provides for a republican form of government?
3. What arguments does he offer for the republican character of the Constitution?
4. What is meant by the federal form of government? What is meant by the national form of government?
5. How does Madison respond to the claim that the Constitution created a national rather than a federal form of government? What different aspects of the Constitution does he consider in responding to that claim?

### **Federalist #69**

1. Why does Hamilton feel compelled to write about the character of the office of the executive (i.e., the presidency of the United States)?
2. Whose powers does he constantly compare the President's powers to? Why?
3. **Briefly explain what Hamilton is trying to accomplish in this essay. You don't need to explain all the details, but please choose a couple of examples of Hamilton's main points. Do you find his argument convincing? Do you think people at the time did? Why or why not?** (Please feel free to add your own comments on this essay. You may find the last paragraph especially helpful as it attempts to sum up the argument in the paper).

### **Antifederalist #38**

1. How does the writer respond to the claim that the men who wrote the constitution were "an illustrious band of patriots" who spent a long time thinking about and drafting the Constitution?
2. How does the writer respond to the claim that the Constitution must be adopted because the country is in danger of falling into anarchy?
3. What does the writer imply is the motive of the proponents of the Constitution in claiming that we must adopt the Constitution quickly, or else?
4. What does the writer say about self-interest?
5. How does the writer criticize the writings of Publius (i.e., the Federalist papers)?

### **Antifederalist #40**

1. What does "Philadelphiensis" claim is the intent of the Constitution?
2. How does "A Farmer and a Planter" establish a distinction between ordinary people and the framers of the Constitution?
3. Why, according to "A Farmer and a Planter" did "the rich men" want independence?
4. What is Patrick Henry's main objection to the Constitution?
5. According to Centinel, why might it be that the proponents of the Constitution are so eager to have it adopted quickly?

6. How does Centinel characterize the actions of the Constitutional Convention?
7. How does Centinel characterize the Constitution?
8. How does Centinel explain the fact that the Constitution nevertheless contains what appear to be democratic and republican forms?
9. What do you think Centinel is referring to when he refers to the “conduct of its [the Constitution’s] authors and patrons” and, in a later paragraph, to their having “exerted all their power and influence to prevent all discussion of the subject”?
10. What do the Yeomanry of Massachusetts say about George Washington?

#### **Antifederalist #74**

1. How does Philadelphiensis characterize the office of the President of the United States as created in the Constitution?
2. Why is he not convinced that the legislature is a sufficient check upon the President?
3. **Why, according to Philadelphiensis, is the new Constitution (and the Presidency in particular) undemocratic? Why, according to Philadelphiensis, are elections no guarantee against tyranny?** (Feel free to add your own comments on the essay.)
4. How does Philadelphiensis respond to the arguments that the President is not at all like the King of Great Britain?