

An NLP Approach to:

The Federalist Papers & The Antifederalist Papers

Will Moore

Historical Background

Historical Background

Federalists



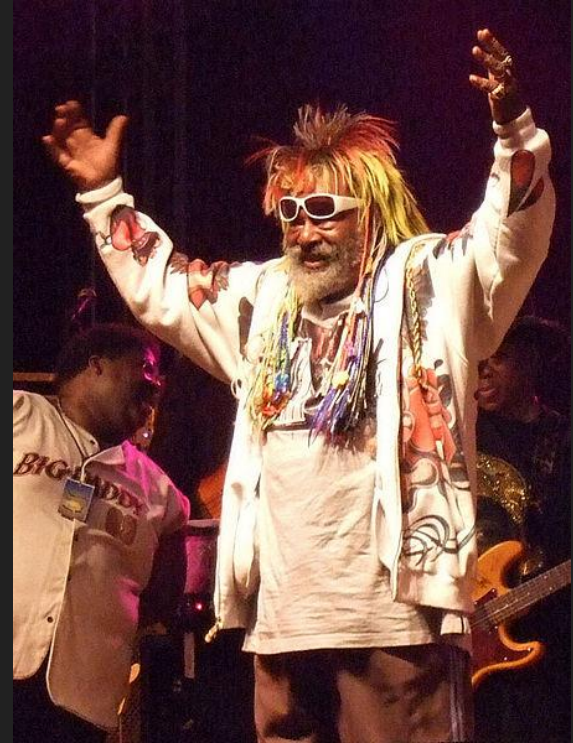
Hamilton!

Historical Background

Federalists



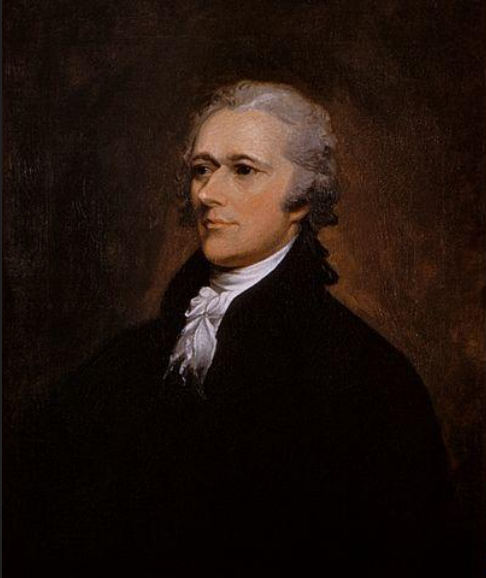
Antifederalists



George Clinton!

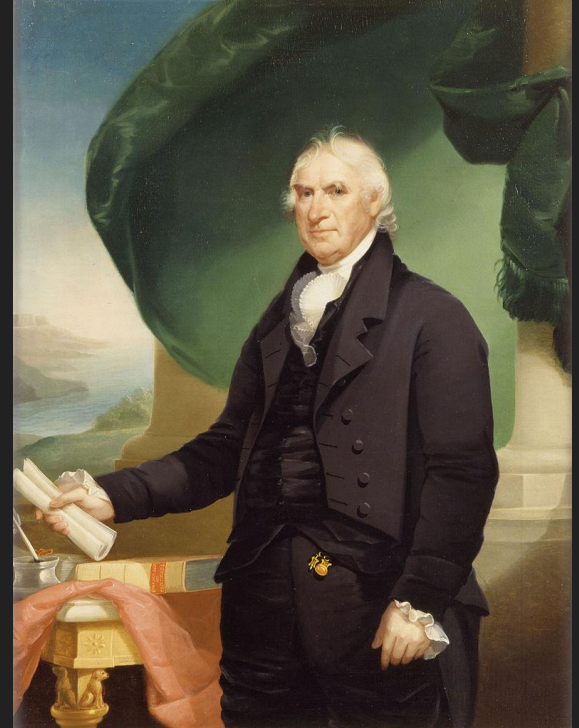
Or maybe more like this:

Federalists



Alexander Hamilton

Antifederalists



George Clinton

The Texts

The Federalist Papers were written to sell the Constitution to the American people.

The Antifederalist Papers were the other side of the argument matched with The Federalist Papers



The Antifederalist Papers

Borden, Morton

Note: This is not the actual book cover

Motivation:

How do we hear both sides of the argument on a particular topic?

