

Jonathan Simmons, PhD

Professional summary

An accomplished and innovative higher education professional with over 13 years of experience at the University of Alberta. Expertise in developing and delivering comprehensive academic support that contributes to a holistic and positive student experience, reaching over 1,400 students annually. Proven ability to lead strategic initiatives, particularly in ethical AI integration, and to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Leverages an extensive research and project management background to enhance evidence-based pedagogical practices and demonstrate program impact.

Professional experience

Senior Graduate Writing Advisor | University of Alberta, Writing and Learning (Student Success and Experience) | Edmonton, AB (2019 – Present)

As the senior member of the advising team, provides leadership, pedagogical mentorship, and strategic guidance on program development and delivery.

- **Program Development & Delivery:**
 - Designs and delivers over 15 distinct educational workshops and programs annually for a diverse audience of approximately 800 graduate students, creating targeted instructional resources and curriculum materials to meet specific learning outcomes.
 - In addition to workshops, developed and facilitated multiple multi-day writing retreats and established two long-running weekly writing groups (virtual and hybrid) to foster productivity and peer support.
- **Consultation & Advising:** Conducts over 600 individualized consultations per year, providing tailored guidance to stakeholders from all academic disciplines to help them strengthen their analysis, articulate complex research effectively, and navigate complex university policies, including the Student Academic Integrity Policy.
- **Strategic Initiatives & Leadership:**
 - **AI in Academic Writing:** Proactively identified a need for guidance on Generative AI; conceptualized, developed, and launched a new initiative to proactively address emerging challenges to academic integrity and support students in the ethical use of new technologies. This included three workshops and the ground-up development of a comprehensive, multi-module asynchronous Canvas course.
 - **Service Evaluation:** Contributed to the evaluation of services by helping to identify key metrics, designing assessment tools like feedback surveys, and providing input for strategic planning and reporting to key partners (GSA, GPS).
 - **Hiring and Team Development:** Contributed to team growth by participating in the hiring process for writing advisors, including updating position descriptions and serving on interview panels.

- **Collaboration & Stakeholder Relations:**

- Works closely with cross-functional partners, including the Graduate Students' Association and Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies, to co-design and deliver specialized programming that addresses specific institutional and community needs.
- Co-drafted major research funding applications in collaboration with faculty, contributing to the successful acquisition of a multi-year grant.

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Sociology | University of Alberta | Edmonton, AB (2019 – 2021)

- Planned and delivered multiple undergraduate sociology courses, developing all course materials including a discipline-specific “Writing in Sociology” guide to improve student learning outcomes.
- Implemented innovative assessment strategies, including practical fieldwork components and peer-review exercises, to enhance student engagement and measure learning effectiveness.
- **Courses taught included:** *Introductory Sociology; Criminology.*

Contract Instructor, Department of Sociology | University of Alberta | Edmonton, AB (2015 – 2018)

- Taught over 15 sections of undergraduate courses to diverse audiences in class sizes of up to 200 students.
- Cultivated an inclusive and respectful learning environment by intentionally incorporating diverse perspectives and readings into all course materials.
- Consistently received outstanding student evaluations, with instructor ratings averaging 4.7 out of 5.0, and was awarded the University of Alberta Graduate Student Teaching Award (2017).
- **Courses taught included:** *Sociology of Deviance and Conformity; Sociology of Religion; Social Psychology.*

Contract Instructor, Department of Social Sciences | Concordia University of Edmonton | Edmonton, AB (2017 – 2019)

- Taught multiple sections of “Sociological Concepts and Perspectives,” introducing foundational theories and methods to first- and second-year undergraduate students.

Doctoral Researcher | University of Alberta | Edmonton, AB (2012 – 2018)

- Managed a multi-year empirical research project from conception to completion, successfully securing competitive national funding (SSHRC) and defending the final dissertation.
- Executed a full research cycle, designing and conducting a rigorous qualitative study that included in-depth fieldwork, interviews, and archival research.
- Performed systematic thematic analysis on complex qualitative data sets, translating findings into multiple peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations.

Early Academic Experience (Consolidated) | University of Alberta & University of New Brunswick

(2007 – 2013)

- Held several progressive roles including Sessional Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and Research Assistant.
- **Selected Research Assistantships:**
 - Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education (Dr. Joseph Galbo)
 - Irish Cultural Identity, Mediation, and Music in New Brunswick (Dr. Daniel Downes)
 - Gender Roles in Japanese Comics (Dr. June Madeley)
- Supported faculty by assisting with course delivery, gathering data, and conducting literature reviews, building a strong foundation in research support and pedagogical practices.

Workshop development and facilitation (Selected)

Designed and facilitated a comprehensive suite of workshops for diverse university audiences, including graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and undergraduate students.

