

The Constitution and The American Dream
Dr. Cal Jillson, Professor of Political Science
Southern Methodist University

Introduction – Dr. Alan Gibson, CSU Chico: Well, welcome. This is Constitution Day. So, on this day -- Constitution Day is actually tomorrow, September 17th, and on that day in 1787, 38 of the 41 delegates who remained in Philadelphia signed the United States Constitution. This ended four months of debate that gave us the 4400-word document that is still governing our country today, with 27 additional amendments and a few subtractions, so this remains our political charter today.

The Political Science Department took over managing Constitution Day about three years ago and we've run it ever since. We take this a bit quite seriously and is an important moment in civic engagement and civic education for the university for us. We try to couple it with town hall. We're really glad to see the great turnout that we have here for this.

Before introducing our speaker, I have a couple of announcements and then a few thank you's. Take out your cell phones and turn them off, and do that for me right now so that I don't have to hear that happening while this is going on. This would be the best thing for you to do if you don't want to face me. And then second, extra credit sheets for my class are going to be up here for people to sign after this and I assume that you guys are for other professors who will have other methods for doing this. And then, finally, Professor Jillson has agreed to take questions from the audience after about a 40-, 45-minute presentation and so be ready -- prepare your questions and ask them for him and stay for the question-and-answer session. It will also be very [inaudible] event. A thanks tonight goes out especially to the dean's office in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. Dean Eddy Vela and the dean's office have been generous and enthusiastic in their support of Constitution Day for each of the proceedings that we've had over the past three years. They funded it fully and it's been -- it's transformed this event for our university. We're quite proud of the last three years and we're quite proud of having Calvin Jillson here today. Special thanks also to Charlie Turner of the Political Science Department, and also the Lori Adrian, Rebecca DeWitt and especially [inaudible] from the Political Science Department. The excellence of the administrative staff in political science is only exceeded by their spirit, their wit and their wisdom. They make our Political Science Department go. Lori, stand up, please. Come on.

[Applause]

We also want to thank this year the Office of Civic Engagement and its new head, Ellie Ertle, who has gone to work for us. She's really done a great deal of -- put a great deal of effort into this event for us and publicized it and helped us organize this event. And I'd also like to thank the officer corps of Pi Sigma Alpha, especially Avanya and also Carrie Asala and also Luke Ellard and Steve Chamberlin [assumed spellings] for their work on this event. And, finally, I want to single out my colleague and partner in crime for each of these events, Diana Dwyre. Diana, where did you hide? Where did you go

to? Please stand up. Diana is the consummate professional. She is dedicated to excellence in everything she does.

[Applause]

So it's an honor to have you as a colleague and a friend. Thank you very much [background talking]. ..Go for it, go for it.

Dr. Diana Dwyre, CSU Chico: All my students [inaudible] extra credits [inaudible].

[Inaudible Audience Comment]

Dr. Gibson: I thought you were going to say what a great guy I was [laughter], how nice it was to work with me. [Applause] I guess not.

Okay, on to the important business. So, our speaker today, Calvin Jillson of Southern Methodist University, is one of the nation's top political scientists and scholars of the Constitution. An Oregon native and an Oregon State grad, Professor Jillson received his PhD from the University of Maryland and has taught at Louisiana State University, the University of Colorado, and now, Southern Methodist University. Professor Jillson has served in several administrative posts during his academic career, including department chair for 10 years and multiple stints at several institutions; and also, as an Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Professor Jillson has also served on this prestigious Council of Foreign Relations. This prestigious organization is composed of some 2000 Americans that constitute the foreign policy elite of America.

Mostly, however, Calvin Jillson is a scholar and an author. Jillson is the author of the path-breaking book on the dynamics of the debate in the Constitutional Convention. He's written several books on Texas politics, is an authority that's often consulted on Texas politics. He has written a popular American government textbook that's now on its seventh edition. And he's most known for the work that on which this presentation this afternoon will be based, which is "Pursuing the American Dream -- Opportunity and Exclusion Over Four Centuries," from the University of Kansas Press. Professor Jillson's scholarship is particularly noteworthy for its methodological sophistication and range. He's at once a first-rate empiricist and a normative political scientist as well. At the same -- at a time when political sciences are increasingly specialized, he's a rare intellectual with an ability to sweep across American political thought, offer insights into international relations, comment on any topic in American politics and contribute to numerous debates within this discipline. He's a frequent source of information for the *New York Times* and other leading papers across the nation and a public intellectual in the finest sense in which that word is used.

On a somewhat more personal note, it's been -- it's just been a great honor to host Professor Jillson in this. He embodies in many ways the American Dream and the success story that he so intelligently dissects in his scholarship. Born of humble origins, he's risen to the top of the academic world. He

understands the importance of opportunity and the pain of exclusion. He speaks to us tonight about the Constitution and the American Dream. Ladies and gentlemen, Calvin Jillson.

[Applause]

Dr. Calvin Jillson: Those introductions are always overblown. If that were half true, I would be a very happy man. But, I am very pleased to be here today. The only thing that I'm a little bit chagrined about is I looked out across the audience and thought everyone was here because they saw the topic, "The Constitution and the American Dream." And now I hear there are signup sheets and extra credit and various kinds of incentives that have been offered to draw you out.