The Constitution - 4 pages

The Federalist Papers - 600 pages

The Antifederalist Papers - 258 pages



The Antifederalist Papers

Borden, Morton

Note: This is not the actual book cover

Process

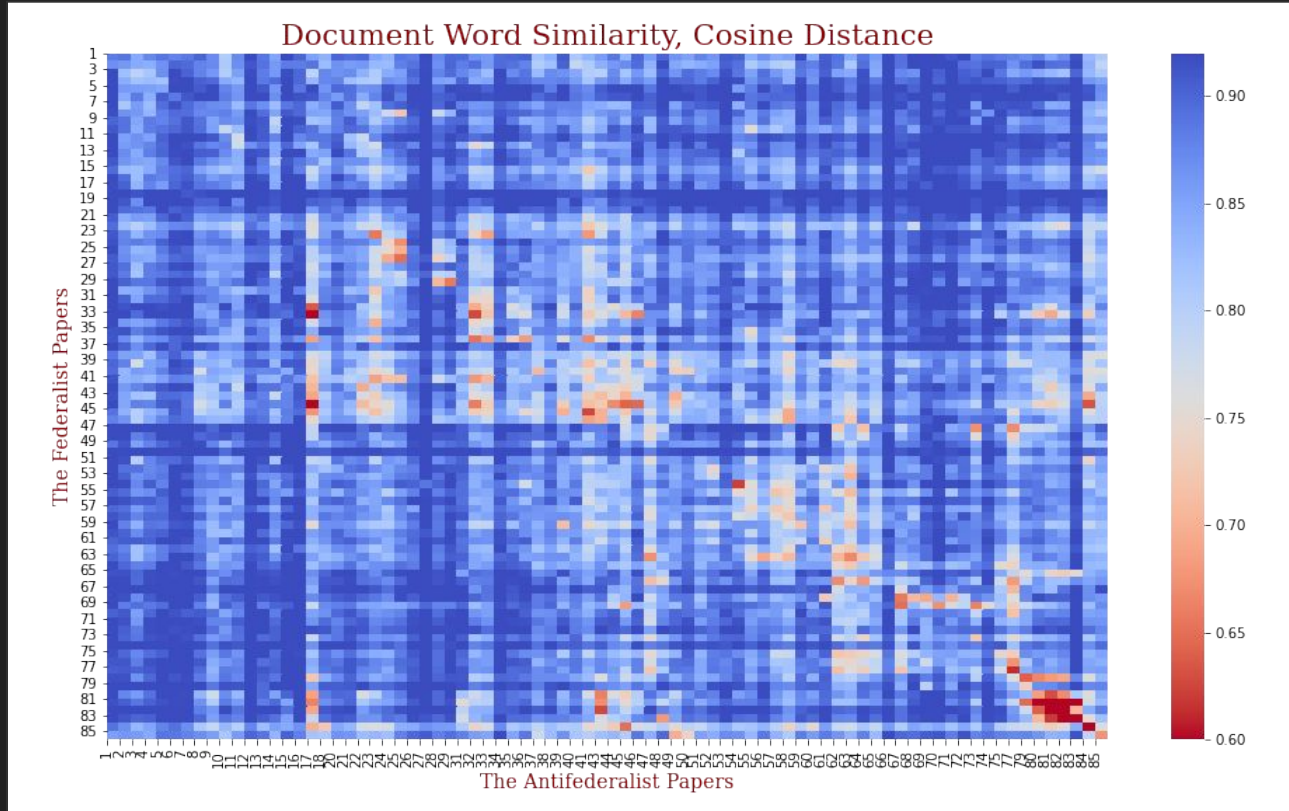
Texts from archive.org

Use sklearn's TFIDF to create a Document Term Matrix

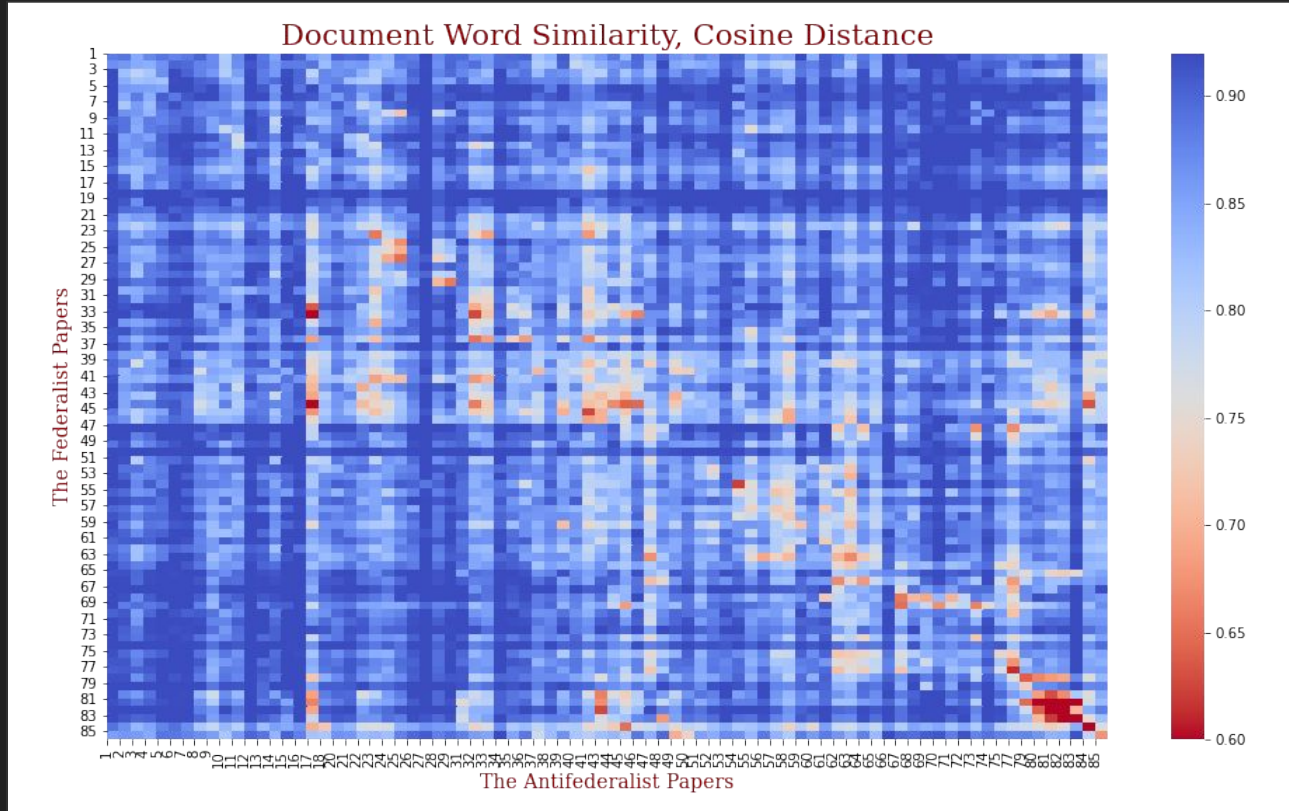
Use sklearn's `pairwise_distances` and numpy for a cosine distance table

Use matplotlib and Seaborn to visualize

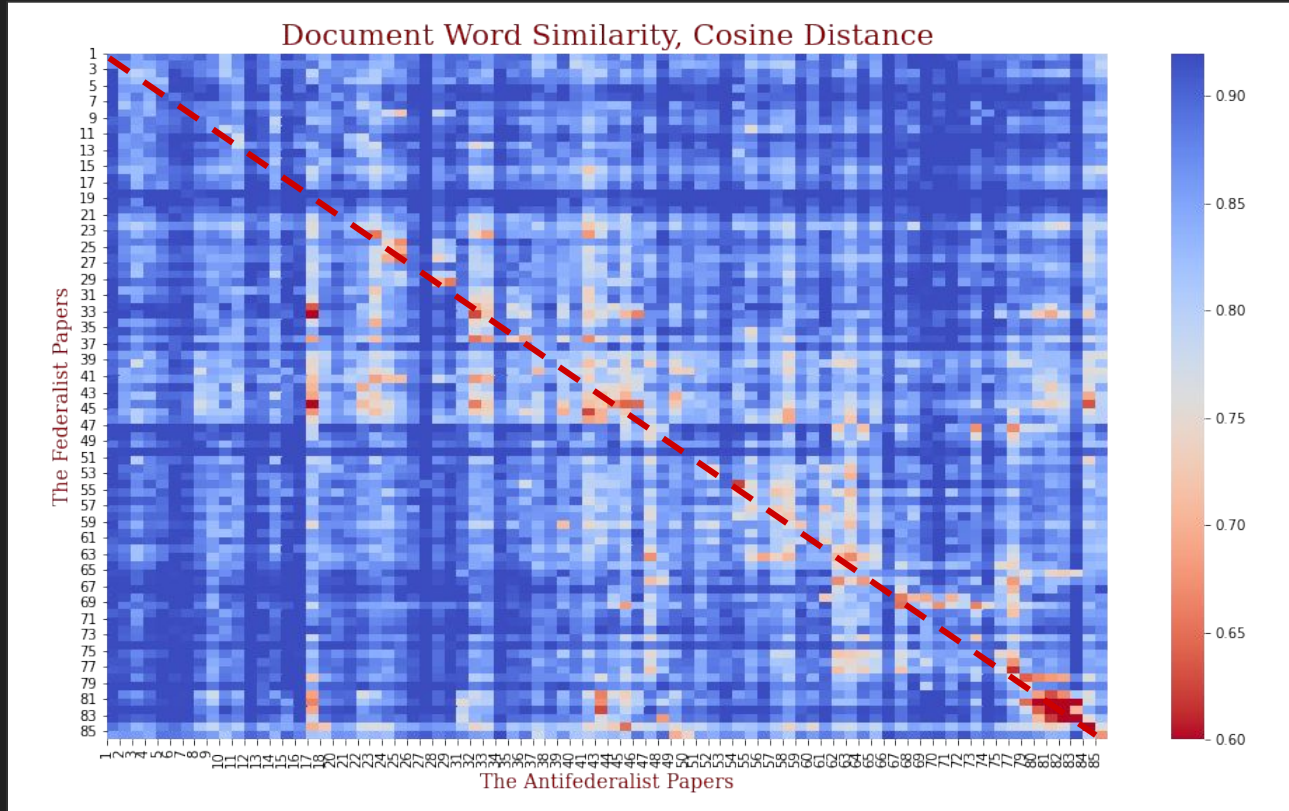
Matching The Federalist/Antifederalist Papers



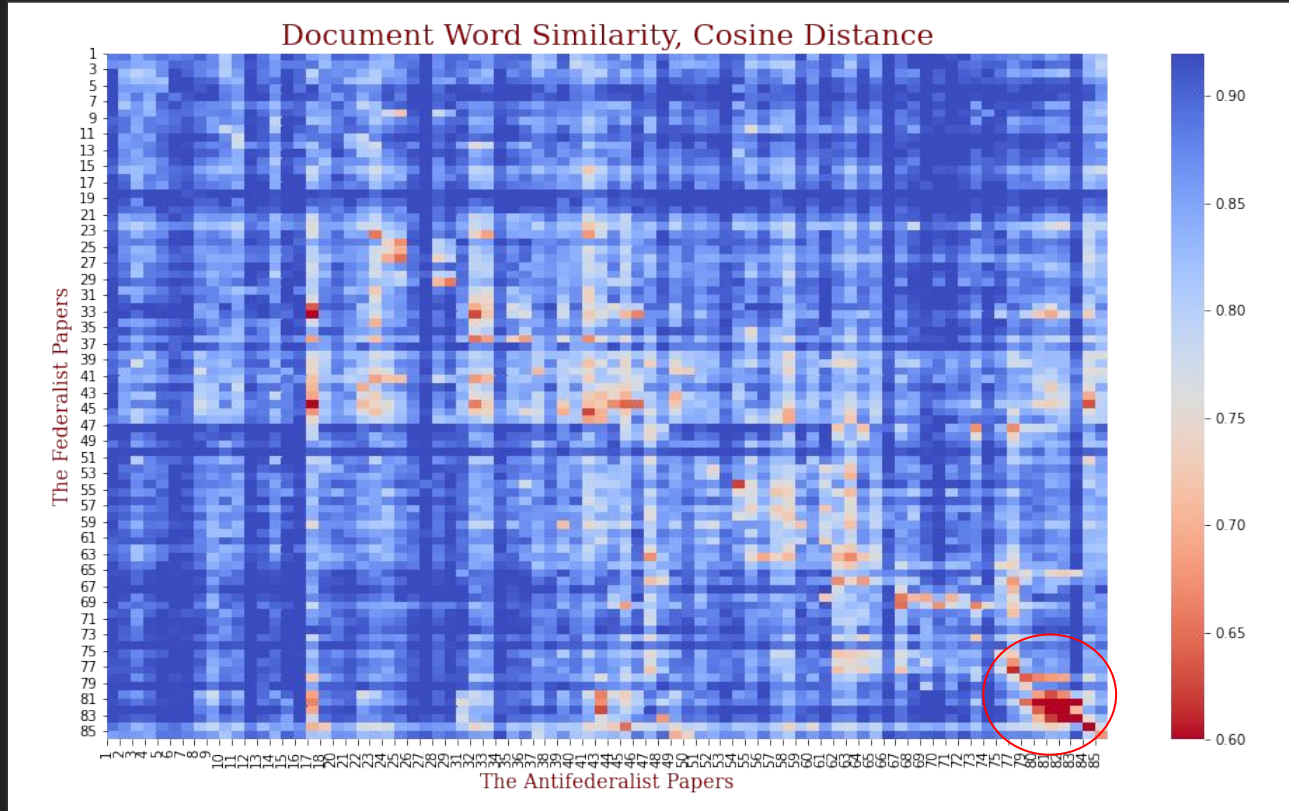
This is our map for finding similar documents



