

ZACH SOMMERS
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

IIT CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW , Chicago, IL Assistant Professor of Law	2024 – Present
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EDUCATION

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY , Evanston, IL Ph.D. (Sociology), December 2018	2013 – 2018
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW , Chicago, IL J.D., <i>magna cum laude</i> , January 2019	2011 – 2013
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA , Philadelphia, PA B.A., <i>magna cum laude</i> , (Criminology; Psychology), May 2011	2007 – 2011

PUBLICATIONS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS

JOURNAL ARTICLES

White-Collar Crime: An Empirical Examination of Race, Class, and the Challenges of Enforcement, __ MICH. ST. L. REV. __ (forthcoming 2025).

[*Black Deaths Matter: Disparities in Gun Homicides, Policing, and News Coverage in Chicago*](#), 57:5 CRIM. L. BULL. ART. 2 (2021).

[*Missing White Woman Syndrome: An Empirical Analysis of Race and Gender Disparities in Online News Coverage of Missing Persons*](#), 106 (2) J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 275 (2016).

Revisiting Missing White Woman Syndrome: The Durability of the Disparities and Reactionary Legislation (manuscript in progress).

Missing White Woman Syndrome: The Effects on Police Investigation Outcomes (manuscript in progress).

BOOK CHAPTERS

Rethinking the Criminal Responsibility of White-Collar Crime in THE PALGRAVE HANDBOOK ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY (Ken M. Levy and Raff Donelson, eds. Palgrave Macmillan) (forthcoming 2025).

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

[Missing White Woman Syndrome: How Do We Fix It?](#), BLOOMBERG LAW, Oct. 19, 2021.

[Solitary Confinement and the Nation of Islam](#), THE IMMANENT FRAME, May 30, 2018.

[Missing White Woman Syndrome: It's Not a Media Myth](#), THE CRIME REPORT, Apr. 3, 2017.

SELECT MEDIA COVERAGE

Marquise Francis, *Boyfriend of Alabama Woman Carlee Russell Suggests She Was Kidnapped Before Her Safe Return*, YAHOO! NEWS, July 17, 2023.

Melanie Eversley, *When Women of Color Disappear, Who Says Their Names?*, THE GUARDIAN, Oct. 4, 2021.

Li Cohen, *These Families Want Help Finding Keeshae Jacobs, Mary Johnson, Alicia Navarro and Hundreds of Other Missing People. Here's Why You Might Not Have Heard of Them*, CBS NEWS, Oct. 1, 2021.

Nora Mabie, *The Gabby Petito Case Has Left Indigenous People Asking How to 'Qualify' for Same Attention*, USA TODAY, Sep. 24, 2021.

Nicquel Terry Ellis, *These Families of Missing Black People are Frustrated with the Lack of Response to their Cases*, CNN, Sep. 23, 2021.

Maia Niguel Hoskin, *What About Jelani Day And Daniel Robinson?: Racial Bias And Anti-Blackness In the Media*, FORBES, Sep. 23, 2021.

Hanna Flint, *Why Does the Media Only React When Victims are Young, Pretty and White?*, GQ MAGAZINE, June 2021.

Maia Niguel Hoskin, *Breonna Taylor's Death Further Illustrates the Invisibility of Black Women and Resurrects a Discussion About 'Missing White Woman Syndrome,'* FORBES, June 28, 2020.

Anna North, *A Young Woman Disappeared in Iowa. Here's Why President Trump Got Involved*, VOX, Aug. 23, 2018.

Paul Farhi, *Colorado Murders Signal a Return of the News Media's 'Damsels in Distress' Trope*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Aug. 21, 2018.

Gene Demby, *What We Know (And Don't Know) About 'Missing White Women Syndrome'*, NPR, Apr. 13, 2017.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Pro Bono Award, Kirkland & Ellis LLP	2021
Robert F. Winch Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University	2017
Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award, Northwestern University	2017
Winner, Graduate Student Paper Competition, Midwest Sociological Society For Paper Titled <i>Missing White Woman Syndrome: An Empirical Analysis of Race and Gender Disparities in Online News Coverage of Missing Persons</i>	2016
Robert F. Winch Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University	2015
Graduate Fellowship in Legal Studies, Northwestern University	2013 – 2018
Northwestern University Fellowship, Northwestern University	2013 – 2018
Law Scholars Program, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law	2012 – 2017
Dean's List, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law	2011 – 2013
Sellin-Wolfgang Research Prize for Best Senior Thesis Department of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania	2011

SELECT ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

“Revisiting Missing White Woman Syndrome: The Durability of the Disparities and the Effect on Police Investigation Outcomes.” CrimFest, Philadelphia, PA (July 2025).

