

Christopher D. Berk

Aquia Building, Room 331
George Mason University, MSN 3F4
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

☎ (703) 993-6365
✉ cberk@gmu.edu
🌐 www.chrisberk.com

Appointments *George Mason University*
Assistant Professor in the Schar School of Policy & Government 2019-
Director, Democracy Lab First-Year Student Learning Community 2025-

University of Virginia
DeOlazarra Fellow in the Program in Political Philosophy, Policy & Law 2016-19

Affiliations *George Mason University*
Legal Studies 2019-
Philosophy, Politics, and Economics 2019-

Education *University of Chicago*
Ph.D., Political Science 2016
M.L.S., University of Chicago Law School 2016
M.A., Political Science 2010
University of Washington
B.A., *summa cum laude*, Political Science 2007

Books *Democracy in Captivity: Prisoners, patients, and the limits of self-government.* University of California Press. 2023.

At Risk. Under contract with the University of California Press (expected publication 2027).

My second book is a study of a community boarding school that serves underprivileged children in the United States. The question I'm most interested in is how social institutions born at the turn of the 20th century to manage 'at risk' youth respond to shifting beliefs about childhood poverty and delinquency in the 21st.

Publications, Refereed "Between Worlds: Identity, Culture, and Ambivalence in a Boarding School for 'At-Risk' Youth." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 10, no. 2: 580-602. 2025.

"The Submerged Prison State: Punishment, private interests, and public accountability." *Punishment & Society* 26, no. 1: 91-108. 2024.

"Must penal law be insulated from public influence?" *Law and Philosophy* 40: 67-87. 2021.

"Childhood, development, and the troubled foundations of *Miller v. Alabama*." *Law & Social Inquiry* 44, no. 3: 752-770. 2019.

– Symposium in *LSI* 44, no. 3 centered on this article. For my response, see "Reply to Elizabeth Scott, Laurence Steinberg, David Tanenhaus, and James Backstrom." *Law & Social Inquiry* 44, no. 3: 787–790. 2019.

"On Prison Democracy: The Politics of Participation in a Maximum Security Prison." *Critical*

Inquiry 44, no. 2: 275-302. 2018.

Publications,
Invited

“Investment Talk: Comments on the Use of the Language of Investment in Prison Reform Advocacy.” *Carceral Notebooks* 6: 115-129. 2010.

Works in
Progress

“Scripted Intimacy: How institutions make intimacy governable.” Under review.

“Development as Justification: Nature, Socialization, and Early Juvenile Justice.” Under review.

“Incarceration and Deservingness: Experimental Evidence on Less Eligibility” (with Lucas Núñez and Brett Burkhardt). In preparation.

Review essay for Theory and Event on *Prison Abolition For Realists* (Minnesota, 2025), *The Prison Before the Panopticon* (Harvard, 2024), *Politics in Captivity* (Fordham, 2024), and *Freedom Inside? Yoga and Meditation in the Carceral State* (Oxford, 2022). In preparation.

At Risk: Reforming Youth and Reimagining Society in a Community Boarding School. Book manuscript under contract, University of California Press. First draft expected September 2026.

Technical
Reports

Berk, Christopher D. 2013. “Youth, New Media, and Race.” MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, University of Chicago.

Wallace, Danielle and Christopher D. Berk. 2011. “Neighborhood Recidivism Rates and Resource Availability in Chicago from 2003 to 2006.” Project Safe Neighborhoods - Chicago.

Berk, Christopher D. 2010. “Mobilization in the 2008 Election.” The Mobilization, Change, and Political and Civic Engagement Project, University of Chicago.

Awards and
Fellowships

2026. Summer grant, Center for Humanities Research, George Mason University
Seed funding (\$5,000) for “Incarceration and Deservingness: Experimental Evidence on Less Eligibility”

2024. Residential Fellowship, Center for Humanities Research, George Mason University
This fellowship provides “release from teaching for spring 2024” and entails “a full-time commitment to participate in Center programming.”