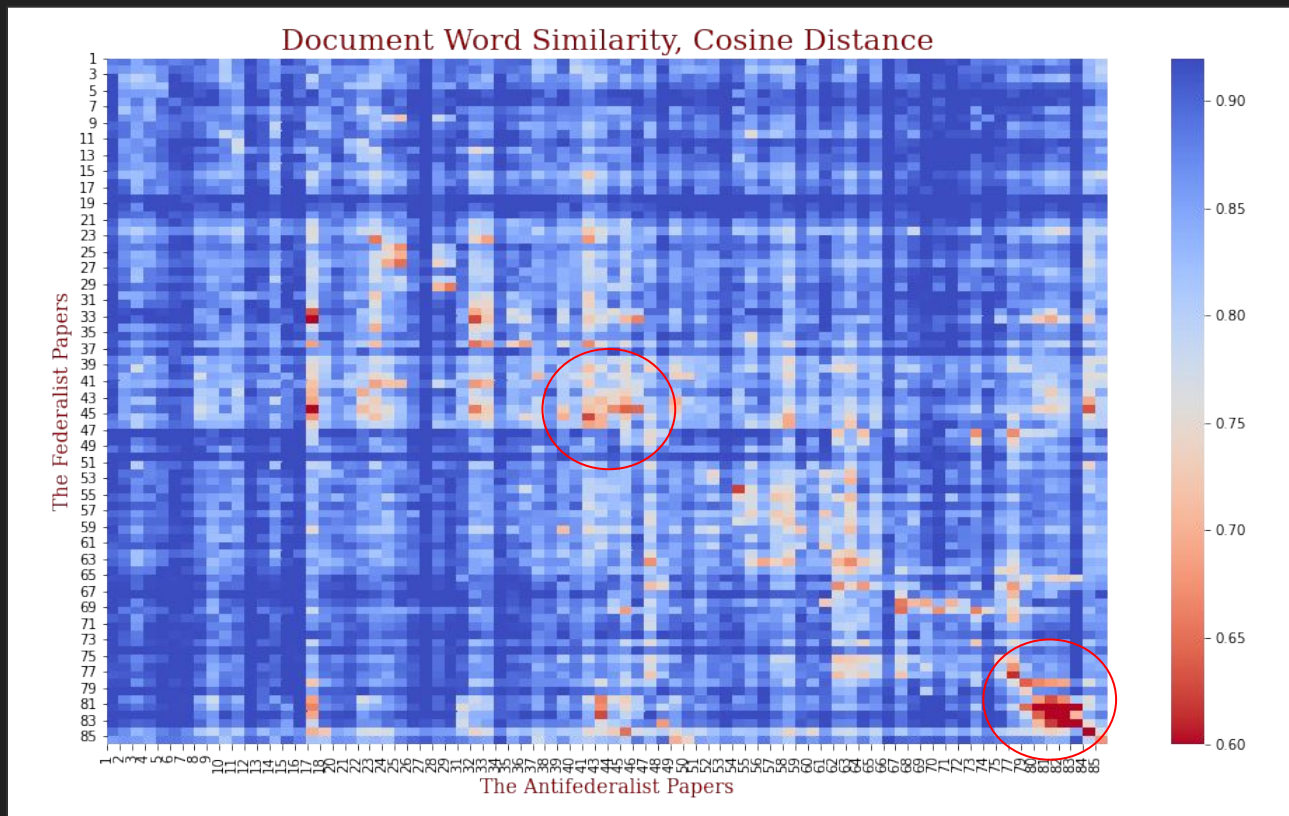
Words from essays converge a bit along this line



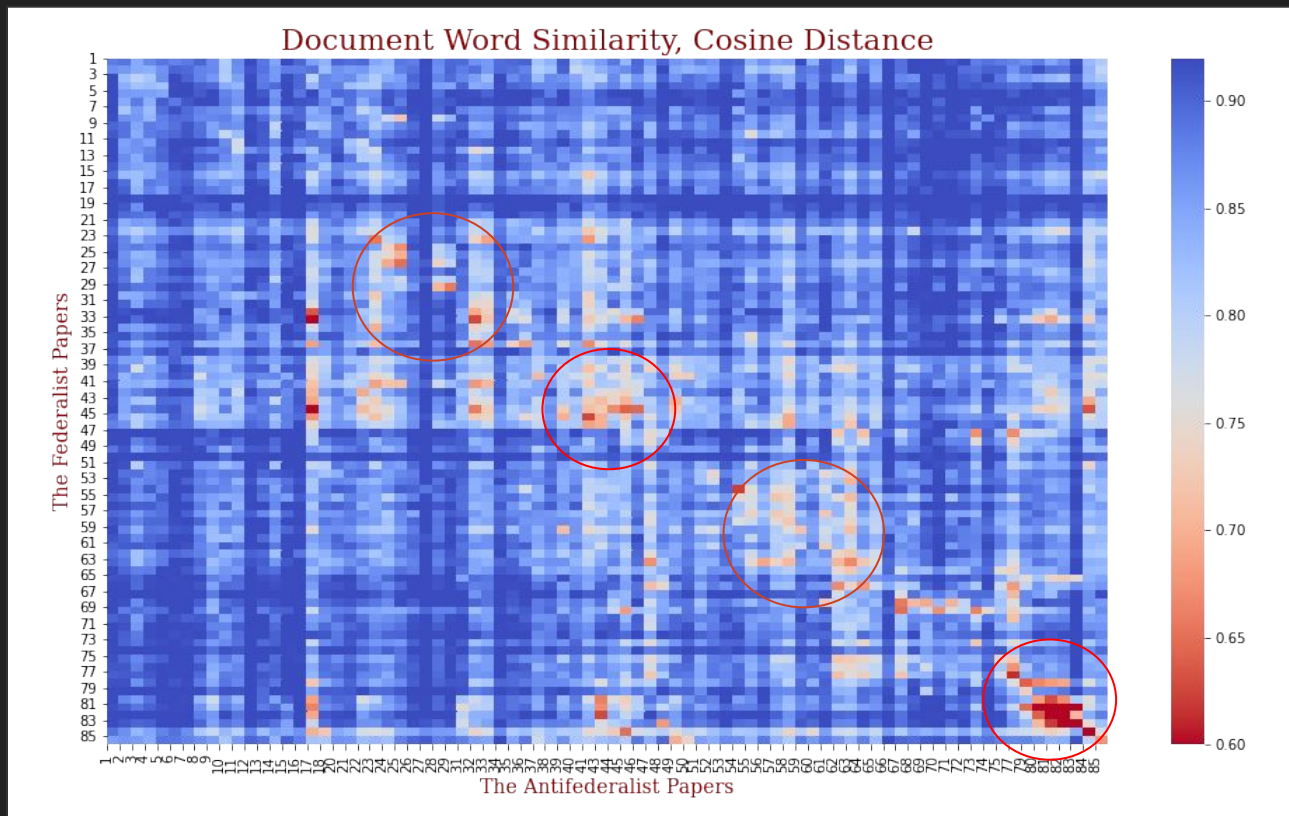
Regions of Similarity



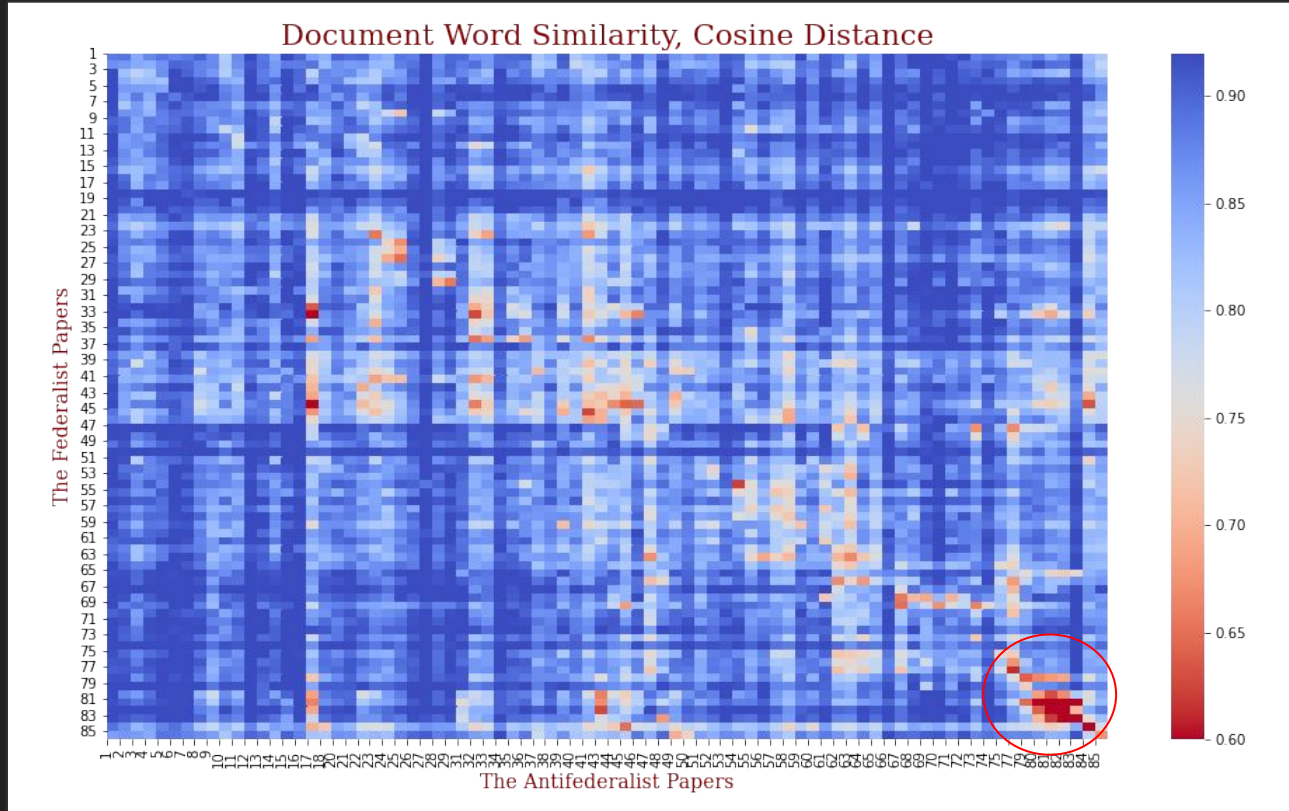
Regions of Similarity



Regions of Similarity



Let's drill down on these essays



Topic Modeling Process

TFIDF Document Term Matrix into NMF

Evaluate topic coherence based on number of topics

Create list of top words for topics

Name topics

Topic Model - 8 Topics (selections from top 25 words)