But, be that as it may, I'm glad to see you. This has been a really interesting day. I started early out at Butte Community College with a group of students, and that went very, very well. I'm not sure that I can reproduce two really good talks in one day and one is already under my belt, so I'll do the best I can here this afternoon. But it's an honor to have been invited to Cal State Chico because this is a department that I've known for a long time and have known about members of the department, have been aware of their work over the years, lots of accomplished people in your political science department, and so you're benefiting from that every day. In some days it may not feel like it, but you are blessed to have this group of political science faculty to help you through your education.

And I would -- before I get started, also say that if you are a political science major and are not part of Pi Sigma Alpha, you should get involved in that. That is an organization that exists on every campus in the country. Every political science department at every university in the country sponsors a Pi Sigma Alpha, organization and they do wonderful stuff. They have speakers come, which might not sound all that wonderful by the end of this hour -- but it is an opportunity to see people that you wouldn't otherwise get a chance to see and really interact with other people who are in their undergraduate career taking political science very seriously and thinking about what to do with it in terms of a career, what you think about graduate school. So, there are all kinds of opportunities to think about political science as part of Pi Sigma Alpha. So if you're not in, get in; it'll be well worth it.

Today, I'm going to talk about the Constitution and the American Dream. As Allan said, these are a couple of topics that I've been thinking about for a very long time. I wrote a book on the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in the late 1970s, early 1980s. And then in the 1990s, I wrote that book that Allan mentioned called "Pursuing the American Dream," about what the idea has meant over the course of American history. The American Dream is a theme that all of you have heard about many, many times. And so, I want to talk a little bit about what that idea has meant over the course of the nation's history and end with some discussion of what it means today, because the American Dream has always been the promise that the United States holds out more promise to common people for an opportunity to contest and compete for the best that this society has to offer. And generations of Americans have pursued the American Dream successfully, at least for the extent of having created a calm, peaceful prosperous environment for their families.

But at some points in American history, that has seem really quite easy to do and in other points more difficult to do. Unfortunately, this is one of those points in American history where pursuing the American Dream is troublesome, is problematic. It's -- it is fraught with difficulty. If there is a slow-moving economy and high unemployment and you're coming out of college into a job market that is not ready for you, that's a very intimidating thing. And so, we want to end with the idea of what is the current state of affairs in regard to the American Dream and the rising generation, which is you. Is the country open and receptive to your efforts and will good, honest effort result in a secure and prosperous future? At many points in American history, the answer to that is yes, it will. And at other points, the answer is only with some difficulty and we're at one of those points in American history where there are questions and there are hurdles in the way of people attempting to access the American Dream, so we'll want to talk about those two things, particularly, what role the Constitution plays in ensuring that the American Dream is broadly available. And that'll be our goal over the next 40, 45 minutes, something like that. And then we'll talk about it a little bit in question and answer.

But the thing I want to start with is the idea of American "exceptionalism." American exceptionalism is the feeling from the country's earliest settlement to the current week that America is in some sense special, that it's different from other countries. And while scholars will take that idea of American exceptionalism -- the country is different and special -- and try to sort it out as not that special in an entirely good sense, that there are aspects of America's approach to world affairs that are problematic, if not sometimes dangerous.

But we have had a conversation in the last week in which Barack Obama went on television to explain to the American people the importance of action in regard to Syria -- that in Syria the President Bashar Assad had used chemical weapons in his civil war to try to maintain power and about 1400 people were killed with chemical weapons. And chemical weapons have been largely banned in warfare for the better part of a hundred years. They were widely used in World War I, 1914 to 1917, but it was so horrific to die of chemical exposure that they were banned and rarely used since. And so when Assad used them, Barack Obama said that "America is a special place. We stand for human rights and when human rights are violated in an egregious way as they were with the chemical weapons used by Assad, that we -- if only we act, we try to make sure that it doesn't happen again." And in response, Vladimir Putin who is the President of the Soviet Union wrote an editorial to the *New York Times* in which he took on Barack Obama's sense that America is special and is a singular defender of human rights. And what Vladimir Putin said was that "I would rather disagree with the case that President Obama made on American exceptionalism," stating that, "the United States policy is what makes America different, is what makes us exceptional." That was Obama, and this is Putin -- "It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessing, we must not forget that God created us equal." All kinds of things about Vladimir Putin instructing the United States. The Soviet Union was the great American enemy of the Cold War, from the end of World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and 1990s, the Cold War was America and its allies standing off against the Soviet Union and its allies, with both sides having tens of thousands of

nuclear weapons that offered the prospect of world destruction if we went to war with the Soviet Union. And they were communists and part of communism is a rejection of religion. So, Putin in lecturing America was particularly irksome to American leaders. John Boehner, the Speaker of the House, said he almost threw up when he read Vladimir Putin's editorial because to be lectured by the Russians on human rights he thought was just particularly objectionable and over the top.

So America has always had the sense that it has a special place in the world, a special role in the world and that role involves advancing democracy and free markets together with human rights. That we were the first democratic nation in the world, others had followed on and they should watch us and learn from us as they become more democratic themselves. But much of the world looks at those American claims to exceptionalism and says, "We don't think so," particularly Europe. Europe is also democratic; it's also rich; and so we have a sense of our self as a special nation in the world that others sometimes do not share.