2020, 2021. "Outstanding Core Social/Behavioral Sciences course," George Mason University
My GOVT 101 course, Democratic Theory and Practice, received recognition for teaching in both my first (in-person) and second year (COVID, online) at Mason.

2016-19. DeOlazarra Fellow, University of Virginia
Post-doctoral fellowship in the Program in Political Philosophy, Policy & Law (PPL).

2016. Visiting Scholar, The Newberry
Scholars-in-residence are given privileged use of the library and are "expected to publish or otherwise disseminate their research" and "participate in the Newberry's intellectual community."

2015-16. Master of Legal Studies Fellowship, University of Chicago Law School
Tuition remission and living stipend for a year of coursework in law.

2014-15. William Rainey Harper Provost Dissertation Fellowship, University of Chicago
Tuition remission and living stipend, "one of the highest honors given to our graduate students."

2013-14. Social Science Division Long-Term Project Grant, University of Chicago (\$8,000)

2011. Grodzins Prize Lectureship, University of Chicago
Competition among advanced graduate students to design and teach a course.

2010. Joseph Cropsey Prize for the “outstanding master’s thesis in political philosophy written by a student in the Department of Political Science,” University of Chicago

2010. High Pass in the American Politics Field Exam, University of Chicago

2008-13. McCabe Fellowship, University of Chicago
Tuition remission and living stipend for five years of graduate study.

2007. Daniel Lev Award for the “outstanding political science senior thesis” in 2007, University of Washington

2007. Graduated *summa cum laude* in the Honors College with Distinction in Political Science, University of Washington

Teaching

George Mason University

Democratic Theory and Practice (undergraduate)
Politics of Prisons (undergraduate)
Law and Political Thought (undergraduate)
Seminar in the Courts and Constitutionalism (graduate)

University of Virginia

Prisons
Law and Democracy
Law & Political Thought: Punishment
B.A. Thesis Colloquium in Political Philosophy, Policy & Law

Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women (Piedmont Virginia Community College)
Constitutional Foundations of American Government

University of Chicago

B.A. Thesis Colloquium, Department of Political Science
Classics of Social and Political Thought III
The Politics of Mass Incarceration in the U.S.

Advising

PhD Students

Loveline Phillips – Committee member (current)
Adam Bernbaum, PhD – Committee member; Representative, Washington State Legislature
Piper Biery, PhD – Committee member; Assistant Professor, West Texas A&M University

MA Students

Alen Dzaferagic, MA – Advisor; Law student, University of Maryland
Tariq Shanks, MA – Advisor; Program analyst, federal government
Moses Hunsaker – Advisor (current)

Other

Resident Head of Vincent House, University of Chicago College Housing 2013-16

Pedagogical Training

Center for Teaching Excellence in-class observation & focus group (Virginia) 2016
Seminar and Workshop on Course Design (Chicago) 2015
Workshop on Teaching in the College (Chicago) 2012

Talks

“Trump and Crimmigration” on the panel “The US Constitution and Executive Power – What’s Happening?” 2025. Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University

"Truth, Lies, and Bullshit." 2025. Democracy Lab, George Mason University

"At Risk: Democratic Culture in a Community Boarding School." 2024. Center for Humanities Research, George Mason University

"Corporate Profit or Public Good: Prison Privatization and the Question of Justice." 2021. Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University

"Local Politics, Prisons, and the Welfare State." 2020. Justice in America, George Mason University.

"Prison Riot/Rebellion." 2019. Moderator, featuring Heather Thompson, Bernard Harcourt, and Vesla Weaver. School of Law, University of Virginia

Book manuscript conference for *Democracy in Captivity* held at the University of Virginia on May 3, 2019.

"Life in Graduate School and Law School." 2019. Leadership Alliance Mellon Initiative, University of Virginia.

"Democratic Exclusions: Prisoners, patients, and children in democratic politics." 2015. Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought, Columbia University.

"Participatory Politics and Equality in the Digital Age." 2015. Chicago Area Behavior Workshop, Northwestern University.

"Participatory Politics and Equality in the Digital Age." 2014. Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, MacArthur Foundation.