National Government - government, national, union, federal, authority

Executive - executive, president, power, appointments, governor

Judiciary - court, jury, jurisdiction, cases, supreme, law

Congress - congress, states, taxes, laws, duties, revenue

Military/War - standing, army, militia, peace, military, force

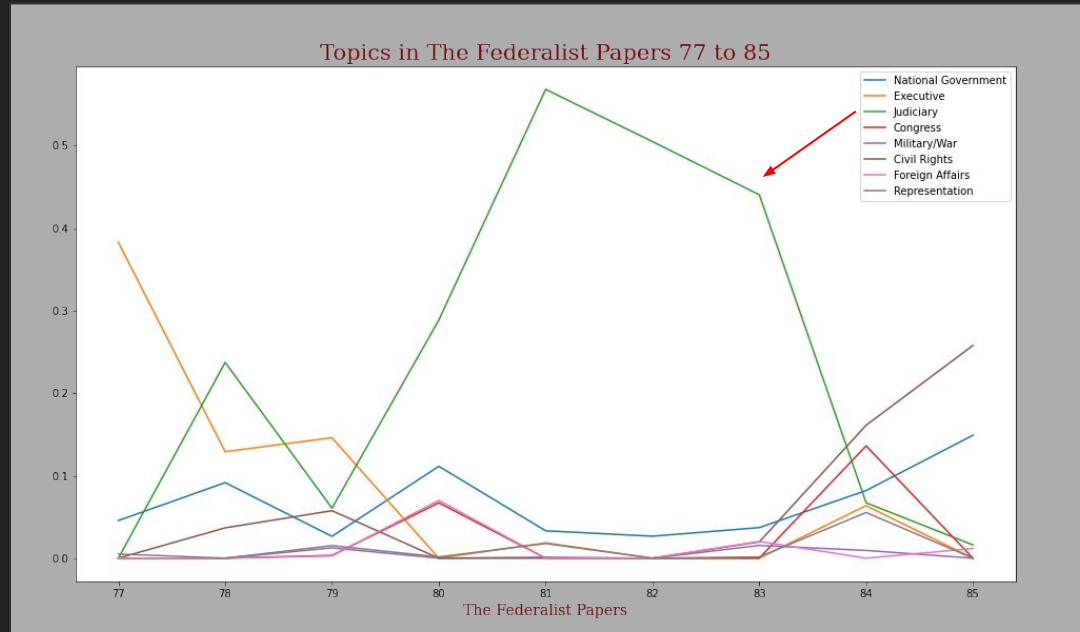
Civil Rights - constitution, amendments, alterations, proposed, rights, liberty

Foreign Affairs - nations, commerce, trade, europe, neighbors, policy, wars

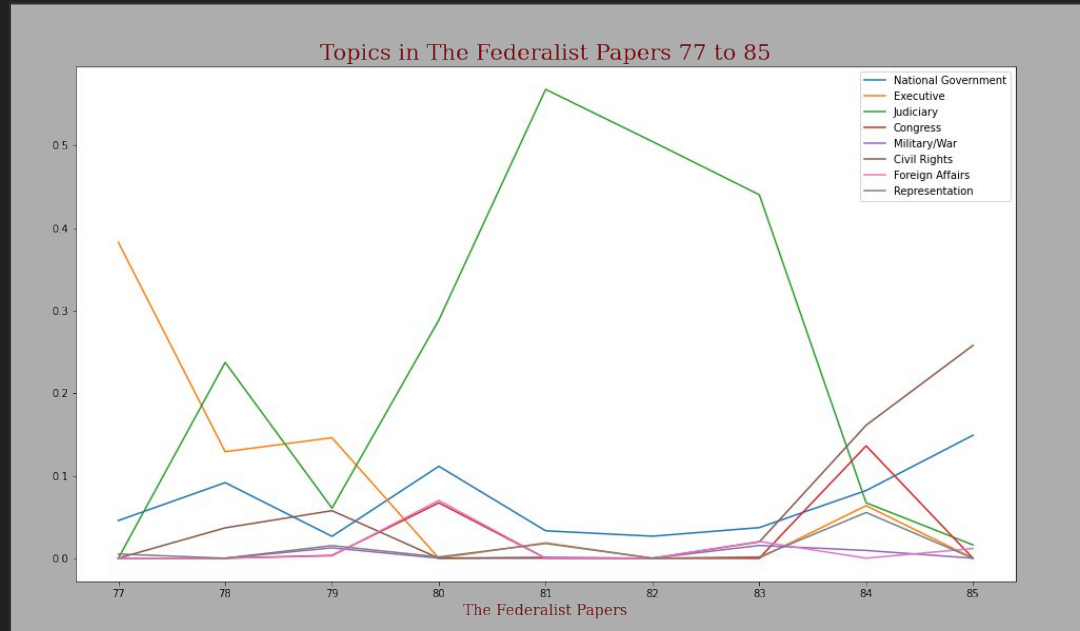
Representation - representatives, people, elections, state, number, electors

What did those essays discuss?

Judiciary, mostly.



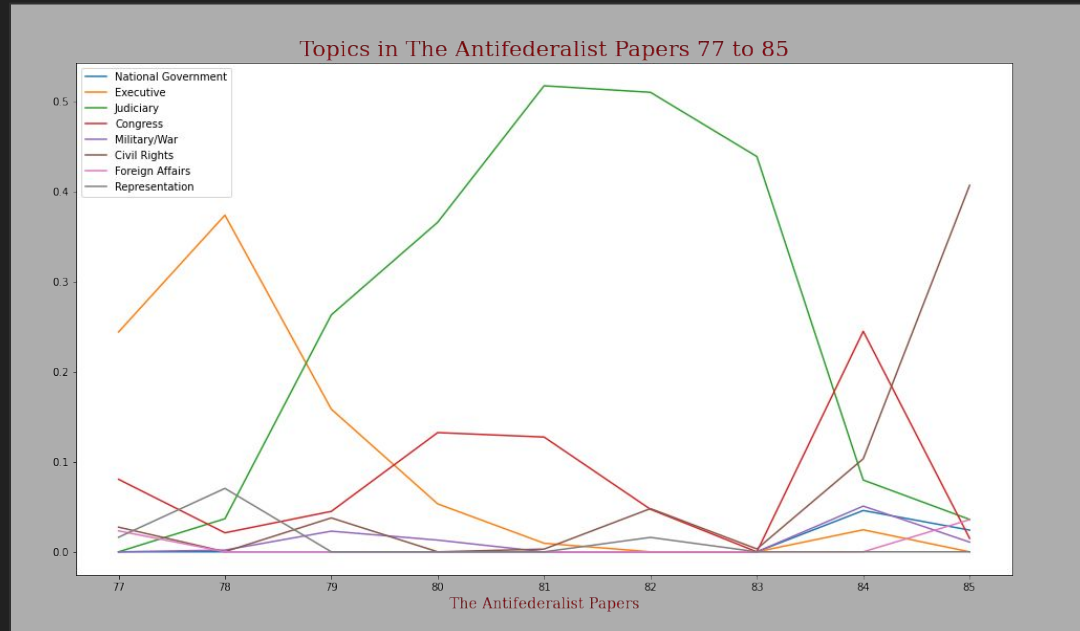
'courts', 'court', 'jury', 'jurisdiction', 'cases',
'supreme', 'judicial', 'law', 'trial', 'appellate',
'constitution', 'state', 'inferior', 'judges',
'causes', 'states', 'laws', 'criminal', 'judiciary',
'power', 'appeal', 'cognizance', 'legislature',
'appeals'



What about The Antifederalist Papers?

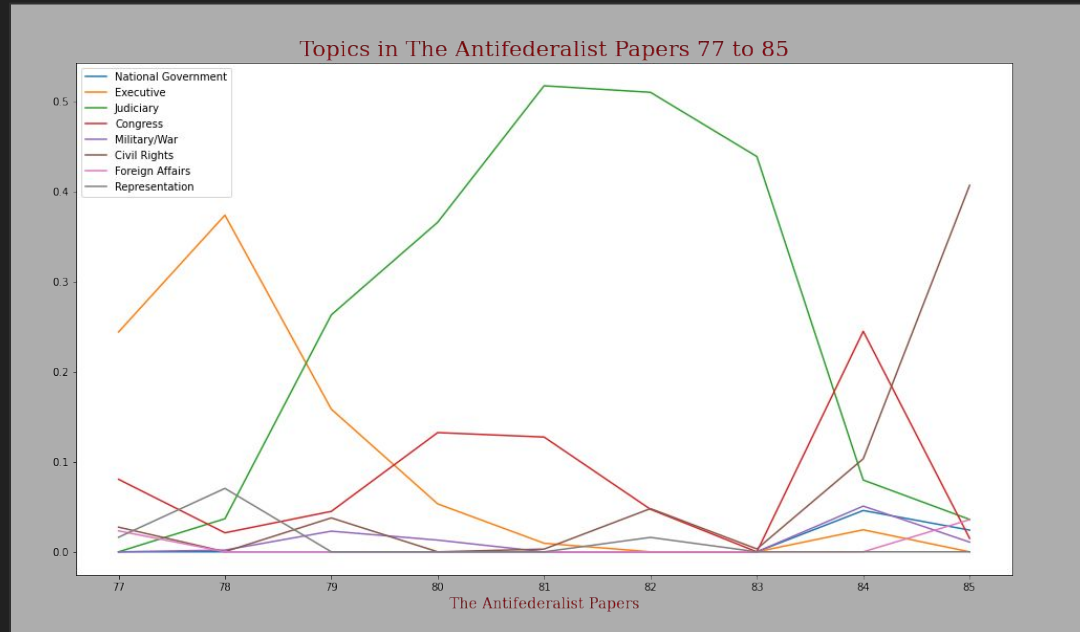
Judiciary top 25 words:

'courts', 'court', 'jury', 'jurisdiction', 'cases',
'supreme', 'judicial', 'law', 'trial', 'appellate',
'constitution', 'state', 'inferior', 'judges',
'causes', 'states', 'laws', 'criminal', 'judiciary',
'power', 'appeal', 'cognizance', 'legislature',
'appeals'



What about The Antifederalist Papers?