And at the basis of that sense of American exceptionalism is the idea of the American Dream. That is a phrase that you have heard any number of times over the course of your life to this point. And the idea of the American Dream is that one of the ways in which America is special is that it promises to offer the best prospect for opportunity and achievement to common people of any society in the world; that the American Dream suggests that if an individual American, either a young person in the rising generation or immigrants, will behave correctly. In other words, if they will educate themselves, if they'll gain a skill or a trade, if they'll work hard, if they will compete with others in the marketplace and the economy, they may not succeed the first time. But if they get up, dust themselves off and try again, that they've got a better chance through their own individual exertion and effort of succeeding and taking care of themselves and their family, having a comfortable financial existence, and maybe breaking it bigger than that and becoming wealthy. So, part of the American Dream is addressed to individuals and it is that if you will act systematically to gain education, to gain a skill, a trade, work hard in that trade, save and invest, that you'll have a better chance in America to be successful than any other country in the world.

The other part of the American Dream is the nation's responsibility, that is, a corporate responsibility, it's a communal responsibility. It's a responsibility of the American government to be sure that the society and its economy are organized in such a way as to be accessible to common people, that there is enough economic growth and enough opportunity that when you have prepared yourself through a good education and learning job skills and a trade, that you can engage an economy that is producing enough good jobs that you can start at the entry level, work hard, get a promotion, maybe move to another higher paying job and work your way up through the economy to ever more secure higher-paying, challenging and rewarding jobs. So, there are two parts to the American Dream. One is addressed to the individual, and that is that you are expected to work hard and systematically in getting an education, gaining job skills, working hard. If you fail the first time, trying again, working your way up through the economy. And the other side of it is that the United States government, through the Congress, the president and the courts, are responsible for organizing the society and the economy in such a way that it is open and competitive and available for your efforts. And what that means is, if the economy has to be growing at a rate that is employing everyone who's already in the marketplace but

growing fast enough to take the next generation of immigrants and the next generation of college graduates and provide them with opportunity to pursue and compete over as well.

And at some points in American history, government has been broadly effective in assuring that the prerequisites to effort and competition on the part of the individuals is widely available. And that at other points in American history, it has seemed that opportunity is shrinking, that the prospects of good jobs are limited, and so that when you come out in the economy, maybe there's not going to be a job there. If there is, maybe it's a job that is not consistent with your skills. Maybe you've got a college degree but you've got to take a job that oftentimes high school graduates used to take, or somebody with less experience and less of a degree. So, the American Dream has always been the promise that if you prepare well and work hard that society will be open enough to receive your efforts and to reward them; maybe not on the first trial but down the road on second effort if you fail to begin with.

And, a second part of that idea of the American Dream is that oftentimes there are images, there are examples, that sort of crystallize the meaning of important concepts like the American Dream. And sometimes those concepts or images or examples help a lot in getting an intuitive sort of gut level grasp of a complicated concept. And so, one of the examples that I give is that, in the religious area, the idea that salvation is difficult to achieve is an idea that you can sort of get your mind around -- that earning salvation, eternity in Heaven for all time expects a lot, that it's hard to achieve. But there's an image in the Bible to suggest how difficult salvation is and it's the image that says, particularly for a rich man, salvation is as difficult as it is "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." Now, that is a different sort of intuitive impact than the idea that salvation is difficult. How difficult? As difficult as a camel passing through the eye of a needle, which is to say, "Damn near impossible; really hard."

And so there are three images that politicians and leading members of society have used over the course of American history in talking about the American Dream that have that same sort of galvanizing impact on the meaning of the idea. And the first one is that America will be "a city on a hill." That idea of America as a city on a hill, an example to the world, was first articulated by a man named John Winthrop, who was the governor of the Puritans who were coming from England to settle New England in 1630. There were already a few thousand Pilgrims in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but the Puritans were a larger group. There would be 20,000 of them who would come between 1630 and 1640, and John Winthrop was their leader and their first governor. And so, he gave a speech onboard the flagship of the Puritan fleet before anyone ever stepped to shore in North America to sort of galvanize his fellow Puritans with the gravity of the business that they were undertaking. And he said, "We shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us so that if we deal falsely with our God in this work, He will pursue us out of this beautiful land." And so he was saying, "Think of yourself as you approach these initial settlements in New England as if you were to be a city on a hill; meaning, seeing from a great distance. Think of yourself as a city on a hill that mankind is watching." And what Winthrop was saying is that in Europe, Puritans couldn't live their religious lives as they thought most appropriate, so they were going to go to North America in order to found a Bible commonwealth, a true Christian community -- that other Puritans and Christians in Europe could see how a true Bible commonwealth is put together, learn from it, and demanded for themselves in Europe. So, from before the Puritans stepped ashore,

they were telling each other what we do here is going to be an example to all of the world to learn from and to emulate. And that idea has been part of American history from the very beginning.

There was a very famous speech by one of the most prominent United States senators of the 19th century delivered on July 4, 1826. July 4, 1826 is the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and on that day, both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams -- Adams had been the second President of the United States, Jefferson had been the third. They had been heroes of the American Revolution and the early national period, and both of them died within hours of each other on that same day, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. And so, the country, and particularly its leadership class, thought, this is really an inspired happening -- that this closes the first chapter in American history. It requires an assessment of how we got to where we are today and where we're going into the future.

