

**Call for Participation in a Discussion Group on**  
***CRITICAL EVIDENCE REFORM: HOW DO WE CHANGE PRIOR***  
***CONVICTION IMPEACHMENT IN THE U.S.?***

**Abstracts due: August 31, 2021**

**Introduction**

The following is a Call for Participation in a Discussion Group on *Critical Evidence Reform: How Do we Change Prior Conviction Impeachment in the U.S.?* to be held during the virtual AALS Annual Meeting from January 5-9, 2022.

**Description**

This Discussion Group will build on the momentum for reform of various facets of the criminal law to focus attention on the problem of prior conviction impeachment. Evidence law in almost every U.S. jurisdiction now permits witnesses' prior convictions to be introduced as evidence in order to impeach their credibility. This practice of impeachment by prior conviction has been critiqued on many grounds, many of which are relevant to this year's theme: "Freedom, Equality and the Common Good." Freedom is implicated by the use of convictions to bring about other convictions, often via improper means. Equality is implicated by the way in which longstanding biases along lines of race, in particular, are perpetuated. The common good is implicated because of this practice's detachment from truth-seeking and its tendency to chill essential testimony from defendants.

The session aims to bring together a diverse group of scholars to continue efforts begun in early 2021 to organize around this issue and to think systematically about the way forward. What changes to prior conviction impeachment are most desirable? What changes are most achievable? Is there overlap between the two? Should reform efforts be focused on legislative, prosecutorial, or judicial actors or on the public? How can we strengthen interest in change beyond the legal academy? In short, what are the next steps to bring about long-awaited reform in this area? We hope for a wide-ranging conversation among the participants and audience-members that will encompass aspects of federal and state practice in both criminal and civil contexts and will strengthen a concentrated effort at reform.

**Call for Abstracts**

The Annual Meeting Program Committee invites faculty and administrators who would like to join this Discussion Group to submit a three-page abstract on a topic relevant to the project of reforming prior conviction impeachment **by August 31**. It could be a critique of the status quo,



for example, or a vision for what change might involve or how it might be achieved. Current organizers and confirmed discussion participants are as follows:

- Jeffrey Bellin, William and Mary Law School
- John Blume – Cornell Law School
- Bennett Capers – Fordham Law
- Montréal Carodine – University of Alabama School of Law
- Jasmine Gonzales Rose – Boston University School of Law
- Lisa Kern Griffin – Duke University School of Law
- J.D. King – Washington and Lee University School of Law
- Anna Roberts (co-organizer)—St John’s University School of Law
- Julia Simon-Kerr (co-organizer)—University of Connecticut School of Law

The Committee, along with the faculty who proposed this discussion, will select the remaining discussion participants from the abstracts submitted. At the AALS Annual Meeting in January, selected participants will make a three-to-five-minute presentation during the Discussion Group. The remaining time will be devoted to a moderated, roundtable group discussion.

Each submission for this Discussion Group should include:

- The title of the submitted presentation;
- The name, school and email of the applying participant;
- A three-page, double-spaced abstract of their presentation; and
- The curriculum vitae of the applying participant.

In reviewing the submitted abstracts, the Discussion Group organizers and selection committee will consider the following:

- The fit of the abstract for the Discussion Group;
- The diversity that the applying participant may bring (including diversity of viewpoint, institutional affiliation, and status, i.e. tenure-track, non-tenure track, tenured); and
- The applying participant’s interest in joining our ongoing reform efforts in this area.

Abstracts are due by **August 31, 2021** and should be submitted using the online submission form <https://aalsweb.wufoo.com/forms/r7szvob1pac94u/>.