



Vail Symposium launches new series with discussion on Supreme Court

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In a new series from Vail Symposium, humanities scholar Clay Jenkinson gathers experts for a thoughtful, civil, rigorous and historically grounded discussion on various controversial issues. The first topic? The Supreme Court of the United States.

“The objective of the series is to increase understanding—not to be an advocate for any one position,” explained Kris Sabel, executive director of Vail Symposium. “Instead of attempting to sway the audience to one side or another, we hope instead to provide an in-depth discussion on complex issues that adds insight and perspective for the audience.”

The Supreme Court has become the focus of intense national conversation and debate. Usually regarded as the third and “forgotten” branch of the national government, the political struggle of recent years in America has been a flashpoint for political controversy: How many members should serve on the Court? Should they serve for life? Should they “stay within their lane,” “call balls and strikes,” or “legislate from the bench?” Is our method of selecting and confirming Supreme Court Justices rational? Does Presidential nomination and Senate confirmation bring the best individuals to the bench? Is it appropriate to use “litmus tests” in choosing prospective justices? What does the Court owe to judicial precedent? Is the Constitution a “living document” or an inerrant guide to our national life? Has the Court become too politicized in recent years, or are we just now scrutinizing it from this perspective? What reforms in the Court would make for a “more perfect union?”

Join moderator and humanities scholar Clay Jenkinson, and guest presenters Akhil Reed Amar, Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale University, and Clark Neily, senior vice president for legal studies at the Cato Institute, for a thoughtful, civil, rigorous, and historically-grounded discussion of these questions and more as they examine the Supreme Court in American life.

“America’s political issues are vast, complex and contentious,” said Vail Symposium board chair Dale Mosier, who helped create this new series. “With his vast experience as a historian, moderator and humanities scholar, along with his expertise as a performer, Clay will skillfully moderate these controversial topics and draw the best out of our expert panelists.”

Don’t miss this inaugural program. The next program in the series will take place in August and will discuss immigration in the United States.

About the speakers

Akhil Reed Amar is Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale University where he teaches constitutional law in both Yale College and Yale Law School. After graduating from Yale College, summa cum laude, in 1980 and from Yale Law School in 1984, and clerking for then-Judge (now Justice) Stephen Breyer, Amar joined the Yale faculty in 1985 at the age of 26. His work has won awards from both the American Bar Association and the Federalist Society and he has been cited by Supreme Court justices across the spectrum in more than 40 cases—tops in his generation, and indeed among all active scholars. He regularly testifies before Congress at the invitation of both parties; and in surveys of judicial citations and/or scholarly citations, he invariably ranks among America’s five most-cited mid-career legal scholars.

Clark Neily is senior vice president for legal studies at the Cato Institute. His areas of interest include constitutional law, judicial engagement, coercive plea bargaining, police accountability, and gun rights. Neily served as co-counsel in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, in which the Supreme Court held that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to own a gun. Neily received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, and he is the author of “Terms of Engagement: How Our Courts Should Enforce the Constitution’s Promise of Limited Government.”

Clay Jenkinson is a humanities scholar, author and social commentator who has devoted most of his professional career to public humanities programs and is considered one of the most entertaining public speakers in the United States. His performances are always humorous, educational, thought-provoking and enlightening, while maintaining a steady focus on ideas. Jenkinson is widely regarded as one of the most articulate public speakers in the country and he brings a humanities perspective – partly learned as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University – to everything he does.