And Senator Daniel Webster gave a eulogy to Adams and Jefferson, in which he brought this "city on a hill" theme back to life. And he said, "The world turns hither, its solicitous eyes. It cannot be denied that with America and in America, a new era commences in human affairs. If we cherish the virtues and principles of our fathers, Heaven will assist us to carry on the work of human liberty and human happiness." So, he was saying that here, 50 years in, we are an example to the world. The world expects us to lead, they're watching us for how we behave and the direction that we set for ourselves, that a new era has commenced in human affairs with the founding of America, and the death of Adams and Jefferson have closed that first chapter.

You can imagine that this idea from Winthrop and from Daniel Webster that America is the model for the rest of the world to follow has aggravated a lot of other people, not just Vladimir Putin last week. But the most prominent European interpreter of the American society, its culture and politics in the 19th century was a man named Alexis de Tocqueville. If you haven't heard that name, you will. In any sociology course you take, any political science course you take. Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 wrote a book called "Democracy in America." And that book stands as the most insightful single inquiry into the nature of the American republic and what made it -- what makes it distinctive. But de Tocqueville in "Democracy in America" was also aggravated because he wrote this -- it sounds much like Putin -- it says, "For the last 50 years, no pains have been spared to convince the inhabitants of the United States that they are the only religious-enlightened and free people. Hence, they can see the high opinion of their superiority that are not very remote from believing themselves to be distinct species of mankind." So Alexis de Tocqueville in "Democracy in America," he's a French minor aristocrat visiting America to survey the prison system of the country and take back lessons to France, but he looks much more broadly. He studies the society in general because he's convinced that America is the first democracy, Europe is going to democratize, and he can study the mistakes made as America experimented with democracy, so Europe doesn't have to make those same mistakes. And so he's writing about America in the coming democratic age, but he's listening to these Americans talking about how special they are and he's saying, "Look, you know, it's just not all that true. I mean, you're the first ones there, but you're not the only religious democratic people." And so, Putin's comments, we reject out of hand because he's a

communist, right? He's an atheist. We're not going to listen to the President of Russia lecture us. But when Alexis de Tocqueville says similar things, we -- at least, we political scientists -- do tend to listen

So that "city on a hill" --there's a wonderful quote here that I will quickly share with you from Herman Melville, author, middle of the 19th century. "Moby-Dick" is his most famous book. Do not read that book [laughter]. Moby-Dick is a weird book and I made the mistake of picking it up and starting it this summer. My wife said that she wanted a copy of "Moby-Dick" for Mother's Day and I said, "Well, I'm getting off pretty easy here." So, I went and found a copy, but I got a really nice sort of premiere edition of "Moby-Dick" and it turned out she wasn't really all that interested in it, she wasn't going to read it immediately. So, I picked it up and started it. That is an experience I do not recommend. [laughter] There are some interesting passages in "Moby-Dick," but it is a hell of a grind. And it is a good 500 pages long, so I can encapsulate it for you afterwards if you feel like you need that. But, Herman Melville said this, "We Americans are the peculiar chosen people. The Israel of our time, we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. God has predestined. Mankind expects great things of our race and great things we feel in our souls. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard." And so, maybe, maybe not, but we have thought highly of ourselves and our position in the world over the course of American history; that we are a nation constituted in such a way as to be open to the efforts of the common man in the way no other country in the world has been.

And so, the second image that we have used continuously over the course of American history is that there has to be a balance in American public policy between property rights and human rights. And in the 19th century, that was described as a balance between "the dollar and the man" -- the dollar, meaning property rights; the man, meaning human rights. And so, our public philosophy, our sense of government's purpose, has always involved the idea that we want to be a country in which liberty and opportunity is widespread, recognizing that as people compete over the opportunity available in our society, that some will fail and others will break it big. Bill Gates -- \$40-, \$50 billion as opposed to someone on food stamps.

But that public policy has to be aware that property rights can overwhelm human rights, that the dollar can command the man. And the country and its leadership, political classes, always understood it's really got to be the other way around, that when the challenge comes, that the man --human rights -- has to be more important than the dollar -- property rights. And at some periods in American history, it has seemed that property rights overwhelmed human rights. The most obvious example is slavery, right? How committed can you be in human rights if you let people own, have property and other people? And so, the idea of a balance between the dollar and the man has been a theme that helps presidents and other leaders sort of set the course of the nation's development.

One Jacksonian-era, sort of early-19th-century-scholar and advisor to Andrew Jackson of the Democratic Party said, "We believe that property should be held subordinate to man and not man to property. And therefore, that it is always lawful to make such modifications of property rights as the good of humanity requires." So, that's the formulation that you can get property so out of balance, well, so concentrated

that it becomes a threat to the opportunity of the common man in the next generation and that we have to stay alert to that.

