

Christopher D. Berk

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Appointments	<i>George Mason University</i>	
	Associate Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government	2026-
	Director, Democracy Lab First-Year Student Learning Community	2025-
	Assistant Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government	2019-26
	<i>University of Virginia</i>	
	DeOlazarra Fellow, Program in Political Philosophy, Policy & Law	2016-19
Affiliations	<i>George Mason University</i>	
	Affiliate Faculty, Legal Studies Program	2019-
	Affiliate Faculty, Philosophy, Politics, & Economics (PPE)	2019-
Education	<i>University of Chicago</i>	
	Ph.D., Political Science	2016
	M.L.S., University of Chicago Law School	2016
	M.A., Political Science	2010
	<i>University of Washington</i>	
	B.A., <i>summa cum laude</i> , Political Science	2007
Books	<i>Democracy in Captivity: Prisoners, patients, and the limits of self-government.</i> University of California Press. 2023.	
	<i>At Risk.</i> Under contract with the University of California Press (expected publication 2027).	
Publications, Refereed	"Between Worlds: Identity, Culture, and Ambivalence in a Boarding School for 'At-Risk' Youth." <i>Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics</i> 10, no. 2: 580-602. 2025.	
	"The Submerged Prison State: Punishment, private interests, and public accountability." <i>Punishment & Society</i> 26, no. 1: 91-108. 2024.	
	"Must penal law be insulated from public influence?" <i>Law and Philosophy</i> 40: 67-87. 2021.	
	"Childhood, development, and the troubled foundations of <i>Miller v. Alabama</i> ." <i>Law & Social Inquiry</i> 44, no. 3: 752-770. 2019.	
	– Symposium in <i>LSI</i> 44, no. 3 centered on this article. For my response, see "Reply to Elizabeth Scott, Laurence Steinberg, David Tanenhaus, and James Backstrom." <i>Law & Social Inquiry</i> 44, no. 3: 787-790. 2019.	
	"On Prison Democracy: The Politics of Participation in a Maximum Security Prison." <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 44, no. 2: 275-302. 2018.	
Publications, Invited	"A Movement Consolidates After Its Moment: Prison Abolition as Political Theory." Forthcoming in <i>Theory & Event</i> .	

– Book review essay of *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).

“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.

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

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 for “Incarceration and Deservingness” (\$5,000)

2024. Residential Fellowship, Center for Humanities Research, George Mason University

2020, 2021. “Outstanding Core Social/Behavioral Sciences Course,” George Mason University

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

2016. Visiting Scholar, The Newberry

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

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.

Pedagogical Training

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

Teaching in Carceral Institutions

Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women (Piedmont Virginia Community College) 2017
Instructor, Constitutional Foundations of American Government 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

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

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 Am-

bivalence 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)

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

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, 2027.
 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.

Updated September 17, 2026