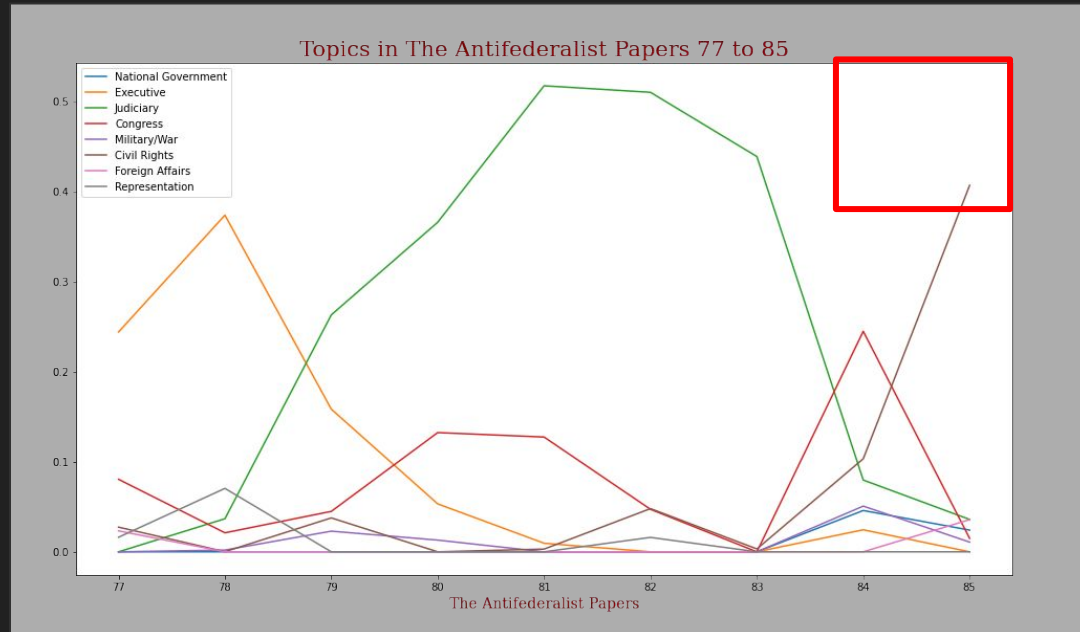
Looks about the same



What about The Antifederalist Papers?

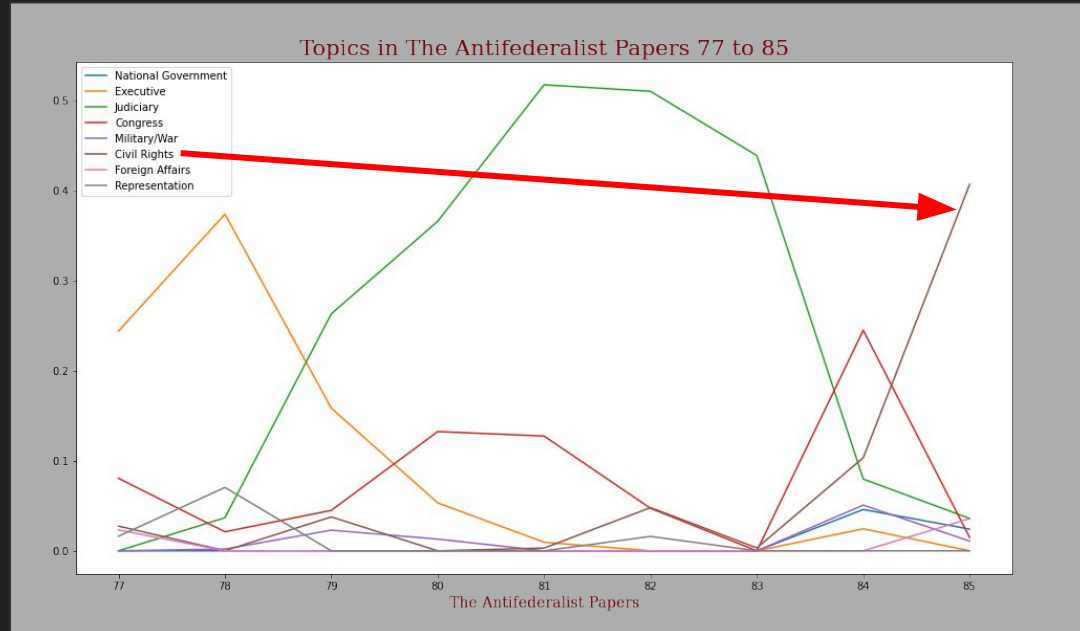
Looks about the same

Wait, what happened to my legend?



What about the other side?

Those pesky Civil Rights
got in the way.

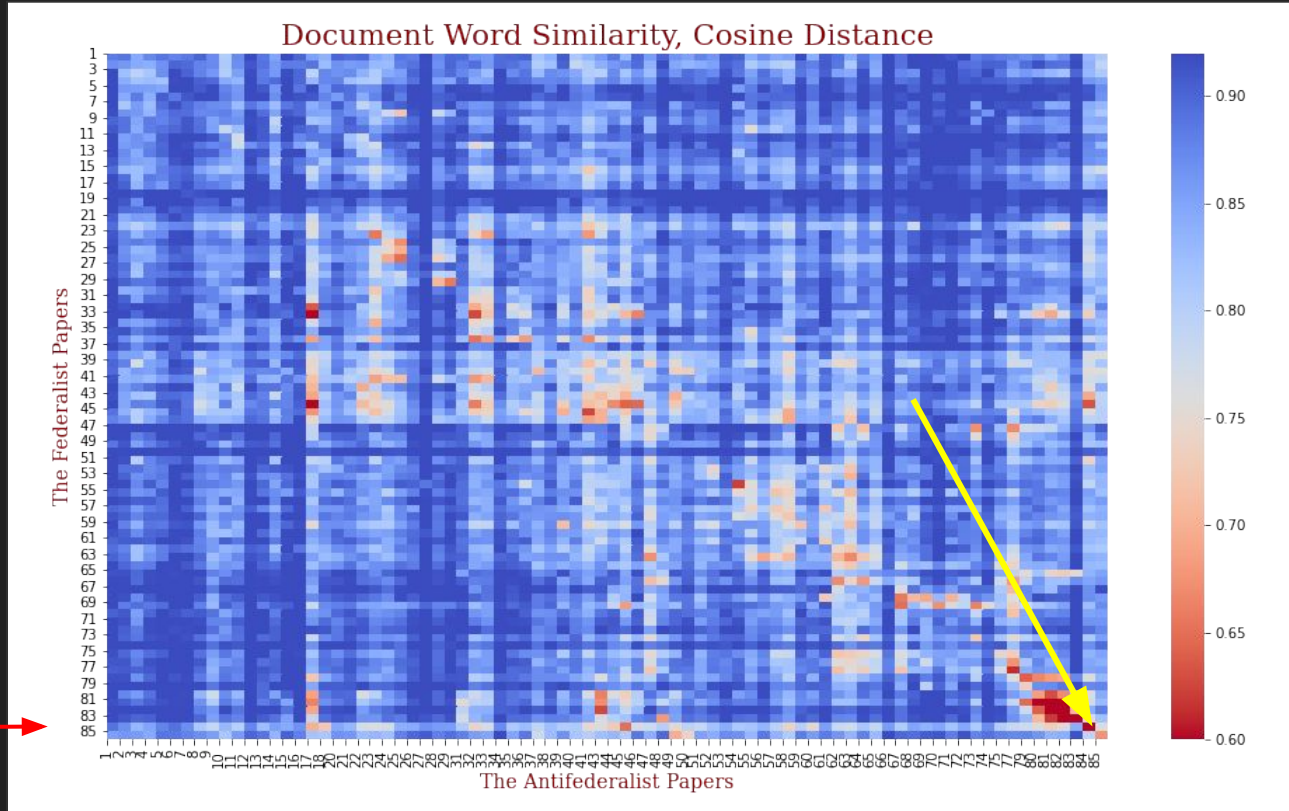


What would Hamilton say about that?

