CHRISTINA PLAKAS

University of South Carolina
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Columbia, SC 29028
cplakas@email.sc.edu | (347) 319-2585 | Google Scholar Profile
CV Updated 10.14.26

EDUCATION

2027 — Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
Dissertation Title: *Meaningful Access to the Courts from Behind Bars: The Relationship between the Jail Environment and the Development of Legal Capability of Pretrial Detainees*
Chair: Dr. Brandon Applegate

2019 — B.A. in Sociology | Minor in Hispanic Studies | Graduated *cum laude*
Hamilton College, Clinton, NY
Thesis Title: *The revolution will not come with flowers: What motivates some Greeks to join the high-risk, high-cost anarchist movement*
Chair: Dr. Stephen Ellingson

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Access to Justice; Pretrial Justice; Sentencing Disparities; Corrections; Mixed Methods; Qualitative Methods

VISITING APPOINTMENTS

2026 – Present — *Visiting Research Fellow*
Center for Institutional & Social Change, Columbia Law School, Columbia University

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2026 – Present — *Dissertation Fellow*
Southern Region Education Board, Doctoral Scholars Program

2021 – 2025 — *Graduate Research Assistant*
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina

2024 – 2025 — *Graduate Research Assistant*
National Science Foundation Grant: Understanding How Mentoring Can Disrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Promote Positive Youth Development (Award no. 2234344)
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina

2022 — *Graduate Research Assistant & Mentor*
Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU): Disparities of the Criminal Justice System, National Science Foundation (Award no. 1851955)
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina

LAW & CRIMINAL JUSTICE EMPLOYMENT

2024	*Data Intern* The Jailhouse Lawyer Initiative, NYU School of Law, New York, NY
2022	*Performance & Impact Research Assistant* Correctional Association of New York (CANY), New York, NY
2020 – 2021	*Rikers Island Law Library Legal Coordinator* New York City Department of Correction, New York, NY
2019 – 2020	*Civil Litigation Paralegal* Shanies Law Office, New York, NY

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

2026	Whiting, S., Sails-Dunbar, T., & **Plakas, C**. (2026). At the Margins of Justice: Association Between Youth and Adult Street Homelessness and Violent Crime Arrests Among Incarcerated Adults. *Journal of Criminal Justice.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2026.102728
2025	**Plakas, C**., Klein, B. R., Rath, H., Jones, T., & Weber, L. (2025). Criminal Court Case Processing of American School Shooters. *Journal of School Violence*, *25*(2), 236-248. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2025.2572587

PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS

Under Review	**Plakas, C**. Jailhouse Lawyers on Meaningful Access to the Courts for Pretrial Detainees.
Revise & Resubmit	Sails-Dunbar, T., **Plakas, C**., & Whiting, S. Public Disorder Arrests and Severe Mental Illness: A Focal Concerns Perspective.
In progress	**Plakas, C**. Exploring Barriers to Legal Resources in Jails: Challenges Faced by Law Library Practitioners. *Final stages of manuscript editing

BOOK CHAPTERS

2026	**Plakas, C**. & Case, B. Restoring connection: Visitation's wellness benefits and barriers in correctional facilities. In J. Phillips, M. Novisky, & R. Ricciardelli (Eds.), *International Handbook on Wellness and Wellbeing in Criminal Justice.* Taylor & Francis.
2025	Shaiman, S., & **Plakas, C**. (2025). Ctrl+ Alt+ Aggression: Exploring the relationship between video games and violence. In *Research Handbook on Violent Crime and Society* (pp. 445-459). Edward Elgar Publishing. *Solicited book chapter

PRE-PRINT PUBLICATIONS

2019 **Plakas, C**. (2019). *The revolution will not come with flowers: What motivates some Greeks to join the high-risk, high-cost anarchist movement*. [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Sociology, Hamilton College.

2018 **Plakas, C.** (2018). *Burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary traumatic stress among humanitarian aid workers in Jordan*. [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Psychology, Hamilton College.

GRANT, FELLOWSHIP & SCHOLAR ACTIVITY

2026 – Present *Dissertation Fellow*
Southern Region Education Board, Doctoral Scholars Program ($20,000 awarded).

2021 – Present *Doctoral Scholar*
University of South Carolina, Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program ($40,000 awarded over five years).

