



# Dr. James "Doc" Simmons

AUG 12, 1946 - JAN 29, 2023



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# Table of Contents

<b>Obituary</b> .....	Page 3
<b>Events</b> .....	Page 6
<b>Tribute Wall</b> .....	Page 7



# Dr. James "Doc" Simmons

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James Roy Simmons (Jim), age 76, passed away peacefully in his home on January 29, 2023, surrounded by family. He was born to the late James Roy Simmons and Dorothy Lucy Murray on August 12, 1946 in Fort Wayne Indiana. He is preceded in death by his wife Joan Lea Rutan, whom he married in Bloomington Indiana on August 17, 1968 in the Indiana University campus chapel. Jim earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from Indiana University in December of 1983 and started working at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh as a faculty member during fall of 1989 after having taught at Iowa State University and DePauw University. He retired as a Distinguished Professor at the end of 2020 and was awarded Professor Emeritus status. Prior to completing his education, Jim served in the US Army from 1970 to 1972, ending his service as a legal specialist –JAG Corps at Fort McPherson in Georgia—where he was deeply involved in handling documents associated with the My Lai Trials. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal. Jim was an accomplished empirical social scientist and author. In addition to his over fifty published papers and dozens of shorter research pieces, he was the author of *What Government Can Do; Dealing with Poverty and Inequality*, published with the University of Chicago Press. Jim was an expert in political theory, election



## Obituary

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forecasting, local responses to environmental regulation, and municipal government structures; his research on the forms of

local government had real-world impacts on Oshkosh city government. Almost every aspect of UW Oshkosh bears some trace of Jim's indefatigable energy and persistent influence. He was one of the longest serving and most accomplished faculty leaders, holding numerous leadership roles, including three terms as president of the Faculty Senate, chair of the political science department from 1999-2011, Chancellor's Leadership Fellow, and dozens of other roles, most of which were invisible to his colleagues who benefitted from his service. In his time at the university, he received over fifteen awards for his scholarship, for his service and his teaching; he was also recognized for his success in advising students as well as supporting seven student organizations, which covered the range of political persuasions.

Jim was active in his national and local professional disciplinary associations and in the local community, serving three times as president of the Wisconsin Political Science Association and on many business and community partnerships with university connections. He was a regular and well-known commentator on local and national politics and engaged in contentious debates at the Candlelight Club since 1989. Jim had definite political views, but he always took pride in making his students unable to guess his personal opinions. His presence at the university was critical yet always positive, as one colleague put it, "Jim had this great wry smile that, with his mustache, gave him a mischievous look - coupled with a great sense of humor. He made me laugh." Even in retirement, he was working and sharing ideas right up to



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the end.

Jim is survived by his son Solon Simmons, his son's wife Andrea Robles, and their two daughters, Alessandra and Gabriela, as well as by his two brothers Mike and Tom Simmons and their families.

A time of visitation and support will be held in Fiss & Bills-Poklasny Funeral Home (865 S Westhaven Oshkosh) on Saturday February 11, from 10:00 AM -12 Noon. At 12:00 PM there will a public sharing of stories and remembrances.

Memorials will be taken to fund a scholarship for engaged political scientists for the UW Oshkosh Political Science Department.



## Events


**Dr. James "Doc" Simmons**

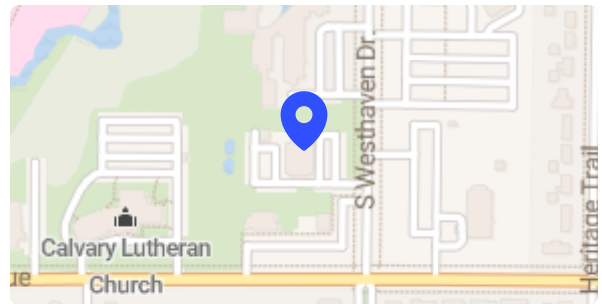
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### Visitation

 **Saturday**, February 11, 2023

 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM cst

 **Fiss & Bills-Poklasny Funeral Home**  
865 S. Westhaven Dr., Oshkosh WI 54904





## Tribute Wall

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**Tom Manning** posted:

Jim was a great colleague and campus leader. He is missed.

February 13 at 5:21 AM



**David Vanderlinden** posted:

The Oshkosh Area Humane Society would like to extend condolences to Solon and James entire family. We are sorry for your loss. We are also very grateful to Dr. James and his wife for the kind donations and support of the Humane Society through the years. Thank you. Our sincere sympathy to each of you at this most difficult time.

February 11 at 7:46 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring James "Doc" by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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