

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

POLS-1101

Marbury v. Madison (1803) – Even though the Constitution never specifically mentioned it, the Supreme Court used this case to assert for itself the power of “Judicial Review” for Federal actions (i.e., Federal Courts can interpret the meaning of the Constitution, and declare legislative or executive acts unconstitutional).

Fletcher v. Peck (1810) – The Supreme Court ruled that Georgia had violated a contract, establishing for itself and other Federal courts the right to judge state laws unconstitutional. This began a long process of Federal erosion of state sovereignty supposedly guaranteed under the “Reserved Clause” of the 10th Amendment.

McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) – Based on the “Necessary & Proper” clause in the Constitution, the Supreme Court decided that the Federal government could establish a national bank in Maryland, despite the opposition of the state. This established the principle of vast “Implied Powers” for the national government, not specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857) – Slaves were determined to be property, not citizens, thus setting the stage for arguments which culminated in the Civil War.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) – This infamous case allowed racial segregation as long as facilities were “Separate but Equal.” This precedent was overturned in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Schenk v. United States (1919) – First Amendment rights, including the freedom of speech, can be limited during national emergencies, thus establishing the “Clear and Present Danger” formula for limiting speech.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) – The Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation was inherently unequal and thus violated the 14th Amendment’s “Equal Protection” clause. This overturning of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* precedent helped usher in the Civil Rights movement.

Mapp v. Ohio (1961) – This case overturned a pornography conviction because of an illegal search and seizure of evidence by police. This case helped establish the right of privacy for citizens and began the “Exclusionary Rule” for tainted evidence in court trials.

Baker v. Carr (1962) – The court ruled that gerrymandering sometimes violated the “Equal Protection” of citizens, and later, that Congressional district lines must guarantee “One Man, One Vote.”

Engle v. Vitale (1962) – Together with several other cases, this ruling determined that religious ceremonies in public schools, including teacher-led school prayer, were unconstitutional because they violated First Amendment guarantees against the “Establishment” of religion.

Miranda v. Arizona (1966) - A confession obtained through the “Third Degree” technique was ruled inadmissible in a trial because the suspect was not informed of his right to remain silent.

Roe v. Wade (1973) – Based on implied Constitutional privacy rights, the Supreme Court ruled that states may not interfere with a woman’s right to an abortion during the early trimesters of pregnancy.