

The First Amendment

Protects five core liberties: religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly.

The Post (2017)

Highlights *The Washington Post's* 1971 publication of the Pentagon Papers, a classified report that revealed decades of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. This thriller is about freedom of the press – and courage when the powers that be wage war with that Constitutional right.

Further viewing: *Selma (2014)*, *Citizen Kane (1941)*, *All the President's Men (1976)*, *The People vs. Larry Flynt (1996)*

The Fifth Amendment

Protects Americans against self-incrimination.

The Client (1994)

Adapted from the John Grisham novel. Mark Sway, 11, comes upon incriminating information that prosecutors want and the (very) bad guys want kept quiet. On the run from both groups, Mark befriends a local lawyer, Reggie Love, and the two unlikely friends struggle to avoid a host of legal – and physical – dangers.

Further viewing: *Presumed Innocent (1990)*, *Miss Sloane (2016)*

The Ninth Amendment

Asserts that spelling out certain rights shouldn't be seen as "denying or disparaging other rights."

Enemy of the State (1998)

The Ninth Amendment – which basically says that just because you don't read something in the Constitution, it doesn't give the government the right to do whatever it wants – comes in handy for Chris Gardner when he becomes a victim of government overreach.

Further viewing: *Three Days of the Condor (1975)*, *Wag The Dog (1997)*

The Fifteenth Amendment

Asserts the right of all eligible U.S. citizens to vote, and expressly prohibits denying the ballot on the basis of race, color, or "previous condition of servitude."

All The Way (2016)

President Lyndon Johnson's stakes his presidency on what an historic unprecedented Civil Rights Act. Johnson finds himself caught between the moral imperative of Martin Luther King Jr. and southern Democratic leaders who brought him to power.

Further viewing: *Gangs of New York (2002)*

The Twenty-Fifth Amendment

Provides for the vice president to assume the office of "acting president" if the vice president and a majority of the cabinet determine that "the president is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office."

Olympus has Fallen (2013)

This action thriller centers on the kidnapping of the president and his top advisers, including the vice president and the secretary of defense – and what would happen next.

Further viewing: *White House Down (2013)*, *Air Force One (1997)*

The Second Amendment

References both the collective right of a militia and an individual right to bear arms.

Gran Torino (2008)

This story of growth and friendship follows a retired Detroit autoworker ready to lock and load to protect his changing neighborhood. He becomes a reluctant hero when he stands up to gang members trying to coerce a neighbor to steal his treasured car. An unlikely friendship results.

Further viewing: *Tank (1984)*, *Dirty Harry (1971)*, *Death Wish (1974)*

The Sixth Amendment

Assures Americans accused of crimes a fair trial.

12 Angry Men (1957)

A jury in a murder trial deliberates, and a guilty verdict would mean death for the teenaged defendant. As they try to reach a unanimous decision, one juror casts doubt on several elements of the case. Personal issues rise to the surface, and conflict threatens to derail the delicate process that will decide the boy's fate.

Further viewing: *The Trial of the Chicago 7 (2020)*

The Tenth Amendment

Establishes that powers not designated by the Constitution to the federal government are reserved to the states or the people.

The Free State of Jones (2016)

The Tenth Amendment runs ironically and symbolically, if not literally, throughout this film about a disillusioned Confederate deserter in Mississippi who leads a militia of fellow deserters in an uprising against their corrupt government.

Further viewing: *CSA: The Confederate States of America (2004)*, *Smokey and the Bandit (1977)*

The Seventeenth Amendment

Makes U.S. senators elected by the people instead of appointed by state legislatures.

Mr. Smith Goes To Washington (1939)

Jefferson Smith spends much of the film fighting the Washington machine as it attempts to chew him up and spit him out. He's mocked in the press, manipulated by colleagues, and eventually discovers new layers of corruption and graft.

Further viewing: *Star Wars Episode 3: Revenge of the Sith (2005)*, *The Distinguished Gentleman (1992)*

The Twenty-Sixth Amendment

Sets the U.S. voting age at 18.

