CURRICULUM

Virginia offers courses in civil rights and anti-discrimination law, but equally important is a wide array of courses in constitutional law and history. These offerings reflect the ways in which the struggle for civil rights shaped — and continues to shape — our country and institutions.

EACH YEAR THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND LAW BRINGS A VISITING PROFESSOR TO TEACH A SHORT COURSE. PAST VISITORS INCLUDE:

RICHARD BANKS, JACKSON ELI REYNOLDS PROFESSOR OF LAW, STANFORD LAW SCHOOL
DEVON CARBADO, PROFESSOR OF LAW AND FORMER VICE DEAN OF THE FACULTY, UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW
ADRIENNE DAVIS, PROFESSOR OF LAW AND VICE PROVOST AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
MICHAEL KLARMAN, KIRKLAND & ELLIS PROFESSOR OF LAW, HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
MARI MATSUDA, PROFESSOR OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MANOA WILLIAM S. RICHARDSON SCHOOL OF LAW

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS has written two books that address the hidden history of the Civil Rights Movement. In “The Lost Promise of Civil Rights,” she explores the fight for black economic and labor rights from the 1930s until the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education. After that ruling, looking at race through the lens of integration in education led to an inability to resolve the troubling legacy of racial economic inequality that remains today, she argues. In her second book, “Vagrant Nation: Police Power, Constitutional Change and the Making of the 1960s,” she examines the revolution in the nation’s vagrancy laws that shifted the balance of power between police and individuals. “This is a story that’s always going to be relevant, because there’s always going to be a tension between how much power the police have and how much liberty individuals have,” she said. “You didn’t actually have to engage in any particular conduct in order to be arrested and convicted for vagrancy. You had to be a certain kind of person, and there was an enormous discretion in the eyes of the police as to whether a particular person was a vagrant, and who counted in that category.”

LAWYERS CANNOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE AMERICAN LEGAL LANDSCAPE WITHOUT STUDYING THE IMPACT OF RACE.

The Law School founded the Center for the Study of Race and Law in 2003 to provide opportunities for students, scholars, practitioners and community members to examine and exchange ideas related to race and law through lectures, symposia and scholarship. The center also coordinates with the Law School to offer a concentration of courses on race and law, and serves as a resource for faculty whose teaching or scholarship addresses subjects related to race.

THE SCHOOL OF LAW

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UVA HISTORY PROFESSOR JOHN MASON AND UVA LAW VICE DEAN LESLIE KENDRICK WERE among those to discuss the events surrounding the Aug. 11-12 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville. Throughout the year at UVA Law in various fora, community members gathered to understand the violent rallies and how to move forward, and promote allyship with the Black Law Students Association.

FIGHTING FOR FAIRNESS IN HEALTH OUTCOMES

FOR PROFESSOR DAYNA BOWEN MATTHEW ’87, HEALTH DISPARITY IN THE U.S. DUE TO RACE AND INCOME is both a bigger-picture issue and a personal one. Matthew, who has studied the connection between living environments and longevity, grew up in the crumbling, crime-stricken South Bronx of the 1960s and ’70s.

Her father, Vincent E. Bowen Jr., at one point worked four jobs to help the family make ends meet. He died at 49, her mother, Marion Bowen, at 61. Both were lost to preventable diseases, exacerbated by the stress of societal inequities. “My parents died very, very young,” Matthew said. “They died, as many African-Americans do, because of a limited access to the social determinants of health in their neighborhoods.”

Now Matthew applies her experiences to her scholarship. She is the author of the book “Just Medicine: A Cure for Racial Inequality in American Health Care,” which looks at how implicit bias affects health outcomes. Previously as a law professor at the University of Colorado, she co-founded the Colorado Health Equity Project, a medical-legal partnership whose mission is to remove barriers to good health for low-income clients.

Poverty in Law, Literature and Culture Racial Justice and Law Social Science in Law Urban Law and Policy

CHALLENGING PROBLEMS IN CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

AS PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER, ALUMNUS RICHARD COHEN ’79 HAS CONFRONTED the most challenging problems in civil rights and social justice. Since joining the center in 1986 as its legal director, Cohen has battled hate groups fueled by changing demographics and immigration, and has defended legal measures designed to promote racial equality before the U.S. Supreme Court.

“A lawsuit summons people before a neutral arbiter and forces them to answer,” Cohen said. “That is an incredible thing, and lawyers are incredibly powerful people by virtue of being able to summon people and make them accountable to the law. It’s the thing that makes our country great and has moved the social agenda.”

EXPLORING RACE THROUGH DISCUSSION

UVA LAW RECENTLY HONORED THE LEGACY OF ITS FIRST BLACK STUDENT, GREGORY SWANSON, WITH A CEREMONY and the creation of the Gregory H. Swanson Award, which recognizes students with traits that Swanson embodied, including a commitment to justice within the community. Jah Akande ’19 and Toccara Nelson ’19, pictured with Dean Risa Goluboff, were the inaugural recipients.

WITH A CEREMONY OF ITS FIRST BLACK STUDENT, UVA LAW RECENTLY HONORED THE LEGACY INCOME IN THE U.S. MATTHEW ’87 DAYNA BOWEN RACE AND DUE TO DISPARITY HEALTH INCOME CLIENTS.

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