Meet Jacqueline Gaines, Professor of Cooperative Education

FRANCHESCA SMITH
SEP 11, 2026

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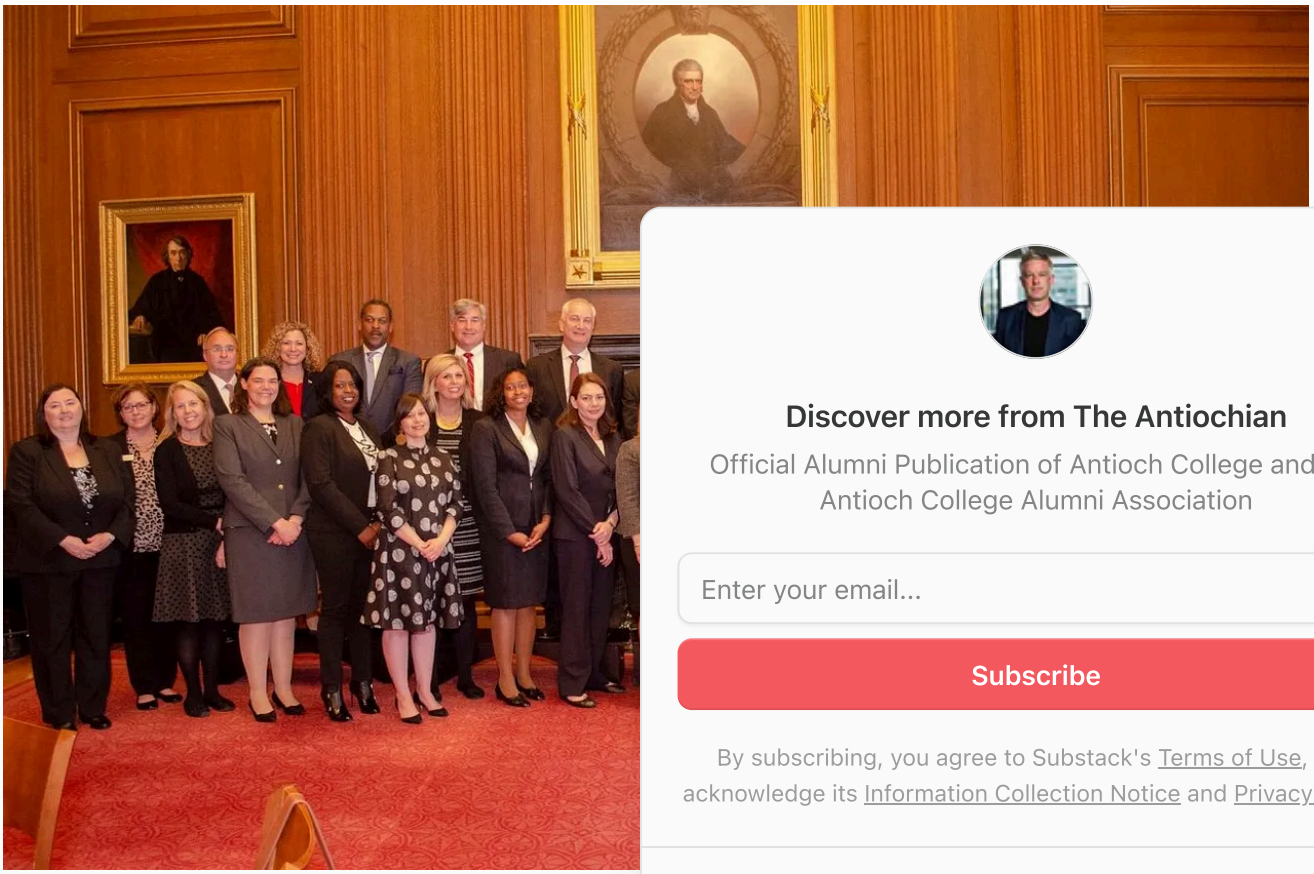
What first inspired you to pursue a career in law?

I am passionate about helping people solve difficult problems. When I was in college, I was always torn between pursuing a career in academia or a career in law. I am amazed that in my career, I have been able to do both. I practiced law in the Dayton-area for 20 years. I worked in private law firms for six years practicing business litigation, workers compensation law, employment law, and did an externship at the Montgomery County Public Defender's Office. Then for 13 years, I served as a family law magistrate, presiding over complex cases involving child custody, parenting time, domestic violence, contempt, and property division.

For over 10 years, while holding a full-time law job, I also served as an adjunct professor at various schools, including the Maurer School of Law at Indiana University; University of Dayton School of Law; and Central State University. In 2025, I wanted to transition from practicing law full-time to full-time teaching. I am thrilled that Antioch College gave me the opportunity to teach full-time.

What is one meaningful moment in your career that you often reflect on and what impact did it have on your trajectory?

In 2019, I travelled to Washington, DC with a delegation from the University of Dayton School of Law and was sworn in as a member of the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States. Our group had a private meeting with Justice Ruth Bader Gingsburg. She was so gracious with us and answered our questions, accepted our UD t-shirt gift, and took a photograph with us. It was an amazing experience and I learned so much about the history and traditions of the United States Supreme Court.



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What do you love most about being an educator?

I love being able to interact with students one-on-one. I like hearing and learning from their stories and their experiences. It is powerful when you see a student connect with new material and take ownership of it.

How do you use your field experience to impact the way you lead a classroom and mentor students?

I like to share with my students that you do not to have a linear career trajectory, and you can leverage past experiences to open new opportunities. In my career, I have gone from business litigation in private practice, to working as a magistrate in family court, to now being an educator. Each experience builds on previous experiences.

What do you hope students take away from your classes beyond the course content?

I hope that students take away a sense from my classes that they are capable of achieving their professional aspirations because I have assisted them in building the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve them.

Are you currently working on a project, research, or new program that you will be adding to your professional portfolio?

This upcoming academic year, I'd like to hold virtual lunch and learns connecting Antioch alums who are lawyers with Antioch students in order to increase students' comfort with being around lawyers and for students to gain exposure to a variety of legal practice areas.

Trustees Suparna Bhaskaran and Shalini Deo are planning some exciting initiatives related to the law, specifically a Law & Justice Network and a Law & Justice Co-op Fellowship Fund. I am thrilled to assist them in these endeavors.

What led you to Antioch College?

Working here at Antioch College aligns with my professional values because Antioch has a storied civil rights and social justice history, and it has been a pioneer in higher education. I am proud of the legacy of Antioch's first president, Horace Mann, who is known as the father of American education and was an abolitionist. I am proud that the first lady of the Civil Rights Movement, Coretta Scott King was an alumna, and I support the mission of the Coretta Scott King Center. I believe in Antioch's mission to make a life changing college education accessible to all. I am proud that Antioch is the first federal work college in the State of Ohio and of the dual work program which enables students to graduate with real world work experience.

What would you like the Antioch Community to know about you?

I would like the Antioch community to know that I am passionate about accessibility of higher education and legal education to underserved communities. Education is a powerful tool that unlocks countless possibilities in life. I want students to know that attending law school is a viable option for them and for them to know that there are many types of practice areas you can enter into from environmental law, civil rights law, to corporate law and beyond. I think that exposure to the law is important so that students can see that a law degree is versatile and can be used for community organizing or to enter various career fields that may not directly involve being in the courtroom.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?

I grow a small vegetable garden. I have a dog and a cat. I enjoy traveling and exploring new places with family and friends.

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