- **Academic Integrity & AI:**
 - Academic Integrity in the Age of AI
 - Generative AI for Graduate Writing
 - Plagiarism: Getting It Right (so you aren't wrong)
- **Grant & Proposal Writing:**
 - Writing Concisely for Grant Proposals
 - SSHRC/NSERC: Writing Strategies for Grant Applications
- **Thesis & Long-Form Projects:**
 - Getting Started on Your Thesis or Dissertation
 - Build a Better Thesis from Start to Finish
 - Writing a Compelling Thesis or Dissertation Proposal
- **Writing Process & Productivity:**
 - Overcoming Writer's Block, Procrastination, and Imposter Syndrome
 - Writing with Style: Crafting Clear and Concise Sentences
 - Characteristics of Effective Writing
- **Genre-Specific Writing:**
 - Writing about Literature: Navigating Sources with Confidence
 - Building Better Abstracts for Medical and Scientific Writing

Research and scholarship

Research Experience

- **Associate Investigator** | "Indigenous nonreligion in Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada" | Victoria University of Wellington (2024–Present)
- **Principal Researcher** | "Indigenous Atheists in Canada: Challenging Assumptions and Navigating Belonging" | University of Alberta (2023–2024)

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Articles

- Eacersall, D., Pretorius, L., Smirnov, I., Spray, E., Illingworth, S., Chugh, R., ... **Simmons, J.**, et al. (2025). Navigating ethical challenges in generative AI-enhanced research: The ETHICAL framework for responsible generative AI use. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2025.8.2.9>
- **Simmons, J.** (2024). Indigenous Atheists in Canada: Challenging Assumptions and Navigating Belonging. *Secular Studies*, 6(1), 62-83. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25892525-bja10060>
- Sandhu, A., & **Simmons, J.** (2022). Police officers as filmmakers: the cinematography of body worn cameras. *Policing and Society*, 33(5), 593-603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2022.2160450>
- **Simmons, J.**, & Sandhu, A. (2020). Between Islam and Islamophobia: Stigma Management among Canadian Atheist Activists. *Secular Studies*, 2(2), 117-137. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25892525-bja10007>
- **Simmons, J.** (2020). Feminist Women's Attitudes towards Feminist Men in the Canadian Atheist Movement. *Religion and Gender*, 10(2), 182-201. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18785417-01002002>
- **Simmons, J.** (2019). Politics, Individualism, and Atheism: An Examination of the Political Attitudes of Atheist Activists in a Canadian City. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.112>
- **Simmons, J.** (2018). "Not that Kind of Atheist": Scepticism as a Lifestyle Movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 17(4), 437-450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2018.1434500>
- **Simmons, J.**, & Kent, S. A. (2015). An Expansion of the Rational Choice Approach: Social Control in the Children of God during the 1970s and 1980s. *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, 6(1), 27-49. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ijnsr.v6i1.20430>

Under Review

- [Co-authored article submitted to *AI & SOCIETY*] (2025)

Book Chapters

- **Simmons, J.** (forthcoming). "De-converting from Indigenous Religious Traditions." In P. Zuckerman & A. Zamušinski (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Apostasy and Religious Deconversion*. Oxford University Press.
- **Simmons, J.** (2024). The Politics of Non-religion. In *Secularity and Nonreligion in North America* (pp. 152–170). Bloomsbury Publishing. (ISBN: 9781350407435)

Book Reviews

- **Simmons, J.** (2018). Review of *Resilient Gods: Being Pro-religious, Low Religious, or No Religious in Canada*, by S. Wilkins-Laflamme. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 43(1), 93-96.
- **Simmons, J.** (2014). Review of *Caught in the Pulpit: Leaving Belief Behind*. *Secularism and*

Nonreligion, 3. <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.ap>

Public Scholarship and Creative Works

- **Simmons, J.** (2025, August/September). The Humanist Response to Authoritarianism. *Free Inquiry*, 45(5).
- **Simmons, J.** (2025, April/May). Sacred or Secular? Rethinking Indigenous Spirituality. *Free Inquiry*, 45(3).
- **Simmons, J.** (2025). "Les Guérisseurs." *On Spec Magazine*, 133.
- **Simmons, J.** (2010, November). "Modest Intentionalism and the Replicant Debate." *Americana: The American Popular Culture Magazine*.
- **Simmons, J.** (2010, April 1). "The Pervert's Guide to The Birds: Of Hitchcock, Žižek, the Maternal Superego, and Critical Confusion." *Bright Lights Film Journal*.

Media Coverage

- "Social justice a strong motivator for local atheist groups," University of Alberta Faculty of Arts, March 22, 2019. Research profile featuring doctoral findings.

