

## Suffrage in America

The history of the right to vote in the United States is a long and complex tale, stretching from the absence of an affirmative right to vote in the U.S. Constitution to current debates about election procedures and voter suppression—with many important episodes in between. This course explores some of the key moments in this story, much of which unfolded in state governments, from the late 18th century through the 1960s and beyond.

The Constitution includes no affirmative right to vote for American citizens, nor does it include a uniform rule or set of qualifications for voting. Instead, voting law has been in large part a province of the states, with notable moments of federal involvement over the course of our nation's history. This course examines key developments in voting rights in America. Beginning with colonial precedents, the course then explores how states relaxed property and financial qualifications for voting in the early 19th century, the passage of the 15th Amendment and its effect on African American voting across the country, the development of Women's Rights movement and its victories for Women's Suffrage and the ultimate passage of the 19th Amendment, and the multiple legal changes of the long 1960s that stripped away barriers to African American voting across the South and elsewhere. The course ends with an exploration of contemporary issues of voting rights.

The history of the right to vote in the United States has not been a linear one in which the franchise has expanded, uninterrupted, to include more and more people, as conventional understanding dictates. Instead, it is a complex history, full of expansions and contractions, changing contours, and shifting boundaries. It is a history that is far from over, as voting rights continue to pose real Constitutional challenges today.