Theodore Roosevelt in the early 20th century -- President Roosevelt is most famous as the great trustbuster, using government power to assault undue concentrations of economic power, in the railroads of the day, US Steel of the day and also of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. If Standard Oil was able to command the oil industry from wellhead to sale, 90% of it, he could sort of hold down every other kind of entrepreneurship. And so, Theodore Roosevelt was the great trustbuster. And Roosevelt said, "We grudge no man of fortune, which represents his own power and sagacity when exercised with entire regard to the welfare of his fellows. We cordially believe in the rights of property. We think that normally and in the long run, the rights of humanity coincide with the rights of property. But we feel that if, in exceptional cases, there is any conflict between the rights of property and the rights of man that we must stand for the rights of man." And that sort of theme has run throughout American history and is very much alive today as I'll mention in just a couple of minutes.

The last image I want to present more quickly is the idea of the "fairly run race" -- that if America is going to be country that provides opportunity broadly to its citizens, one way to think about that opportunity is that everyone should have a fair chance to start even in the race of life. And so, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and a number of others have talked about a "fair race," an equal start in the race for life -- and opportunity as being fairness.

But as we move toward the 20th century, other presidents, particularly Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s said, "Look, if there are members of our society that have been chained, held back, limited in terms of access to opportunity over the course of centuries, it's not fair to click off the chains, bring them up to the start of a race and said, "Now, you're free to compete," and expect that the results of that race are going to be a fair measure of people's abilities. So you've got to do things to be sure that everybody before the starting gun goes off is ready, that everyone has access to high quality education. And particularly that the children of the poor have an opportunity to get a good public education and get access to college. So, at the community college this morning, that's the bottom rung of the American system of higher education, and then you move to four-year schools, you move within four-year, schools, the flagship campuses, major state university systems and then you move up to Berkeley, Harvard, Yale, you know, the very top. But, it's a system that is supposed to have a place for everybody, and people worry today whether it actually does or not.

So the American Dream has been critical in sort of saying what the extra takes in expectations are that our society has for individuals and for public policy -- individuals work hard, public policy has to be open and fair. And that's what brings us here today -- that the Constitution is the framework that is supposed to -- that is supposed to direct our elected officials to the kinds of solutions, the kinds of public policies that will keep the society open to people's aspirations. And so, I want to draw attention quickly just to two aspects of the Constitution, because if the challenged individual is to prepare well and work hard, the society has to be open to the wide range of human effort from those who are already successful to those just starting out.

The Preamble to Constitution is distinctive in world history because it is the first example of popular sovereignty, the first example of a constitution written for the approval of the common people of the society to be then ratified by conventions elected by the common people. So, the Preamble to the Constitution says, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States." Lots of people have pointed out how revolutionary it was if you just read the first clause and the last. "We, the people of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." -- kings, tyrants, all kinds of landed nobility all over the world; first example of popular sovereignty at the national level in the United States.

The Constitution, if you've had a chance to look at it in your American government courses, is amazingly brief. So the Constitution doesn't directly govern our modern politics. The Constitution, together with the Legislation of the last 225 years, and the Supreme Court cases of the last 235, 225, 235 years, interpret the Constitution, flesh out the meaning of its very general clauses. So just reading the Constitution is not going to give you a very good sense of how the government works today, but thinking about the Constitution as the channel through which legislation and court cases have flown through the last 2 1/4 centuries is a much better way to think about how the Constitution has been the framework for American political development.

The last thing I want to draw your attention to in the Constitution is how the Bill of Rights -- the most famous of the Bill of Rights is the First Amendment, which is "freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition." You've heard about that and it's important, but what flows out of popular sovereignty? What flows out of respect for individuals high and low is really the Fourth through the Eighth Amendments because what the Fourth through the Eighth Amendments to the Constitution do is -- say that in Europe, if the king is offended by you or something you have done, he sends his sheriff to collect you up and throw your butt in the Tower of London and you stay there until his rage subsides or he decides to send the hangman. The king judges you and determines your fate. And the Bill of Rights says, "Not here. Not here."

The Fourth Amendment says, and students usually love this because this is search and seizure, the right to privacy. If the cop stops your car, can he tell you, "Open the trunk." The answer is no, you can't. Right? And so, because students sometimes have shit in their trunk they're not supposed to have, this is an important piece of information, right? So, the Fourth Amendment says, "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated." It goes on a little bit.

The Fifth Amendment says, "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime upon presentment of an indictment by a grand jury." A grand jury is a group of your peers to whom government presents the information they have suggests you committed a crime, and your peers

says, "I don't see it. I don't think there's a conviction there. I don't see a crime. You can't go arrest that guy." So, without an indictment, they can't come and get you. And it goes on.

The Sixth Amendment is that "in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial." King can't come get you and throw you in jail. There's going to be a public trial in your hometown, right? And it's going to be a speedy trial by an impartial jury of the state or district when the crime shall have been committed. And so, again, you know, it's a protection. If government is going to come against a citizen, that is a terrifying experience unless there are rules that say they've got to come slowly and they've got to come through formal procedures and processes, they've got to get an indictment, they've got to get an arrest warrant, they've got to convince a judge. And so, as an American, from the founding period, you can breathe easily because government is slowed and limited in how it comes. Now, if you do something wrong and they come for you, that's still terrifying, right? But you can, as an American, stand before a judge with your head up rather than thinking that that guy works for the king and is going to do his will against you.

I will in three minutes finish three points that I think ought to be of interest to you because they structure the reality in which you are about to emerge as a participant in the American society and economy. When you finish undergraduate school, you may go on to graduate school, you can't get too much education in this economy. But if you go out and go to work, there are three things that are occurring in the American economy that will affect your prospects.