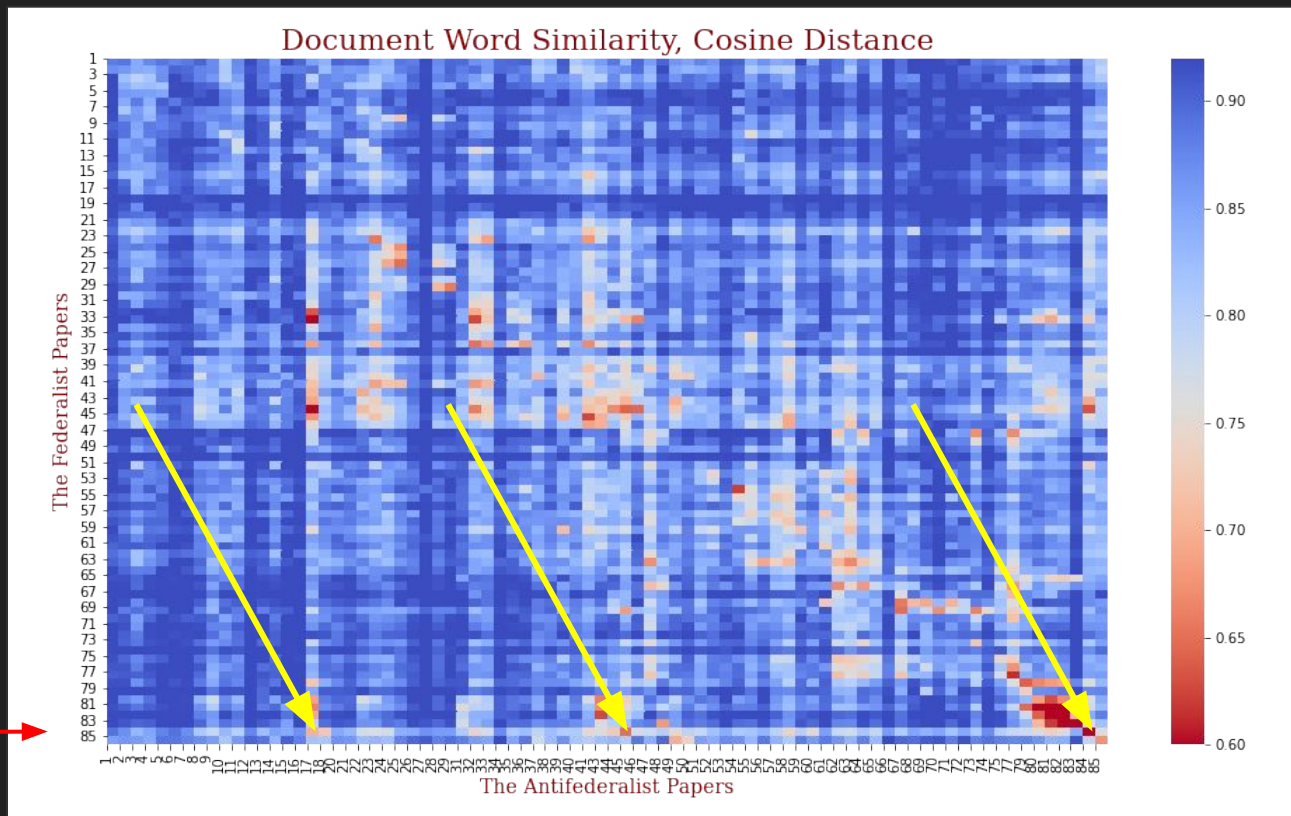
From Federalist 84:

“The most considerable of the remaining objections is that the plan of the convention contains no bill of rights... I go further, and affirm that bills of rights... are not only unnecessary in the proposed Constitution, but would even be dangerous.”

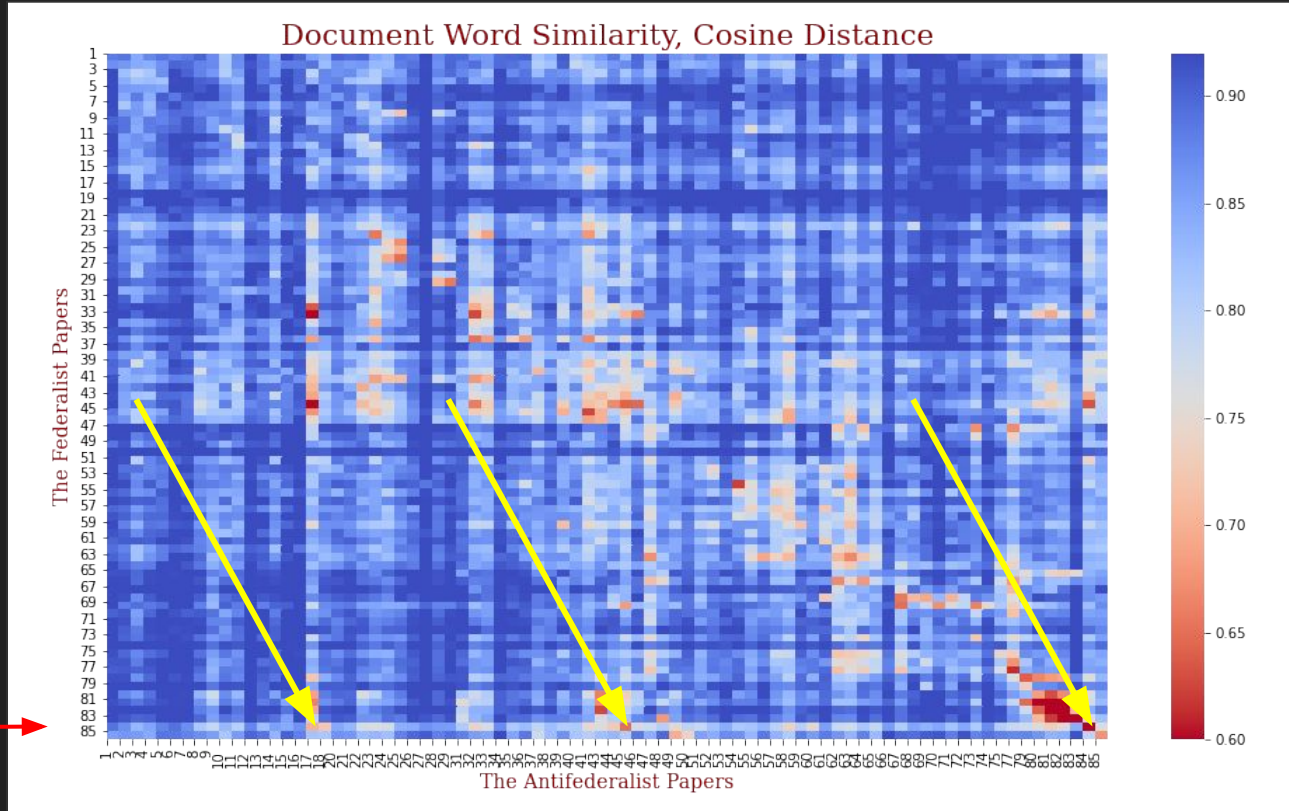
Let's look up a response.



And a couple more



84, 45, and 17 seem similar (to Federalist No. 84)



Antifederalist 84

“Brutus” - April 11, 1788:

“But rulers have the same propensities as other men; they are as likely to use the power with which they are vested, for private purposes, and to the injury and oppression of those over whom they are placed, as individuals in a state of nature are to injure and oppress one another. It is therefore as proper that bounds should be set to their authority, as that government should have at first been instituted to restrain private injuries.”

Antifederalist 45

“Sydney” - June, 1788:

“what is to limit the oppression of the general government? Where are the rights, which are declared to be incapable of violation? ”

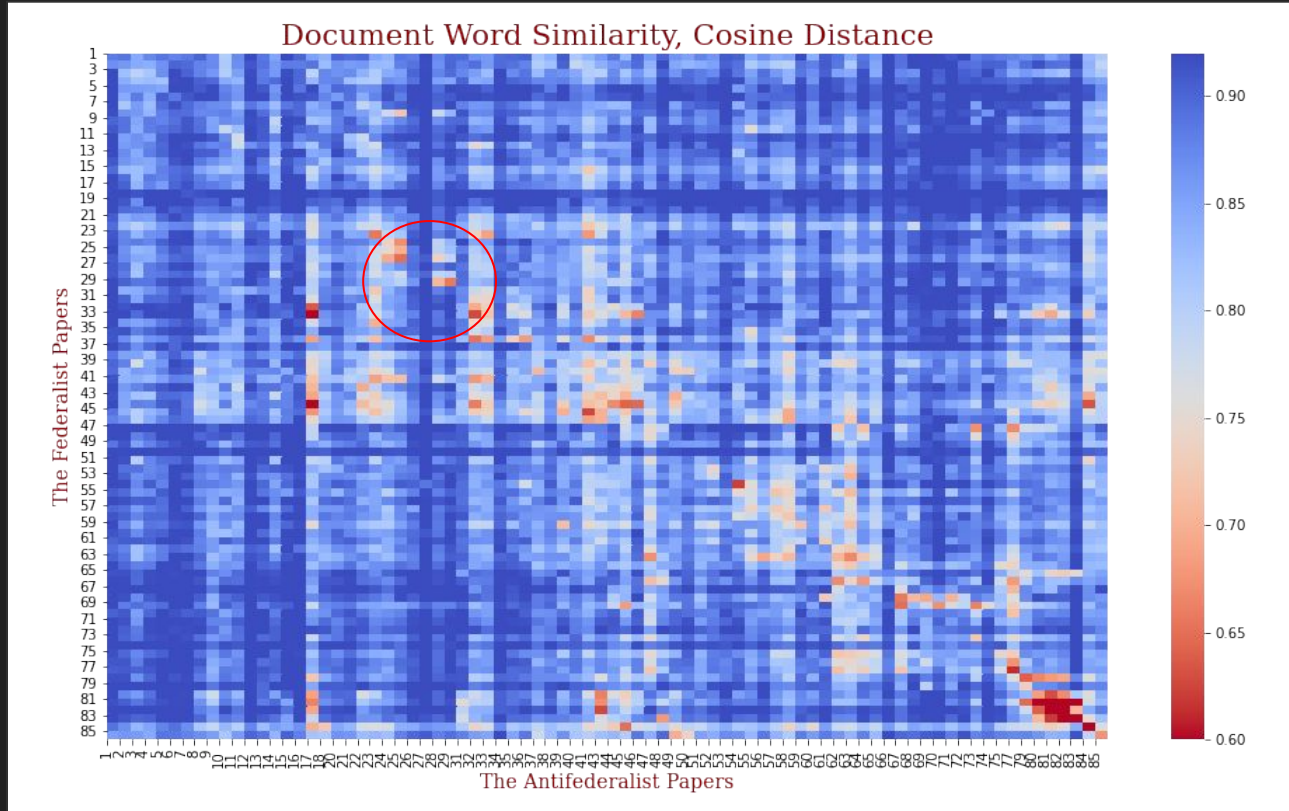
Antifederalist 17

“Brutus” - October 18, 1787:

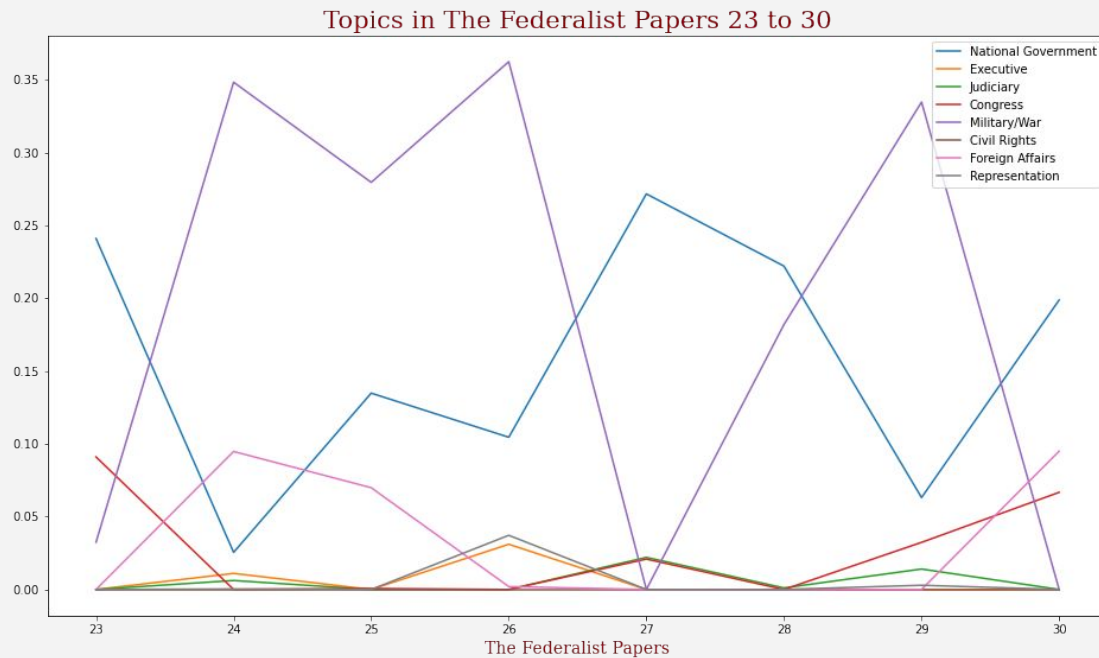
“The powers of the general legislature extend to every case that is of the least importance - there is nothing valuable to human nature, nothing dear to freemen, but what is within its power. It has the authority to make laws which will affect the lives, the liberty, and property of every man in the United States; nor can the Constitution or laws of any State, in any way prevent or impede the full and complete execution of every power given.”

These seem to be relevant responses

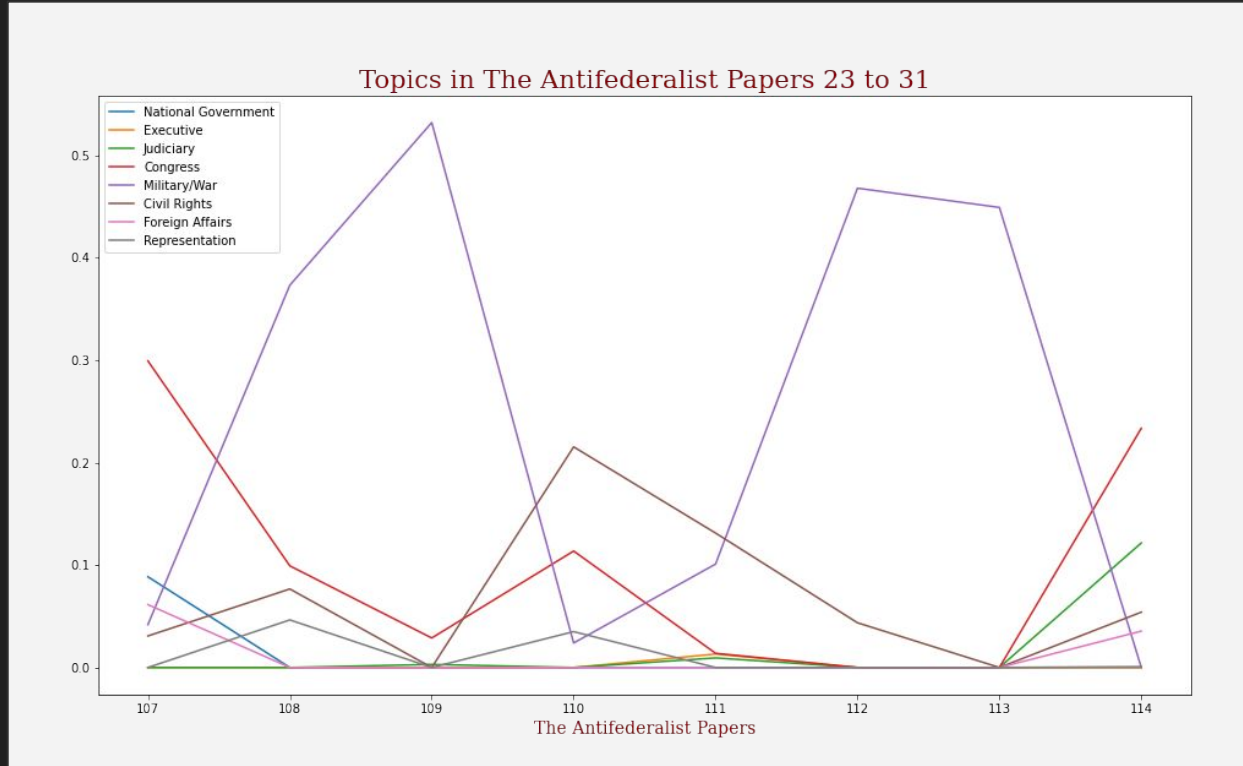
Let's check out this hot spot



Federalist Topics



Antifederalist Topics



What's the takeaway?

Topic modeling makes it easier to find particular topics in The Federalist Papers

We can also find responses in unexpected locations with our heatmap

And we get the flavor of the writing with our topics

Future work

Get new matches for The Federalist Papers based on topics and document word similarity from The Complete Antifederalist

Thanks for your attention

Appendix: Historical Context and Works Consulted

Background:

The Federalist Papers:

Written by

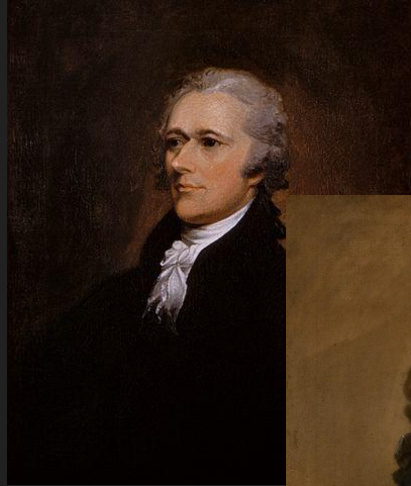
Alexander Hamilton

John Jay

James Madison

Published between

October 1787 and May 1788



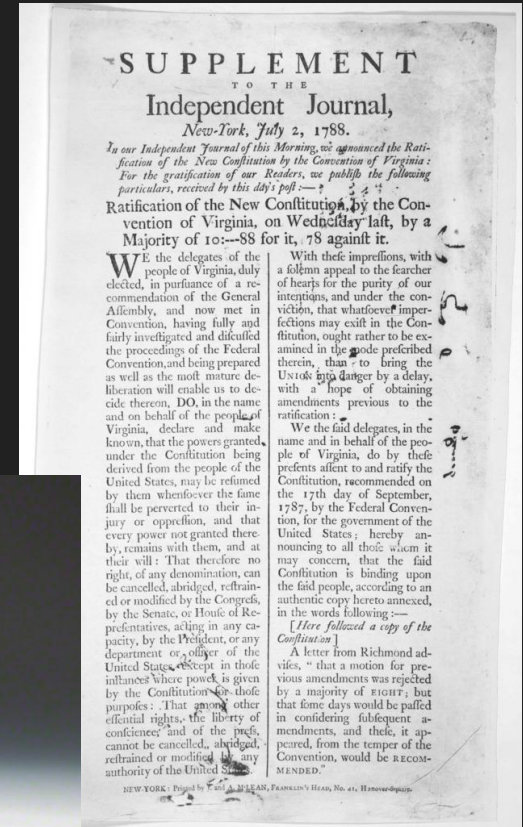
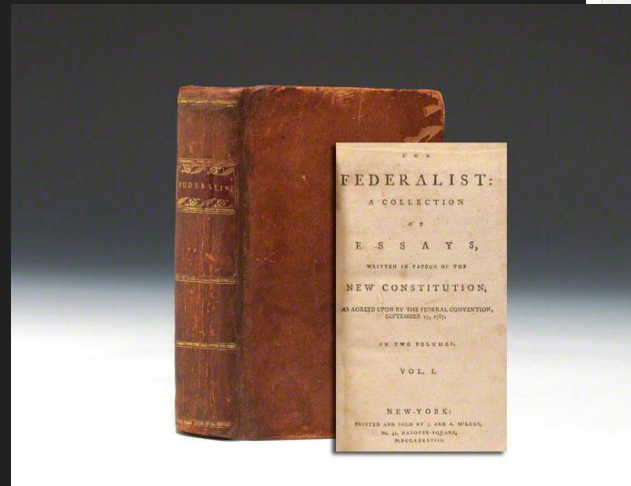
The Federalist Papers