Conference presentations

- Simmons, J. (2024). "My Writing Partner is Hallucinating: Investigating ChatGPT's Impact on PhD Students' Writing Practices." Consortium on Graduate Communication 2024 Virtual Summer Institute.
- Simmons, J. (2023). "You're not Indigenous enough: The voices of Indigenous atheists in three Canadian cities." Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network Conference, Ottawa (Virtual).
- Simmons, J. (2021). "Graduate students' writing anxiety and the limits of self-care." Canadian Sociological Association, Edmonton (Virtual).
- Simmons, J. (2021). "Harnessing Online Writing Retreats to Help Graduate Students (with Takeaways for Undergraduate Instruction)." CAWS (Campus Alberta Writing Studies) Colloquium, Edmonton (Virtual).
- Simmons, J. (2018). "Political Atheism and Individualism." Pacific Northwest Political Science Association.
- Simmons, J. (2017). "The Social Justice Atheist: A Case Study of Atheist Activism in Edmonton." Canadian Sociological Association, Toronto. (Winner of the Best Student Paper Award).
- Simmons, J. (2017). "Atheist Identity in Edmonton, Alberta: An Intersectional Approach." The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Washington, DC.
- Simmons, J. (2016). "'Not That Kind of Atheist': Scepticism as a Lifestyle Movement." Canadian Sociological Association, Calgary.
- Simmons, J., & Sandhu, A. (2016). "Between Islam and Islamophobia: Stigma Management." The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Atlanta.
- Simmons, J., & Sandhu, A. (2015). "We're Not Islamophobes: Stigma Management and Atheist Activism." Association for the Sociology of Religion, Chicago.

- Simmons, J. (2012). "The Science of Happiness: Positive Psychology as a Scientific Movement." The International Conference on Science in Society, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Grants, awards, and honours

- **Marsden Fund Research Grant** (\$360,000), Co-Investigator (2024-2027)
- **Graduate Student Teaching Award**, University of Alberta (2017)
- **Best Student Paper Award**, Canadian Sociological Association (2017)
- **Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship** (2017)
- **Walter H. Johns Graduate Fellowship**, University of Alberta (2013-2015)
- **President's Doctoral Prize of Distinction**, University of Alberta (2013)
- **SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier – CGS Doctoral Scholarship** (2013)
- **University of Alberta Scholarship** (2012)
- **SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier – CGS Master's Scholarship** (2011)

Service and contributions

University Service

- Dean of Students Awards Committee (Accessibility Awards), University of Alberta (2020)
- Undergraduate Teaching Committee Representative, University of Alberta (2019-2020)
- Academic Teaching Staff Representative, Sociology Department Council, University of Alberta (2019-2020)
- Committee Member, Teaching Excellence and Policy Committee, University of New Brunswick (2011-2012)
- Organizer, Social Sciences and Humanities Graduate Student Conference, University of New Brunswick (2011)
- Committee Member, Student Organizing Committee for the Canadian Bioethics Society 22nd Annual Conference (2011)
- Graduate Student Representative, Student Life & Support Services Committee, University of New Brunswick (2011-2012)

Professional Service

- **Journal Peer Reviewer:** *Politics and Religion*; *Social Movement Studies*; *Secularism and Nonreligion*; *Sociological Forum*; *Canadian Journal of Sociology*.

Professional memberships

- European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI), Annual Member (2025)

Professional development

- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Training** (2025)
 - Foundations of Campus Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
 - The Basics of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

- Receiving & Responding to Disclosures
- Certificate: Standard First Aid (2025)
- Certificate: Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+), Government of Canada (2025)
- Certificate: "Situational Awareness for Safety" (2025)
- Workshop: "Wordcraft Catalyst with Helen Sword" (2024 & 2025)
- Training: "LivingWorks - Suicide Prevention Training" (2021)
- Workshop Series: "EDI and Accommodation Practices," "Culturally Responsive Teaching" (2020)
- Certification: "Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education" (2019)

Skills

- **Teaching and facilitation:** Curriculum design, workshop facilitation (in-person/remote/hybrid), individual and group consultation, learning outcome assessment, hybrid/online pedagogy.
- **Project management:** Program design and implementation, program assessment, needs assessment, metrics tracking and reporting, stakeholder communication.
- **Research and scholarship:** Qualitative research methods, academic publication, grant writing, interdisciplinary collaboration.
- **Technology:** Learning management systems (Moodle, Canvas), virtual collaboration (Zoom, Google Workspace), appointment scheduling (WCONLINE), AI writing tools (evaluation and pedagogy).

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology | University of Alberta | 2018

Master of Arts, Sociology | University of New Brunswick | 2012

Bachelor of Arts, Communication Studies | University of New Brunswick | 2010