"We the People" -- the American Constitution begins with those deceptively simple words, but how should we define our own distinctive first person plural, the American “We?” In this talk based on his new book *We the People*, Ben Railton will argue that throughout our history narrow and more magnanimous visions have battled to define our national identity. From the Revolutionary period's debates on African American slavery to 20th century controversies about Filipino Americans and Japanese internment, to 21st century anxieties about immigrants from Muslim nations, the struggle has continued. Join the entire BOLLI community as we examine our civic identity with the incisive help of Ben Railton’s perspective, brought out in his new book, *We the People: The 500-Year Battle Over Who Is American*.

**Instructor**

Ben Railton is Professor of English Studies and Coordinator of American Studies at Fitchburg State University in Massachusetts. He is the author of five books, most recently *We the People: The 500-Year Battle Over Who Is American* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2019). He also writes the daily American Studies blog, and contributes the bimonthly “Considering History” column to the *Saturday Evening Post*.

**Questions?**

Contact Carolyn Cross at 781-736-2992 or ccross@brandeis.edu

**Complimentary for BOLLI members. No advanced reading required.**

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