“Missing White Woman Syndrome Revisited: Change Over Time and the Impact on Police Investigation Outcomes.” Law and Society Association, Chicago, IL (May 2025).

“Clear and Present Danger: The Role of Internet News Coverage and Guns in Chicago Homicide Clearance Rates.” Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, IL (Apr. 2019).

“If it Bleeds, it Leads: Media Coverage and Police Homicide Investigation Clearance Rates.”
Law and Society Association, Toronto, Canada (June 2018).

“The Prison Gang Threat: Examining the Disparate Use of Punishment Techniques in
Correctional Institutions.” Co-Presented with Brittany Friedman. American Society of
Criminology, Philadelphia, PA (Nov. 2017).

“Defining Terrorism: What Qualifies as an Act of Terrorism and Who Gets Labeled a Terrorist?”
JD-PhD Colloquium, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, Chicago, IL, (Sep. 2017).

“Defining Terrorism: What Qualifies as an Act of Terrorism and Who Gets Labeled a Terrorist?”
Law and Society Association, Mexico City, Mexico (June 2017).

“Missing White Woman Syndrome.” Legal Studies Research Methods (Guest Lecture),
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (May 2017).

“Food for Thought: Capital Punishment.” International Student Organization Subcommittee on
Global Engagement, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (Nov. 2016).

“Why Do People Obey the Law? Deterrence.” Law and Society (Guest Lecture), Northwestern
University, Evanston IL (Nov. 2016).

“Approaches to Grading and Student Feedback in the Social Sciences.” Northwestern University
New Teaching Assistant Conference, Evanston, IL (Sep. 2016).

“Missing White Woman Syndrome: An Empirical Analysis of Race and Gender Disparities in
Online News Coverage of Missing Persons.” Joint Annual Meeting, Midwest Sociological
Society and North Central Sociological Association, Chicago, IL (March 2016).

“Missing White Woman Syndrome and Its Consequences: An Empirical Investigation.” Applied
Quantitative Methods Workshop, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (May 2015).

“Missing White Woman Syndrome.” JD-PhD Colloquium, Northwestern University Pritzker
School of Law, Chicago, IL, (Apr. 2015).

PROFESSIONAL LEGAL EXPERIENCE

KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP , Chicago, IL Summer Associate; Litigation Associate, White-Collar Crime Group	2019 – 2024
U.S. DISTRICT COURT, NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS , Chicago, IL Judicial Law Clerk for the Hon. John J. Tharp, Jr.	2019 – 2020
CHILDREN AND FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER, BLUHM LEGAL CLINIC , Chicago, IL Research Assistant	2016 – 2018

INDEPENDENT POLICE REVIEW AUTHORITY , Chicago, IL Research Intern	2016
U.S. DISTRICT COURT, NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS , Chicago, IL Judicial Extern for the Hon. Susan E. Cox, Magistrate	2012
PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON SENTENCING , Philadelphia, PA Research Associate	2010 – 2011
PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE , Philadelphia, PA Summer Intern	2009

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

IIT CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW , Chicago, IL Criminal Law; Criminal Procedure	2024 – Present
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY , Evanston, IL Graduate Student Instructor Courses Taught: Crime and Criminology	2016 – 2017
Teaching Assistant Courses: Law and Society; Sport and Society	2014 – 2016
THE PRINCETON REVIEW , Chicago IL GRE Instructor	2014 – 2016

SERVICE AND MENTORING

IIT CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW Speakers Committee	2025 – Present
Visiting Assistant Professor Committee	2024 – Present
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW Student Coordinator, JD-PhD Seminar, Northwestern University	2017 – 2018
Criminology Editor, <i>Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology</i>	2013 – 2014
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY Invited Participant, Teaching Consultant Program, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, Northwestern University	2016 – 2019
Cofounder and Student Coordinator, Crime, Law, and Society Workshop, Northwestern University	2016 – 2018
Selected Participant, Searle Teaching Certificate Program, Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, Northwestern University	2016 – 2017

INVITED REVIEWS

Law & Soc. Inquiry, MASS COMM. & SOC'Y, Nw. U. L. Rev., PLOS ONE, SOCIAL FORCES, SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

MENTORSHIP

Illinois Science & Technology Institute Mentor Matching Engine	2018 – Present
University of Pennsylvania Ben Connect Mentoring Program	2020 – 2023
Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law Mentorship Program	2020 – 2023
Northwestern University Mentorship Program for First Generation or Low Socioeconomic Status Students	2014 – 2015

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Society of Criminology
American Sociological Association
Law and Society Association

BAR ADMISSION

Illinois	2019
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