

*Curriculum Vitae*  
**Laura A. Simpson**

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## **EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION**

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### **Washington University in St. Louis, MO**

John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics  
Postdoctoral Research Associate, August 2025-present

### **Villanova University, Villanova, PA**

Ph.D. Theology and Religious Studies, May 2025  
Dissertation: “Doing Time: Temporality and Representation in a Carceral Context”  
Committee: Drs. Vincent Lloyd, Brett Grainger, Stefanie Knauss, and Janet Jakobsen

### **Villanova University, Villanova, PA**

M.A. Theology and Religious Studies, May 2021

### **Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN**

M.T.S. May 2018  
Thesis: “The American Religion of Punishment: A Theological Exploration of the Carceral Cosmos”  
Advisors: Drs. Melissa Snarr and Emilie Townes

### **Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC**

B.A. Religion, May 2014  
Thesis: “The Mormon Other: National Identity and Religious Legitimacy in American Discourse, 1830-1900”

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

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2024-2025	Dissertation Fellowship, American Association of University Women
2024	Graduate Summer Research Fellowship, Villanova University
2018	Frederick Buechner Prize, Vanderbilt Divinity School
2018	John Olin Knott Award, Vanderbilt Divinity School
2016-2018	Brandon Honor Scholarship, Vanderbilt Divinity School
2014	Currin Medal, Wake Forest University

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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### **Articles and Chapters**

2025	“Saving the Children: Carceral Constructions of Futurity” <i>Political Theology</i> . doi:10.1080/1462317X.2025.2540191
2023	“On Transdisciplinary Possibility: An Interstitial Exploration of American Religious History and Religious Ethics” <i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i> 51 (3): 518-538.
In progress	“Ghostly Encounter at the Prison Museum: Representations of Carceral Haunting,” <i>Religion, Crime, and Media</i> , eds. Stefanie Knauss and Alexander Ornella

## Book Reviews

Forthcoming Review of *Muslim Prisoner Litigation: An Unsung American Tradition* by SpearIt. *Religious Studies Review*.

2023 Review of *In This Place Called Prison: Women's Religious Life in the Shadow of Punishment* by Rachel Ellis. *Political Theology* 25 (6): 697-99.

## Essays/Public Scholarship

2025 "Sing Sing May Be a Beautiful Testament to The Human Spirit, But Can Humanizing Narratives Bring About Meaningful Change?" *Religion Dispatches* <https://religiondispatches.org/sing-sing-may-be-a-beautiful-testament-to-the-human-spirit-but-can-humanizing-narratives-bring-about-meaningful-change/>

2023 "Saving the Children: Carceral Constructions of Futurity" *Political Theology Network* <https://politicaltheology.com/saving-the-children-carceral-constructions-of-futurity/>

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Danforth Center on Religion and Politics (Washington University in St. Louis)

Spring 2026 Horror, Hell, and Monsters (instructor)

### Missouri Eastern Correctional Center (via Washington University in St. Louis)

Spring 2026 US Religious History (instructor)

### Villanova University

Summer 2024 Race, Class, and Gender (instructor)

Fall 2023 Faith, Reason, and Culture (instructor)

Spring 2023 Faith, Reason, and Culture (instructor)

Fall 2021 Theology, Ethics, and Criminal Justice in America (teaching assistant for Dr. Kathryn Getek Soltis)

### Villanova University and SCI Chester

Fall 2021 Ethics and Justice Reading Group (instructor/facilitator)

### Villanova University and SCI Phoenix

Spring 2020 Do Black Lives Matter to God? A Theological Exploration of Race, Suffering, and Resistance (teaching assistant for Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart)

### Virginia Governor's School for the Visual and Performing Arts and Humanities

Summer 2018 Ritual and Religion (instructor)

### Belmont University

Spring 2018 Poverty and Justice (teaching assistant for Dr. Andy Watts)

Fall 2017 Introduction to Christian Ethics (teaching assistant for Dr. Andy Watts)

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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2025 "Care, Curation, Carcerality," Political Theology Network Conference, Nashville, TN

2024 "Narrative and Reproductions of Power at the Prison Museum," American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA

2024 “Capturing the Electric Chair (3MT),” Graduate Student Research Symposium, Villanova University

2024 “Progress and Redemption: Storytelling About the American Prison,” Graduate Student Peace and Justice Symposium, Villanova University

2024 Panelist, “The Environmental Dimensions of Social Matters in Christian Ethics,” Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL

2022 “Infantile Citizenship and Carceral Imaginaries,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

2022 “Conversion and Carcerality,” American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

2022 “Captivity and Surplus: An Exploration of Carceral Settler Colonialism,” Defending the Land: Socio-Environmental Conflicts in the Americas, Villanova University

2020 “‘Do Black Lives Matter to God?’: Teaching About Death in a Prison Classroom” (co-presenter), American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Boston, MA (online)

## INVITED LECTURES

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2024 “The Ethics of Prisons and Punishment,” Prof. Jacques Linder’s RELS 141: Contemporary Christian Morality, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

2021 “Engaging Gendered Archetypes Through a Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” Youth in Global Community monthly meeting, St. George’s Episcopal Church, Fredericksburg, VA

## SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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2024-2025 Volunteer, Human Rights Coalition Archive, Philadelphia, PA

2024 Volunteer Judge, Regional High School Ethics Bowl, Philadelphia, PA

2024 Volunteer, *Fides Quaerens* Graduate Student Conference, Villanova University

2021-2023 Critical Theory Copyeditor, *Political Theology Network*

2020-2022 Coordinator, Emerging Scholars in Political Theology Summer Workshop, Philadelphia, PA

2020-2022 Elected Student Representative, Ph.D. Advisory Committee, Villanova University

## WORKSHOPS AND WORKING GROUPS

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2025-2026 “Religion, Media, and Crime,” International Exchange on Media and Religion, London, UK and Munich, Germany (working group member)

2024 “Narrative Capture: Managing the Past at the Prison Museum,” Center for Political Theology, Villanova University (workshop presenter)

2024 “Why Political Theology Needs Children,” Center for Political Theology, Villanova University (working group member)

2023-2024 *Fides Quaerens* Graduate Student Working Group, Villanova University (working group member)

## LANGUAGES

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Spanish (moderate proficiency)

Arabic (elementary proficiency)

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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American Academy of Religion

Society of Christian Ethics

American Studies Association