77 articles in *Independent Journal* and *New York Packet*

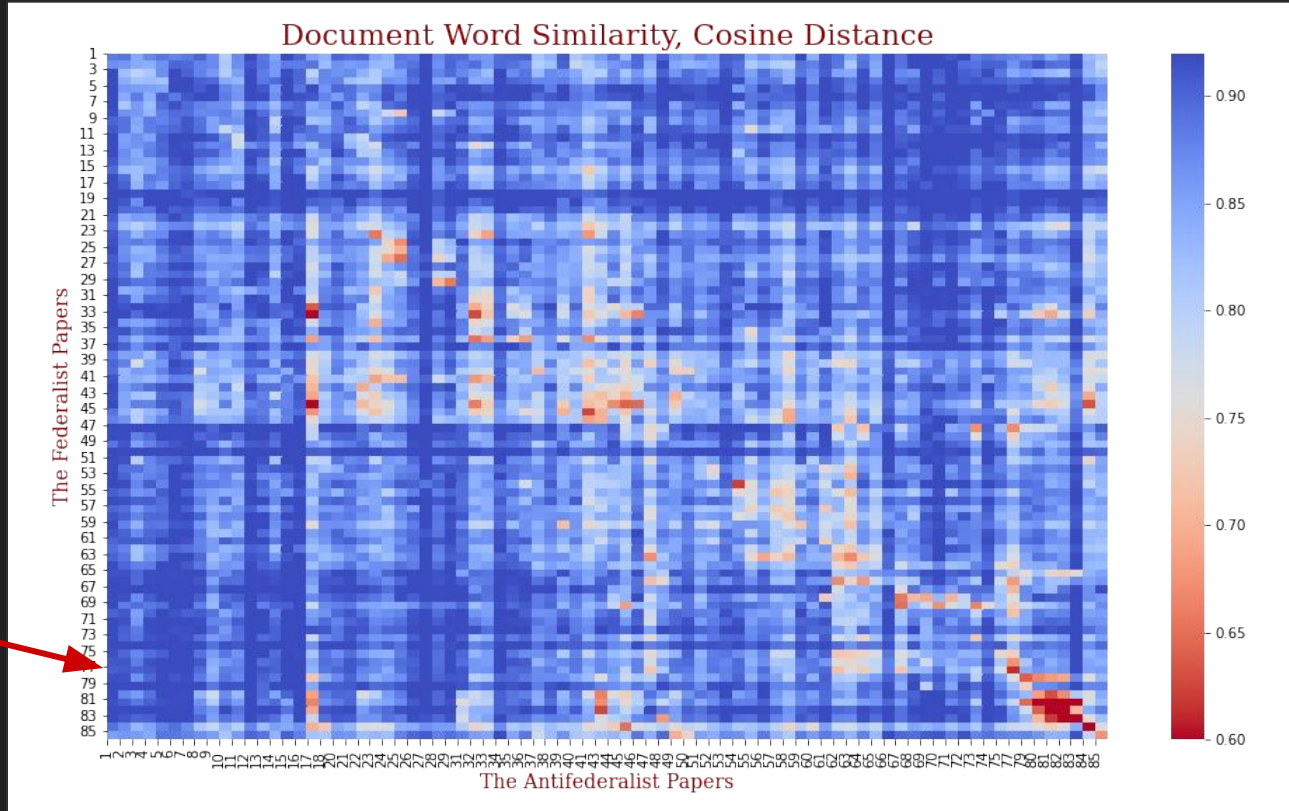
October 1787 to April 1788

Collection published (with 8 new articles)

May 1788



Hamilton Stops Publishing In The Newspaper



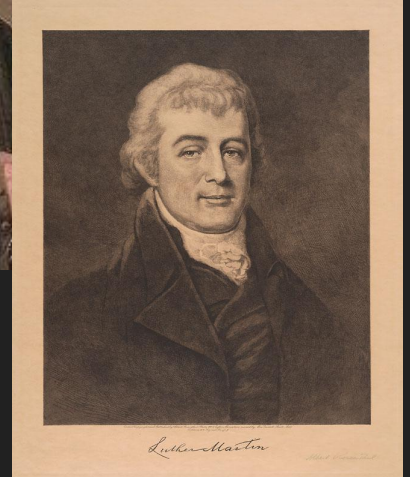
Antifederalist Writings

Excerpts from speeches:

Patrick Henry

George Mason

Luther Martin



Antifederalist Writings

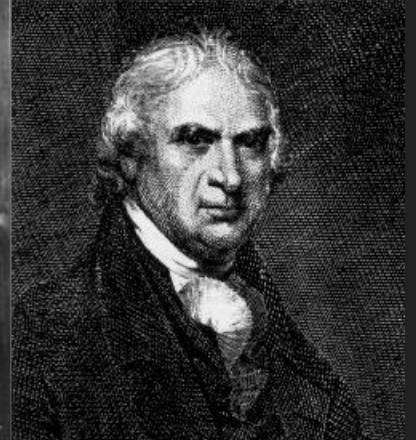
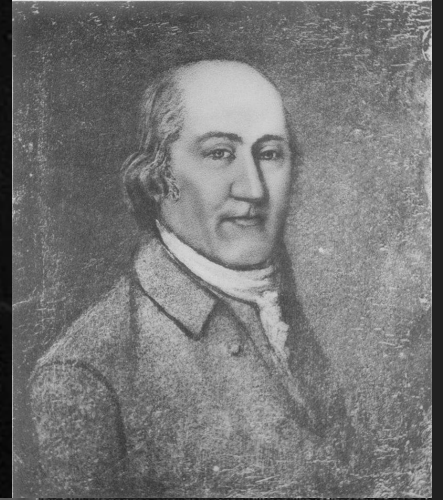
Anonymously published in newspapers:

“Brutus” (Robert Yates?)

“Agrippa” (James Winthrop?)

“Centinel” (Samuel Bryan?)

“Cato” (George Clinton?)



Antifederalist Writings

Anonymous Pamphlets

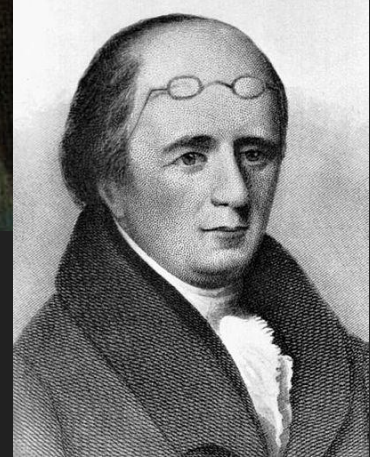
“A Federal Farmer”

Richard Henry Lee?

Melancton Smith?

“A Plebian”

Melancton Smith



The Antifederalist Papers

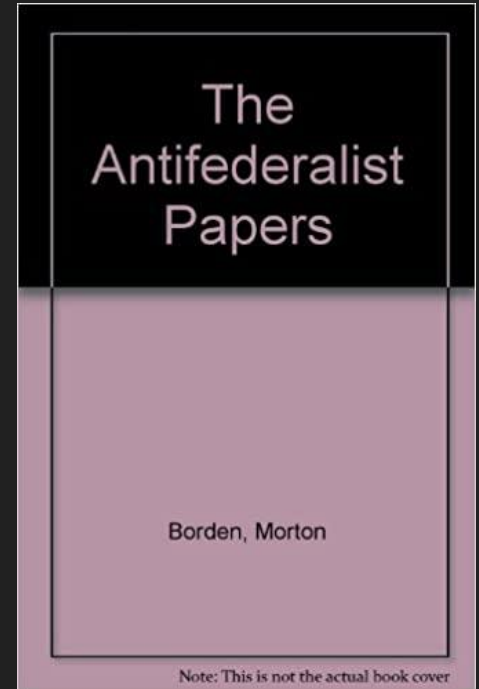
First compiled by Morton Borden in 1965

Borrows the structure of The Federalist Papers, matching the subject matter with Antifederalist writings

Difficulties:

- Diverse authorship

- Many different sources



Antifederalist 18

“An Old Whig” - November 27, 1787:

“the people of this country, at the revolution, having all power in their own hands, in forming the constitutions of the several states, took care to secure themselves, by bills of rights, so as to prevent as far as possible the encroachments of their future rulers upon the rights of the people. Some of these rights are said to be unalienable, such as the rights of conscience. Yet even these have been often invaded, where they have not been carefully secured, by express and solemn bills and declarations in their favor.

Before we establish a government, whose acts will be the supreme law of the land, and whose power will extend to almost every case without exception, we ought carefully to guard ourselves by a bill of rights, against the invasion of those liberties which it is essential for us to retain, which it is of no real use for government to deprive us of; but which, in the course of human events, have been too often insulted with all the wantonness of an idle barbarity.”

Works Consulted

“The Anti-Federalist: An Abridgement”, Storing, Herbert J,
The University of Chicago Press, 1981