The Smithsonian: What its Artifacts Teach Us About Us
OLLI Winter, 2019 (Tuesday, 9:30-11:30)
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Each class will include video lectures (The Great Courses Teaching Company DVD series) from Dr. Richard Kurin, the Smithsonian's Under Secretary for History, Art and Culture and author of the book, “The Smithsonian’s History in 101 Objects.” We will also look at supplementary, documentary materials, and there will be discussion throughout. The Smithsonian is made up of 19 museums and numerous research facilities, with 137 million items and 30 million visitors a year. Some of the artifacts we will learn about are listed below.

Class #1 (Jan. 15) History, Goals and Facilities of the Smithsonian
The Star Spangled Banner

Class #2 (Jan. 22) Presidents and Generals- Images of Leadership
The National Portrait Gallery- The Power of Portraits
The Museum of Art
(Pocahontas, Frederick Douglas, George Washington;
Military uniforms, Lincoln’s hat)

Class #3 (Jan. 29) The Growth and Spread of Slavery (slave shackles, cotton gin,
Harriet Tubman’s hymnal and shawl)
The Immigrant Experience (Statue of Liberty)

Class #4 (Feb. 5) Planes, Trains, Automobiles and Wagons
Kitty Hawk to Tranquility- Innovation and Flight
(Conestoga Wagon, John Bull Steam Engine, Model T, Spirit of St. Louis, Wright Flyer, Apollo Space Suit)

Class #5 (Feb. 12) Communications- From Telegraph to Television
“User-Friendly”- Democratizing Technology (sewing machine, Kodak Camera, Apple Computer)

Class #6 (Feb. 19) Extinction and Conservation: The National Zoo (buffalo, carrier pigeon, eagle, pandas); The Hope Diamond

Class #7 (Feb. 26) For the Greater Good- Public Health (Polio vaccine, AIDS Quilt)
Women Making History (Helen Keller’s pocket watch, Earhart’s flight gear, Julia Child’s Kitchen)

Class #8 (March 5) Two Centuries of American Style (Louis Armstrong’s trumpet, Ali’s boxing gear, Jackie’s inaugural gown)
Hollywood, The American Myth Machine (Mickey Mouse, Dorothy’s ruby slippers, Kermit the Frog)