"Data Collection in Political Science Research." 2014. Spring Lecture Series for Political Science Majors, University of Chicago.

"Mad Politics." 2013. Asylums and Prisons: Deinstitutionalization and Decarceration, University of Chicago.

Conference Presentations

Law and Society Association. San Francisco, CA 2011; Seattle, WA 2015; New Orleans, LA 2016; Toronto, Canada 2018; Washington, DC 2019; Lisbon, Portugal 2022; Denver, CO 2024; Chicago, IL 2025; San Francisco, CA 2026

Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities. Stanford Law School, Palo Alto, CA 2017; Georgetown Law School, Washington, DC 2018; University of Toronto Law School, Toronto, Canada 2023; Georgetown Law School, Washington, DC 2025.

American Political Science Association. Washington, DC 2010; Seattle, WA 2011; Chicago, IL 2013; Washington, DC 2014; San Francisco, CA 2015; San Francisco, CA 2017; Boston, MA 2018.

Western Political Science Association. San Antonio, TX 2011; Seattle, WA 2014; Vancouver, Canada 2017; San Francisco, CA 2018; Los Angeles, CA 2020 [Covid-19]; San Francisco, CA 2023; Seattle, WA 2025; San Diego, CA 2026

Midwest Political Science Association. Chicago, IL 2009; 2010; 2020 [Covid-19]; 2022.

Association for Political Theory. Ohio State University, 2016; Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, 2018.

Fourth Annual Conference on Radical Democracy. New School for Social Research, New York, NY 2014.

Social Science History Association. Chicago, IL 2013.

Research
Seminars,
Workshops

REP Research Group Workshop, APSA Virtual Meeting. 2024. "Identity, Culture, and Ambivalence in a boarding school for 'at risk' youth."
 Brown Bag Workshop, George Mason University. 2024. Book proposal for "At Risk."
 Brown Bag Workshop, George Mason University. 2022. "The Submerged Prison State."
 Political Theory Workshop, WPSA Virtual Community. 2022. "Democracy in Captivity."
 Brown Bag Workshop, George Mason University. 2022. "Wards of Democracy"
 WRiPS, George Mason University. 2019. "Must penal law be insulated from public influence?"
 PPL Colloquium, University of Virginia. 2018. "Custody and Community Control."
 PPL Colloquium, University of Virginia. 2016. "Democracy's Internal Borders."
 Self & Subjectivity Workshop, University of Chicago. 2015. "Mad Politics."
 Political Theory Workshop, University of Chicago. 2015. "Governing Children."
 American Politics Workshop, University of Chicago. 2014. "Governing Children."
 Political Theory Workshop, University of Chicago. 2014. "Mad Politics."
 Political Theory Workshop, University of Chicago. 2013. "On Prison Democracy."

Professional
Memberships

Law & Society Association (LSA)
 American Political Science Association (APSA)
 Western Political Science Association (WPSA)
 Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities (LCH)
 Association for Political Theory (APT)

Professional
Service

Manuscript Reviewer
 Law & Society Review, Law & Social Inquiry, Political Theory, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics, Theoretical Criminology, Critical Criminology, Theory & Event, New Political Science, Review of Education, Oxford University Press, and Routledge

Conference Organization
 Section co-organizer, "Political Theory: Historical Approaches." WPSA, 2026.
 Section organizer, "Political Theory and Its Applications." WPSA, 2025.
 Organizer, "Prison Riot/Rebellion." University of Virginia Law School, 2019.

University
Service

Co-organizer of the Schar School Brown Bag Workshop 2022-
 Governance Committee 2022-
 Center for Humanities Research Steering Committee 2024-2026
 PhD Admissions Committee 2021-23

Community
Service

Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women 2017
 Instructor Troy, VA

Cook County Juvenile Detention Center, Nancy B. Jefferson School 2013-15
 Volunteer Tutor Chicago, IL

Safer Foundation, 1811 Adult Transition Center 2008-11
 Volunteer Tutor Chicago, IL

Literacy Americorps, King County Correctional Facility 2007-08
 Instructor Seattle, WA

Updated May 13, 2026