HST 496: Civil Rights in America

Professor Stephen Jones
#22273151 / M 3:30-6:20 p.m.

History 496 is a senior seminar with the goal of producing a substantial research project, and the focus of this section will be civil rights in America. From the adoption of the Bill of Rights in 1791 to recent court rulings on marriage equality, the religious rights of private employers, the government’s ability to hold U.S. citizens without trial as enemy combatants, and the right of women to receive equal pay for equal work, no aspect of American life has been untouched by disputes over civil rights. College admission practices, treatment of gays and lesbians in the military, access to public buildings for people with physical disabilities, militarization of police departments, application of the death penalty, the status of Native Americans, enforcement of immigration laws, and a multitude of other issues revolve around how Americans define civil rights and what we are willing to do to guarantee those rights to all people. Our goal in this course will be to achieve a deeper understanding of civil rights that begins with — but stretches far beyond — the familiar Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Students will be encouraged to develop research projects that connect civil rights issues with historical events and periods in which they have particular interest.