

"It is difficult to imagine a more inspirational, daring, and rewarding place to engage the mind than the salon on the Wannsee."

*Craig Whitlock, former Berlin Bureau Chief, Washington Post*

## Bruce Ackerman



DAIMLER FELLOW - CLASS OF SPRING 2015

### Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science, Yale University

**American Academy Project:** A General Theory of World Constitutionalism

**Current Institution Affiliation:** Yale University

**Current Location:** Connecticut

#### BIOGRAPHY

Bruce Ackerman is Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale University. His extensive publications have influenced the fields of political philosophy, constitutional law, and environmental law, as well as current thought on issues of social justice in taxation, welfare, and public policy. His major works include *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (Yale, 1980), the multivolume constitutional history *We the People* (Harvard, 1991-2014), *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic* (Yale, 2010), *The Failure of the Founding Fathers* (Yale, 2005), and *Before the Next Attack* (Yale, 2006). His book *The Stakeholder Society* (Yale, 1999, with Anne Alstott) was a basis for Tony Blair's introduction of child investment accounts in the United Kingdom. Ackerman's many honors include Commander of the French Order of Merit and the American Philosophical Society's Henry Phillips Prize for Lifetime Achievement in

Jurisprudence, as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Rockefeller Fellowship in the Humanities. In 2010 he was named a Top 100 Global Thinker by *Foreign Policy* magazine. Educated at Harvard University (BA) and Yale Law School (LLB), Ackerman is a member of the American Law Institute and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

#### AMERICAN ACADEMY PROJECT

### A General Theory of World Constitutionalism

In his Academy project, “A General Theory of World Constitutionalism,” Ackerman develops a new framework for understanding the proliferating constitutionalisms of this century. He claims that standard legal frameworks are too court-centered, failing to appreciate that judges play different roles in different constitutional regimes. Political science emphasizes the importance of institutional design, notably in the choice between presidential and parliamentary systems, but fails to integrate larger normative issues involved in constitutional legitimation. Historical works sometimes touch upon these issues in the study of national or regional developments but do not integrate their particularistic insights into a general framework.

To grasp constitutionalism in both its differing traditions and as a worldwide phenomenon, Ackerman explores three dimensions of constitutionalism: first, as a legitimating discourse of modernity; second, as a specification of institutional practices; and third, as the product of distinctive historical conjunctures. This framework permits both comparative research and reflection as it exposes fundamental problems such as the European Union’s confrontation with the diverse discourses, practices, and historical conjunctures represented by the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.

#### LECTURE SUMMARY

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### A General Theory of World Constitutionalism – and the Crisis of the European Union

On the many ways to make a constitution

#### VIDEOS



THE AMERICAN  
ACADEMY IN BERLIN  
HANS ARNHOLD CENTER



A General Theory  
of World  
Constitutionalism  
– and the Crisis of  
the European  
Union



Daimler Fellow and Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale University **Bruce Ackerman** drew a full house out to the American Academy for the first lecture of the spring 2015 semester, “A General Theory of World Constitutionalism-and the Crisis of the European Union.” Words of welcome were extended to the buzzing room of trustees, scholars, journalists, students and friends of the Academy from American Academy Co-Chair and trustee, Christine I. »

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