Law has played a central role in American history. From colonial times to the present, law has reflected the changing society in which legal decisions have been made and has played a powerful role in shaping that society, though not always in positive ways. American Legal History: A Very Short Introduction sheds light on the impact of law on several key social issues: Native American affairs, slavery, business, home life, and criminal and civil offences. The expansion of laws regarding property rights is also considered, as well as the evolution of criminal punishment, the rise of tort law after the Civil War; and the progress in legal education.

The U.S. Constitution: A Very Short Introduction

The U.S. Constitution: A Very Short Introduction explores the major themes of American constitutional history—federalism, the balance of powers, property, representation, equality, rights, and security. Informed by the latest scholarship, each theme illustrates how the Constitution has served as a dynamic framework for legitimating power and advancing liberty. Today, we face serious challenges to the nation’s constitutional legacy. Endless wars, a sharply divided electorate and deadlocked government, economic inequality, immigration, cybersecurity and privacy, and foreign interference in the nation’s democratic processes have placed demands on government and on society that test our constitutional values. Understanding how the Constitution has evolved will help us adapt its principles to the challenges of our age.