The Candidate (1972)

Without a candidate to run for senate against admired Republican Crocker Jarmon, campaign manager Marvin Lucas recruits young liberal lawyer Bill McKay. As McKay's original and honest platform gets watered down, his popularity increases so much that he is running even with Jarmon as Election Day approaches.

Further viewing: *Wild in the Streets (1968)*

The Third Amendment

Restricts quartering of soldiers in homes without consent and forbids it in peacetime.

The Patriot (2000)

A South Carolina widower and father in the 1770s is reluctant to join the Revolution. That changes when a monstrous British colonel arrests his eldest son, shoots another, and burns down Daniel's house, which the British had been using as a military hospital against Daniel's wishes.

Further viewing: *Training Day (2001)*, *Cops and Robbers (1990)*

The Seventh Amendment

Gives us the right to bring civil actions.

Philadelphia (1993)

Fearing it would compromise his career, lawyer Andrew Beckett hides his homosexuality and HIV status at a Philadelphia law firm. But his secret is exposed by a co-worker, and he is fired. Beckett resolves to sue for discrimination, teaming up with Joe Miller, the only lawyer willing to help.

Further viewing: *The Rainmaker (1997)*, *A Civil Action (1998)*, *Erin Brockovich (2000)*

The Thirteenth Amendment

Abolishes slavery in the United States of America.

13TH (2016)

In the only documentary on our list, filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the history of racial inequality in the United States, focusing on the fact that the nation's prisons are disproportionately filled with African-Americans.

Further viewing: *Lincoln (2012)*, *Cailloux (2020)*, *12 Years a Slave (2013)*

The Eighteenth Amendment

Banned the distribution and sale of liquor. Repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment.

The Untouchables (1987)

After building an empire with bootleg alcohol, Al Capone rules Chicago with an iron fist. Though Prohibition agent Eliot Ness tries to take Capone down, even his best efforts fail due to widespread corruption. Recruiting an elite group who won't be bribed or intimidated, including veteran cop Jimmy Malone, Ness labors to bring Capone to justice.

Further viewing: *Little Caesar (1930)*, *Once Upon a Time in America (1984)*, *Miller's Crossing (1990)*

The Fourth Amendment

Protects Americans' privacy against unreasonable searches and seizures.

Minority Report (2002)

Set in 2054 in D.C., this film revolves around police detective John Anderton in the city's "PreCrime" law enforcement division. Police use information to not just deter crime before it happens, but as proof of guilt to imprison someone of a crime that they were expected to commit.

Further viewing: *Snowden (2016)*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier (2014)*

The Eighth Amendment

Protects against excessive bail or fines, and cruel and unusual punishments.

12 Monkeys (1995)

James Cole, a prisoner in the year 2035, is sent back in time to help scientists cure a deadly pandemic that wiped out much of the globe in 1996. During his forced time travels, he's thrown in a mental institution, shot during World War I, and told to carry out what promises to be a suicide mission.

Further viewing: *Dead Man Walking (1995)*, *Sleepers (1996)*, *The Siege (1998)*

The Fourteenth Amendment

Provides equal protection to all Americans, either native-born or naturalized, under the law.

On the Basis of Sex (2018)

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a struggling attorney and new mother who faces numerous obstacles in her fight for equal rights. When she takes on a groundbreaking tax case with her husband, she knows it could change the way the courts view gender discrimination.

Further viewing: *Amend: The Fight for America (2021)*, *Any Day Now (2012)*, *Loving (2016)*

The Nineteenth Amendment

Gives women the right to vote.

Iron-Jawed Angels (2004)

Originally broadcast on HBO, Iron-Jawed Angels is a frenetically shot, aggressively edited, in-your-face telling of the final fight for women's suffrage. Alice Paul, founder of the National Woman's Party, together with Lucy Burns, struggles against conservative forces to pass the Nineteenth amendment.

Further viewing: *Black Sorority Project (2013)*, *The Ballad of Josie (1967)*

THE CONSTITUTION



ON FILM