2026 *Expanding Services Together Scholar*
San Francisco Public Library, Expanding Information Access for Incarcerated People Initiative ($2,000 stipend awarded).

2025 *Dissertation Grant*
Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy. ($10,000 awarded).

2025 *Dissertation Grant*
Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice, Spring Student Research Award ($2,300 awarded).

2025 *Dissertation Grant*
University of South Carolina, Office of the Vice President for Research, Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity (SPARC) award ($4,957 awarded).

2025 *Instructor Grant*
University of South Carolina, Rolling Beyond the Classroom Grant. Class trip to Broad River Correctional Institute. ($295 awarded).

2024 – 2025 *Access to Justice Research Initiative Early-Career Scholar*
American Bar Foundation. ($1,000 stipend awarded).

2024 *Program Supervisor*
University of South Carolina, Inclusive Excellence Grant. *Bridging Worlds: Narratives of Law, Justice, and Connection*. ($2,000 awarded).

2023 *Principal Investigator*
The Gail Schlachter Memorial Research Grant. *Inmate Access to the Courts: A Mixed-Methods Explanatory Study of the Resources Available in Jail Law Libraries in the United States post* Lewis v. Casey ($3,000 awarded).

2022 *Latinx44 Scholar*
Latinx44 Scholarship Program. (Summer internship funding awarded).

2017 & 2018 *Principal Investigator*
Hamilton College, Antoine de Bourg Travel Grant. The revolution will not come with flowers: What motivates some Greeks to join the high-risk, high-cost anarchist movement. ($600 & $800 awarded).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2025 **Plakas, C.** "'People Perish, Innocent People': Why Meaningful Access to the Courts Matters in Jails and Prisons." Poster accepted for presentation at the Southern Criminal Justice Association. Charleston, SC. September 9–12, 2025.

2025 **Plakas, C**. "Law Librarians Behind Bars: A Qualitative Study of Jailhouse Lawyers' Experiences Accessing the Courts," Poster accepted for presentation at the American Association of Law Libraries. Portland, OR. July 19–22, 2025.

2025 **Plakas, C**. "Legal Access Behind Bars: Jailhouse Lawyers on Ensuring Meaningful Access to the Courts," Paper accepted for presentation at the Law & Society Conference. Chicago, IL. May 22–25, 2025.

2024 **Plakas, C**. "A Qualitative Report on Defining and Understanding Meaningful Access to the Courts in American Jails," Paper accepted for presentation at the American Society of Criminology. San Francisco, CA. November 12–15, 2024.

2024 **Plakas, C.** "Exploring Barriers to Meaningful Access to the Courts: Challenges Faced by Law Library Practitioners in Correctional Facilities," Paper accepted for poster presentation at the Southern Criminal Justice Association Conference. Greenville, SC. September 13–16, 2024.

2024 **Plakas, C.** "Books Behind Bars: The Power of Book Clubs in Correctional Settings for Incarcerated Participants," Paper accepted for poster presentation at Discover USC. Columbia, SC. April 19, 2024.

2023 **Plakas, C**., Klein, B.R., Jones, T., Rath, H., & Weber, L. "Criminal Court Case Processing of American School Shooters," Paper accepted for presentation at the American Society of Criminology. Philadelphia, PA. November 15–18, 2023.

2023 **Plakas, C.** "Deaths Behind Bars: An Empirical Analysis of Preventable Deaths in South Carolina's Correctional Facilities," Paper accepted for presentation at the State of South Carolina's Criminal Justice System conference. Charleston, SC. October 20, 2023.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE - UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Fall 2025 *Instructor of Record*
"Corrections" (CRJU 312), Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Summer 2025	*Instructor of Record* "Hate Crimes" (CRJU 425), Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Spring 2025	*Instructor of Record* "Corrections" (CRJU 312), Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Fall 2024	*Instructor of Record* "Research Methods in Criminology and Criminal Justice" (CRJU 202), Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Summer 2023	*Instructor of Record* "Criminal Justice in London" (CRJU 491), Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
2021 – 2023	*Graduate Teaching Assistant* Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice

INVITED LECTURES

Spring 2026	**JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY** *Harm Reduction Behind Bars.* Presentation for an undergraduate class on harm reduction.
Spring 2026	**COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL** *Learning the Law while Incarcerated: Jailhouse Lawyer Perspectives on the Current State of Meaningful Access to the Courts in U.S. Jails and Prisons*. Presentation for the Legal Literacy at Work cohort.
Fall 2024	**ALCATRAZ ISLAND** *Contemporary Prison Issues: A Discussion of Wrongful Convictions, Law Libraries, and Jailhouse Lawyers*. Presentation for the staff.
Fall 2024	**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO** *The Right to Meaningful Access to the Courts.* Presentation for an undergraduate class on the courts.
Spring 2025	**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA** *Ethical Issues in Corrections*. Presentation for an undergraduate class on ethics in criminal justice.
Spring 2025	*Corrections Overview*. Presentation for an introduction to criminal justice undergraduate class.
Spring 2023	*Voices from Behind Bars: A Discussion with Tyjuan Cassidy & Christina Plakas on their Experiences at Rikers*. Presentation for an undergraduate class on ethics in criminal justice.
Spring 2023	*Explaining the Rise in Violence Between the 1960s and 1990s*. Presentation for

an undergraduate course on violence in America.

Fall 2022 — *Careers in Criminal Justice*. Presentation for an undergraduate class on corrections.

UNDERGRADUATE MENTORSHIP

2025 — *"Greek Life Involvement the Impacts on Students' Mental Health, Academic Integrity, Alcohol Abuse, and Sexual Behaviors."* Discover USC Research supervisor and mentor to: Emily Foreman.

2025 — *"Corruption Within Georgia Prisons."* Discover USC Research supervisor and mentor to: Payton Griffith.

2023 — Undergraduate Research Opportunities with The American School Shooting Study (TASSS). Mentor to: Tessa Jones, Hannah Rath, and Alexis Weber.

AWARDS & HONORS

2025 — First place, American Association of Law Libraries, poster competition. "Law Librarians Behind Bars: A Qualitative Study of Jailhouse Lawyers' Experiences Accessing the Courts."

2024 — MLK Social Justice Student Award, University of South Carolina

2021 – 2024 — McCausland College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Stipend Enhancement Award, University of South Carolina

2020 — Certificate of Divisional Recognition, New York City Department of Correction

2019 — People's Choice Award, Three-Minute Thesis Competition (3MT®), Hamilton College

2018 — Semi-finalist & Alternate, Critical Language Scholarship (Arabic), U.S. Department of State

2017 — Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, U.S. Department of State

SERVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT & UNIVERSITY

May 2022 & 2025 — *Discover USC Presentation Reviewer*
University of South Carolina

2023 – 2024 — *President, Criminology & Criminal Justice Graduate Student Association*
University of South Carolina

SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

2024 – Present — *Career Development Program Director & Instructor*
Alvin S. Glenn Correctional Institution, Columbia, SC

2021 – Present — *Co-Founder & Director*

Project READ Behind Bars, Columbia, SC

2025 *Mock Trial Judge*
University of South Carolina Soda City Trials, Columbia, SC

2021 *Positive Youth Development Mentor*
New Bridge Academy, Cayce, SC

PROFESSIONAL DEVELPOPMENT & CERTIFICATES

2024 – 2025 Inclusive Excellence Institute
Multi-session training course in fostering equity, inclusion, and cross-cultural understanding as a leader in a university setting.

2024 CITI Human Research: Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research
Training course on core norms, principles, regulations, and rules governing the practice of research.

2023 Intercultural Inclusion and Diversity Learning Training
Multi-session training course in fostering inclusion in classrooms; developing syllabi.

2021 CITI Human Research: Social and Behavioral Research Training
Training course on ethical research practices with human research subjects and proper data storage and management.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND AFFILIATIONS

2025 – Present *Center for Civil Rights History and Research,* affiliate
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
2023 – Present *American Society of Criminology,* member
2023 – Present *American Jail Association,* member
2023 – Present *American Association of Law Libraries,* member
2023 – Present *American Library Association,* member
2021 – Present *Criminology and Criminal Justice Graduate Student Association,* member
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC
2024 – 2025 *American Bar Foundation,* Early Career Scholar

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Stata, SPSS, RStudio, NVivo, LexisNexis

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Spanish: Native and professional proficiency in writing, speaking, and reading
Greek: Limited working proficiency in writing, speaking, and reading
Arabic: Elementary proficiency in writing, speaking, and reading