One is income and equality. Income and equality is the question of the distribution of income and of wealth across the population. There is a more skewed distribution of income and wealth today than there has ever been in the recordkeeping since 1913. So, what that means is that the top 20% of income earners in 2012 took 50% of income and the top 1% took 20% of earned income in the United States. The bottom 20% took a little less than 4% of earned income; so, bottom 20%, less than 4; top 20%, 50. And so, the closest period for income inequality in American history before this last year was 1928, the year before the Great Crash and the beginning of the Depression. Now, that's not to say we already had pretty terrifying little crash of our own here recently, but income inequality is the question of whether the nation's wealth is spread fairly broadly through its workforce, or more narrowly skewed toward the top. Now, I can look at this crowd and see that almost every one of you are going to be near the top, so you don't have anything to worry about, right? You're going to be doing just fine. But, if one of you slips and ends up in the bottom, it could be a rough go. And the more information that you -- the more education you have, the better off you are.

Second thing is, intergenerational economic mobility; that is how easy or difficult is it to go from low in the income structure to middle class or higher. And, again, there's a great deal of stickiness in the intergenerational mobility; that is, your generation's prospects of rising up through the income scale. If you came from a lower middle-class family, say, bottom 20%, what are the prospects you get to the middle 20%, let alone, the top 20%? And there is a great stickiness because the American society through its educational system is very, very good at taking wealthy kids and moving them directly from wealthy households through excellent schools and universities to high incomes. And at the bottom, you

have poor parents, poor schools, locked out of college into low-paying jobs. There's a little bit more bouncing around in the middle, but at the top and at the bottom, there's a stickiness that is unusual in American history and unwelcome. It would be nice if it were a little more fluid, so that a person who worked really hard to get a good education, started a business, did something really remarkable, could break it out all the way to the top. That's not impossible. It is more difficult than it's been at some other points.

And finally, I will tell you the college costs are high. This may come as a shock to you. It is not as high at the community college level and not as high here as it is in many places, but still, students have a more difficult time affording college than at earlier periods in American history. I graduated from undergraduate school in 1971 and came out with \$700 in loans, which I was able to pay off relatively quickly. But the average cost of a year's college today is \$21,000 and the -- and two-thirds of students come out with debts and the average of that debt is \$26,600. Now, that is a weight as you move into your first job, particularly if your first job is not, you know, a partner in a major law firm. You've got to, in your first job, well, you might make \$40,000 if you're lucky. \$45,000 to pay off 26,600 is going to be difficult and it's going to take some time. So, what that means is that our political system has failed to make college, which is the prerequisite to modern economic success, widely available.

In the 19th century, the prerequisite to economic success was free or cheap land in the West. And so, the government could say, "If you go west, the land will be cheap, if not free, and all you got to do is knock down the trees, plant it, build a log cabin, take care of your family out there, and if you've got the gumption, we've got the land. Go get it." Today, you know, you might do that, but a farmer's going to shoot you because he's on his land [laughter] -- you're on his land.

The equivalent is not free land in the west; it's a good high quality education. Ideally an undergraduate education more than that perhaps, but if you got to come out with \$26,600 in debt, that means that it is not widely available to the rising generation. Some people can do that easily. A middle class kid might do with a little bit of difficulty, but a poor kid is really going to struggle with the idea of \$26,600 and isn't going to get much help from parents and families. So, it is the responsibility of young people like you to get ready as best you can -- to study, to work hard, to get the best education you can and get as much of it as you can and then launch into the economy with a reasonable chance of security and success.

But it's also the responsibility of the American society and government to be sure that the structure of society is open, permeable, the economy has jobs, good high-paying jobs that you can get out there and get after and compete for. And you might be doing what you're supposed to do. I know some of you aren't because you're not that different from my students. Some of you are doing what you're supposed to, some aren't. Those of you who aren't, get after it. But, the society is not doing what it's supposed to do. It's supposed to ensure that the requisites to success for those who do the right thing is there and it's not entirely close to there today.

So on that fairly sad note, I will stop and welcome your questions, but not just questions. If you have to go, please do feel free to do that. If you want to stay around and talk a little bit, if you want to rebut my mistakes, too, do feel free to do that. Yes, sir?

Audience member: Do you think the American Dream is like outdated or dead [inaudible]?

Dr. Jillson: No, I don't think so. I think that the American Dream is that in a free society, which we are, that a person who does the right thing, who studies hard, gets as much education as possible, and gains a skill or a trade and then works hard in that is going to have a better chance to succeed here than anywhere else in the world. Now, that may be an overstatement because there are European societies, Northern European societies, wealthier than we are. But you ought to be able to get after it with a good chance of success, and you can. But it's not as good as your parents' chance of success, or my chance of success. So, we owe you better and public policy could deliver better. Yeah?

Audience member: So is it really impossible for an individual from a poor background to go to a graduate school like Yale or Berkeley or...?

