

THE ROBERTS COURT AND RACE



Joan Biskupic

Date: February 6, 2017

Time: 12:30-02:00pm

Location: Social Ecology II 2372

ABSTRACT:

The Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Roberts has overturned government efforts to remedy America's history of race discrimination and foster diversity. Among its most significant moves, the Court rejected public-school integration efforts in a 2007 case and curtailed protections of the Voting Rights Act in a 2013 dispute. Roberts took the lead in these cases, following a pattern set early in his professional life. His writings dating to the 1980s, in the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, attest to his long-held views that the 1965 Voting Rights Act encroaches on state and local prerogatives; that affirmative action helps "inadequately prepared candidates"; and that government should only in limited fashion address housing bias. Roberts' philosophy boils down to an adage he expressed in 2007: "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." While the conservative chief justice has been flexible in other areas of the law, notably joining with liberals to uphold the Affordable Care Act, he is unyielding on race. Roberts has not wavered even as racial tensions in America have intensified and as fellow conservative Justice Anthony Kennedy has altered his views, for example, on college affirmative action and the anti-discrimination law in housing. Roberts' consistency arises from his personal background and early experiences with conservative mentors in law and politics.

BIO:

Joan Biskupic is a UCI Visiting Professor of Law for the 2016-2017 academic year. She is also working for CNN as legal analyst while she is on a one-year sabbatical from her position at Reuters as an editor in charge for Legal Affairs.

She has covered the Supreme Court for 25 years and has written several books on the judiciary, including *Breaking In: The Rise of Sonia Sotomayor and the Politics of Justice* (2014) and *American Original: The Life and Constitution of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia* (2009). She is also the author of *Sandra Day O'Connor: How the First Woman on the Supreme Court Became Its Most Influential Justice* (2005). She currently is working on a biography of Chief Justice John Roberts.

Before joining Reuters in 2012, she was the Supreme Court reporter for The Washington Post and for USA Today. She is a regular panelist on PBS's Washington Week with Gwen Ifill. A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, she was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2015.

Please RSVP by: February 1, 2017

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