Understanding Racial Inequality in America: A Historical Perspective

OLLI Boulder Fall term, 2019
8 week course, Wednesday mornings, 9:30 am – 11:30 am, Sept. 18-Nov. 6
Required reading: Amendments 1, 4 – 6, 8, 13 – 15 of the U.S. Constitution
Recommended reading for historical context: These Truths: A History of the United States, Jill Lepore; Lincoln, David Herbert Donald; Washington: A Life and Grant, Ron Chernow; The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander; The Color of Law, Richard Rothstein
Facilitator: Frank Dubofsky
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In this course we will focus on the civil rights and civil liberties amendments to the U.S. Constitution and their continuing impact on racial inequality, including why they have not achieved what a plain reading would imply. The class will combine lecture and discussion.

Week 1 – September 18 – The Fourth Amendment (the right of the people to be secure from unreasonable searches and seizures).

Week 2 – September 26 – The Fifth Amendment (due process of law).

Week 3 – October 2 – The Sixth Amendment (the right to a speedy trial with an impartial jury) and the Eighth Amendment (excessive bail shall not be required nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted).

Week 4 – October 9 – The Thirteenth Amendment (abolition of slavery).

Week 5 – October 16 – The Fourteenth Amendment (equal protection clause; apportionment of representatives based on number of persons in each state).

Week 6 – October 23 – The Fifteenth Amendment (the right to vote).

Week 7 – October 30 – The First Amendment (free speech, press and religion). Tom Kelley, a lawyer specializing in First Amendment cases, will be a guest lecturer.

Week 8 – November 6 – Fair housing (prohibition of racial discrimination in the private sale or rental of housing but government policies that promoted discrimination). Jean Dubofsky, who worked on the Fair Housing Act of 1968, will be a guest lecturer.