Dr. Jillson: No. It is absolutely not impossible, and this is a -- [inaudible] I'll repeat the question. Is it impossible for someone who comes out of a poor family to go to graduate school, or Harvard or Yale or Berkeley or someplace like that? And the answer is, it is absolutely not impossible. And that's what I tried to talk to the kids at Butte this morning about that. Community college is a fine place to start. Those first two years, oftentimes you get teachers who are vastly more dedicated than, say, I am. Where I teach, too, there are students because I do other stuff and I teach my class, try to do a good job, but then I go off and, you know, I go to California and talk to other people, students, and write books and other things. And so I sometimes wake up and, you know, you're not doing exactly as much as you could for your own students.

So, to the extent that can, you get started wherever you can, get an undergraduate degree at the best school that you can afford and this is a very good school. You can then go to a graduate program if you do well enough -- 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, really good -- and score well on the GRE, the exam to go to graduate school. They pay you to go to graduate school -- at Harvard and Yale and Berkeley, and every graduate program in the country. You don't pay to go to graduate school in economics or in sociology or political science or history -- anything really. In the sciences, oftentimes you got to be on somebody's grant, you work in their lab, but they pay you to go to graduate school. And at the really good schools, they pay you \$30,000 a year all of your tuition, they give you book money for God's sake. So, you know, it really is set up, but you got to be good. Right?

Now, you can go -- I went to the University of Maryland because I didn't know from squat going to undergraduate school. I came out of a relatively -- you know, my father and by the time he was 33, had multiple sclerosis and couldn't work and my mother worked in a pickle and sauerkraut factory, putting pickles in jars. Right? So, we're not talking of wealthy family. I drove in to a school very much like this, Portland State University, for two years, lived at home, then went down to Oregon State, this is right

there sort of between those two. And, you know, I had no idea about law school or medical school or anything like that, but they still had the draft then and I got drafted, went to the army, got the GI Bill. Sort of, "Hell, I'll go to graduate school. You know, I'm going to make them give me this GI Bill money and then I found out and they'll give me money to go to graduate school, I thought, "Holy shit [laughter]. This is going to work." So, yeah, and oftentimes when you come out of a family that is not several-generations-deep college graduates, your parents don't know what to tell you. They don't have the experience, really, to give you good advice. But, I now do and I can tell you wherever you start from, it is -- you know, it's not easy. Most people end up not doing it, but you can go from here to anywhere. And you should, right? Bust it. What the hell. What else? Yes, ma'am?

Audience member: I wonder if you, when you spoke about the American Dream and religion and not [inaudible] political issues -- but I wondered if the same attitude that, you know, you believe that if you work hard enough that you'll get there. Is the side effect of this divisiveness that we have today and throughout our history that, you know, if you will work [inaudible] being able to [inaudible] problem...

Dr. Jillson: Yeah.

Audience member: ...and, you know, you see the divisiveness at the top levels, top [inaudible].

Dr. Jillson: Yeah. That's exactly right. And there is a dark side to the American Dream because-- the positive side is just what we've been talking about here that if you do the right thing, work hard, have some luck which I haven't mentioned. Luck is critical. Knowing somebody, having somebody that you -- a friend of the family who you talk to who knows this stuff and can tell you how to move through this. So, things happen. Luck is a big part of it.

But, our society highlights competition, and in competition some portion of society is going to win. Some of them will win a good comfortable middle class prosperity. Some will win a lot more than that, but others are going to lose. And if you lose and get trampled -- de Tocqueville also talked about a "vague dread" permeating the American society. And that "vague dread" is "someone is beating me. Someone is doing better than I am, getting to the prime opportunity before I do." Think of the Oklahoma land rush, right? You've got that picture in your mind of the covered wagons lined up 20 miles wide, free land in Oklahoma territory, and the gun goes off, the wagons take off, and somebody in the next wagon is driving like hell while his wife is in the back with a 22 -- pow, pow -- shooting your ox, for Christ's sake. You know, there's cheating. There's undue competition and so that is the dark side of the American Dream, that people who try to do the right thing and to behave honorably can still lose. And if they lose, they are often blamed; that you lost because of personal shortcomings. I won because of how magnificent I am and how hard I tried and how smart I was to have the raw materials to work with. And you, you poor sucker, what is wrong with you? You don't have the drive. You're a drunk; drugs, whatever it is, it does lead to an invidious judgment on those who aren't visibly successful, and there are themes -- that is a theme throughout American history. Oftentimes from societies looking at us and saying, "Look, you're approach to social and economic life has led to great prosperity, but you have

destroyed a lot of people. You've chewed them up." So, finding that balance is critical. Yes, sir?
[Inaudible] and he thinks he's got me. Look at this. See?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Dr. Jillson: Wow. See? These people invited me here. They invited me here to tell you, "No, it's not worth it. You got to go home [laughter]." No. See, I'm not going to fall for that. The question is, I'm from out of state, so I pay out-of-state tuition, is it worth it for me to do that? And the answer is that you've got to be clear-eyed about these things. And the answer isn't either yes or no, it is that you've got to -- as each one of you do -- to sit down and look at where I am trying to go, what kind of education is going to be most likely to get me there and where is that education best delivered at a competitive price? And if the answer comes out at Cal State Chico, touchdown [laughter].

