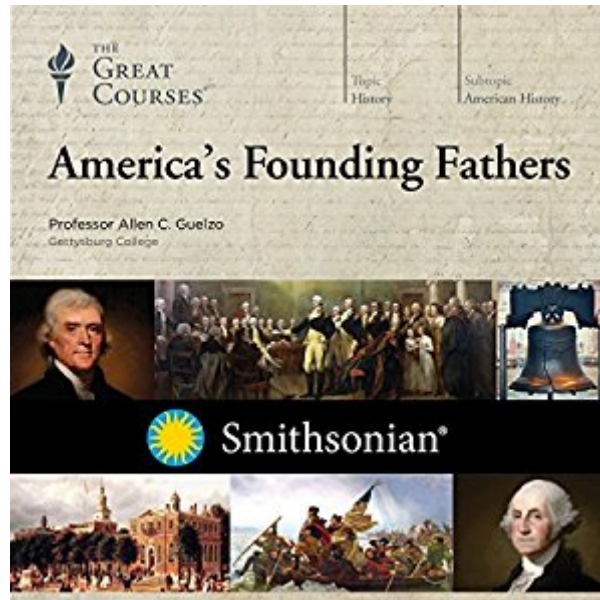




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# America's Founding Fathers



## Synopsis

Today, the US Constitution is the oldest, continually-operating instrument of government in the world. But to think of the Constitution as a fully-formed, canonical document is to miss out on an honest, well-rounded grasp of American history. Now, more than ever, any well-informed citizen should understand how the Constitution lives, breathes, and endures. In collaboration with Smithsonian, these 36 lectures are a deep dive into the creation of the US Constitution as it actually happened - and the remarkable men who played their own unique role in the creation (and survival) of American democracy. Designed to be enjoyed in chronological order, they take you from the closing days of the American Revolution to the opening decades of the United States under the newly created US Constitution. Told like a dramatic story, each lecture uses a Founder as a doorway through which to examine the process involved in crafting the Constitution. You'll encounter fresh perspectives on familiar Founders including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton, as well as people not necessarily considered Founders, including James McHenry, Secretary of War under John Adams; and Alexis de Tocqueville, author of the insightful *Democracy in America*. While detailed, the lectures are highly accessible for all learners, high school students and history buffs alike. Less a biography of individuals, Professor Guelzo's lectures are instead a composite biography of one of the greatest political documents in history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The course provides engaging and dramatic character portrayals of the founding fathers, as if they were part of the cast of a great play, which one day comes to a last act. The course exposes

aspects of the crisis placed before this great cast created by the flawed Articles of Confederation, which nearly destroyed the United States, and their solution, the Constitution, the aftermath and their fates. The facts presented are interesting and relevant, and cover details that perhaps the most adept biographer would catch, none lesser, including shocking treasons right in Washington's midst. While the Enlightenment created the American revolution, a nation one day powerful enough to defeat evil regimes that came into being in the 20th century, it also created the wicked French revolution, a practice run on those very same blackness America fought perhaps best expressed by the Khmer Rouge, a genocidal group spawned in France. The narrative on Hamilton and Madison is outstanding, as well as the critical leader, Washington, now presented as real man beyond reproach, but not a god. That said, it is important those for the credibility of the course to stick to undisputed sources when presenting character strengths and flaws, or at least describe a claim as alleged. Some profiles are better than others in these critical revelations, and I think that Jefferson being characterized as being great, but also a rationalistic kind of visionary, almost weirdly living in the ideas in his books, is also not far from the truth, including this strange tendency to engage in a self-imposed trade embargo. Madison transcended and applied these ideas to a new situation, but also brought war and near destruction on the United States, and certainly helped spawn the burning of Washington by the British. However, I almost fell out of my chair, or rather almost hit a tree, when he mentioned the Sally Hemmings controversy that Jefferson sired six children by her. This is a highly disputed matter and the disseminator of the story in modern times was an anti-founding father revisionist, Joe Ellis, repeating claims made by Callender in 1802. Adding such claims does not help the narrative of true crisis and survival of the republic unless it shows an actual flaw of the man relevant to the story, which it doesn't. Better to have gone more in-depth on Jefferson's views on Epicureanism and religion, which are quite striking, including those he expressed on Christianity and war with Islam than to throw an accusation of sexual misconduct at the man. There certainly have been men well deserving of that accusation in the past and present. Still, a strong narrative and worth the time, but watch out for a few shocks now and then.

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