But, you know, if it comes -- if that analysis comes out to say, you know, Colorado State, somewhere home. But the key thing is that you should go to the best school that you can afford in the area that you are looking to get educated in. And that's particularly the case as you move up. Community college and undergraduate school are important, but increasingly, they set you up either to go into the job market right away or to go to graduate school. At the gradual level, it is absolutely critical that you go to the best school you can get into. And usually, they'll pay you to do that. Now, at the MA level, they may not, so here's a piece of advice that you should write in your notebook. If you apply to graduate school -- lie [laughter]. Tell them that you're there for a PhD. Never tell them you're there for an MA because if you tell them you're there for an MA, they'll say "Fine, here's the tuition bill." If you tell them you're there for a PhD, you're getting an assistantship and you cruise through the MA and, you know, you should stay and go on and get the PhD. But, if you're not sure, I didn't mean to say to lie, what I meant to say is [laughter] -- they're taping this. They're taping this. Yeah. Be strategic. Go ask your economics professor what that means -- be strategic. Anybody else? Yes, sir?

Audience member: I was just thinking about -- talking about the dark side of the American Dream, having spent some time analyzing [inaudible] societies that claim to be equal, you mentioned the Soviet Union. I have never seen societies that chew people out more profoundly and more thoroughly, so it makes me wonder...

Dr. Jillson: Yeah.

Audience member: ...which -- is our dark side maybe less dark?

Dr. Jillson: Yeah. It's our ways compared to what. That's a great point. But, you know, it's critical when you talk about American exceptionalism or the American Dream or any of those sort of things, not to be Pollyannish and not to suggest that it's easy, that everyone is going to have that optimal experience, and that there aren't costs to organizing your society that way. There are costs to organizing your society as a competitive enterprise. But, the benefit is that for those who do challenge themselves and develop

their skills and work hard rise to the occasion, they maximize their abilities. But there are a lot of people who are going to fall by the wayside

And then the question compared to what is the example of another way to organize society that is less harmful with equal benefits, sort of a Pareto optimal solution. Is there a society that will give you the same or more benefits with fewer or equal costs? And you might point to -- you might point to the societies of Northern Europe -- Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Luxemburg. These are generally small and used to be very homogenous societies, a little bit less so now, but they got in the 1980s, 1970s and '80s where they were taking in taxation 60% of GDP, right? More than half the income created by the society in a year and leaving to workers 40%. And so, under those circumstances, the economists suggest, how hard is it going to -- a person going to work if you're going to take 60 cents on a dollar from them? And you had very thick social services, education through college, not just through high school, cradle-to-grave healthcare, all that kind of stuff. But over the last 15 years, those societies have reduced their tax rates down into the 40s. So, they're still a little higher taxes than we are, not as high as they used to be because they didn't want to sap initiative, but it makes it hard for them to deliver their range of services they used to. So, where do you find that sweet spot of high enough taxes to deliver the services that will be the foundation from which people move off to develop their skills is going to keep us fully employed for a very long time.

Dr. Gibson: Let's have one more question.

Dr. Jillson: Yeah, one more question, so who's got a really good one? Yes, sir?

Audience member: What effects does the [inaudible]?

Dr. Jillson: Yeah. We talked about this this morning, and it is no more than a two-minute description. But coming out of World War II, we were not bombed, but all of the other advanced industrial societies in the world -- including Europe, Russia, Japan -- were all bombed to smithereens. So, in the late 1940s, early 1950s, the US economy was 50% of global GDP. Think about that for a minute. The US economy was 50% of global wealth creation, and so we were able to pay our industrial workers for Ford and other kinds of heavy manufacturing in the Midwest, high wages with good benefits.

But, after World War II, we get a couple of things. You've heard of the Marshall Plan? The Marshall Plan, we used about \$7 billion to help rebuild Europe, to get them up on their feet, get their economy going again. We did the same thing with the Dodge Plan in Japan thinking that we wanted Western Europe to come back up, start wealth creation again so that they could help us stand off the Soviet Union. But what that meant was that our steel industry in the Ohio Valley was built in the 1920s, '30s and '40s before the war. We bombed the Ruhr Valley of Germany, which was their steel industry, and Japan, so their new steel industries were postwar, 1950, early 1960; newest technology, very, very able to outcompete us. So by 1973, Europe was back, Japan was back. We were declining from that 50% of global GDP through 30 and it wasn't clear where that was going to stop. Maybe they were going to keep

going and we were going to decline. During the '80s and '90s, especially the '90s, we did come back. We're about 24% of global GDP today.

So, at 50% of global GDP, we could have a thriving middle class. People graduated from high school, going to work at Ford, having a wonderful income. At 24% of GDP, competing with Japan, Germany, and China on the rise, paying people one-sixth what we pay workers. There are downward pressures on the American income structure as a result of globalization. It's very real, but all of that means is, if you know what you're doing, you'll stay in school, right? Because you got to -- you've got to develop a set of intellectual skills that allow you to be part of that high-value-added, top-of-the-American economy, right? If you don't go to college, it's going to be very difficult. If you do go to college, if you do go higher than a four-year degree, then you increase your chances of not working an assembly line, but working R and D, working in the sciences, having patents that you earn, all of those kinds of things. So, you should be running scared, but not too scared. Scared enough to get all the education you can before you launch yourself out into the economy. But if you do that, you'll do fine, I guarantee it. Come and show me if I'm wrong [laughter]. All right?

Thank you very much [applause]. It's been wonderful. Thank you.