

## Joseph Burgess Wilson

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Languages: English, French

### Education

- PhD Anthropology (Candidate), University of Toronto, April 2026 (Est.)
- M. A. Anthropology, University of Toronto, August 2019
- B. Ed. Physics and Mathematics, Global Education and Social Justice, Intermediate/Senior level, OISE, University of Toronto, June 2005
- Hon. B. Sc. With High Distinction, Majors in Astronomy & Astrophysics and Linguistic & Semiotic Anthropology at the University of Toronto, May 2002

### Awards

- Schwartz-Reisman Institute Doctoral Fellow, Sept. 2024-Present
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Sept. 2024
- SSHRC Canada Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship Doctoral Award, Jan 2021
- SSHRC Canadian Graduate Scholarship Doctoral, Sept. 2020
- SSHRC Canadian Graduate Scholarship-Masters, April 2019
- Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence, Nominee, 2009
- University of Toronto Vari Scholarship, 2004/2005.

### Professional Groups

- American Anthropological Association
- Committee for Anthropology of Science, Technology and Computing (AAA)
- Society for Linguistic Anthropology (AAA)
- Canadian Anthropology Society
- Royal Anthropological Institute
- CaMP Anthropology (Communication, Media and Performance)
- Society for the Social Studies of Science
- OpEd Project (Alum Ambassador)
- Science, Math, Technology Education Centre, OISE

## Relevant Work Experience

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|-------------------|--|
| Sept-Dec<br>2025  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Course Instructor, UTSC, Reading Ethnography.</b> Taught fourth-year undergraduate course, graded assignments, papers.</li></ul>  |
| 2004-present      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Freelance writer:</b> <i>SAPIENS, CBC, Globe &amp; Mail, American Scientist, Anthropology News, Babel.</i> Freelance writing on various topics related to science, technology, anthropology, language, education, parenting, and non-fiction book reviews. Book forthcoming from U of T Press (2025) <i>Humans of AI: Understanding the People Behind the Machines.</i> <a href="http://www.josephwilson.ca/article-archive/">http://www.josephwilson.ca/article-archive/</a></li></ul>       |
| Jan-April<br>2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Course Director, York University, The Anthropology of Outer Space:</b> Planned curriculum, delivered lectures, graded papers and exams for third year undergraduate course.</li></ul>   |
| Jan-April<br>2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Course Instructor, Trent University Durham, The Anthropology of Language:</b> Planned curriculum, delivered lectures, graded papers and exams for third year undergraduate course.</li></ul>  |
| 2019-2022         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Coordinator, Linguistic Anthropology Reading Group, University of Toronto:</b> With a co-founder, curated a monthly reading group for students interested in linguistic anthropology, with participants from different departments across U of T (philosophy, linguistics, education, anthropology) <a href="https://ethnographylab.ca/linguistic-anthropology-reading-group/">https://ethnographylab.ca/linguistic-anthropology-reading-group/</a>. With PhD student Lynda Chubak.</li></ul> |
| 2017-2020         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Instructor, University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies.</b> Developed curriculum and syllabus for a course on <i>Business Model Innovation</i>, a design-thinking process for entrepreneurs; prepared and delivered course lectures; designed hands-on activities; marked assignments and submissions; made myself available for extra-help questions and discussions.</li></ul>  |
| 2019              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Teaching Assistant, Anthropology of Contemporary Society ANT 204</b> Ran two sections of second year anthropology course under the supervision of Dr. Kristin Bright, marked papers, exams and held office hours to provide student support.</li></ul>  |
| 2010-2015         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Senior Strategist, Education Cluster, MaRS Discovery District.</b> Supported education startups in their growth using the lean startup and customer development methodology. Helped early-stage companies secure grant and venture capital investment. Travelled across North America to speak at educational conferences and meet with venture capital investors.</li></ul>  |

## Skills

- **Educational program development.** A strong history in developing and delivering curriculum, lecturers, exhibits, public programs, and professional development workshops.
- **Teaching.** A lot of experience explaining difficult concepts in anthropology, science, and entrepreneurship to both children and adults from a wide variety of backgrounds. University, continuing ed, high school, elementary school, primary school.
- **Editing and writing.** Able to organize research results and write clearly and concisely. Experience writing essays, articles, op/eds, scientific papers, abstracts; and editing journals, textbooks, and conference proceedings.
- **Research.** Comfortable sifting through massive amounts of research online and in the library (including the U of T system) for term papers, published papers, articles. Experience conducting first-hand social sciences research through participant-observation, ethnography, interviews, and statistical analysis.

## Selected Public Publications And Presentations Complete list at [josephwilson.ca](http://josephwilson.ca)

- *Humans of AI: Understanding the People Behind the Machines.* Coming December 2025. Toronto: University Toronto Press Aevo.
- "The whole notion that AI will overtake humanity relies on a false premise" *The Globe and Mail*. November 2, 2024.
- "Is There An AI Metrics Mirage?" *American Scientist*. March-April, 2024.
- "The Anthropology of AI With Joseph Wilson." UTSC Dept. of Anthropology. Feb. 20, 2024.
- "In Defense of Plumbing: Joseph Wilson talks to James Pennebaker about his studies into the significance of function words." *Babel: The Language Magazine*. Autumn 2024.
- "Combat by Algorithm: Trials of Strength in Artificial Intelligence Research." *Anthropology News*. Jan. 23, 2024.
- "Will AI Really Change Everything? Not Likely," *The Globe and Mail*. June 5, 2023.
- "Shifting Voices in Dungeons and Dragons." *Babel: The Language Magazine*. February 2023.
- "Why AI Will Never Fully Capture Human Language." *Sapiens*. 12 Oct, 2022.

- "Wilson: COVID shows why we need the social sciences now more than ever." *Ottawa Citizen*, Opinion, Sept. 20, 2022.
- "When we Search for the Humanity in LaMDA AI, We're Missing the Point." *The Globe and Mail*, Opinion, June 24, 2022.
- "Language: More Than Words" on CBC Radio's [Now or Never](#), October 20, 2022.
- "Placekeeping on the Islands: An Indigenous landscape architect is reimaging Toronto's iconic park." *Spacing Magazine* #58. Winter 2021.
- "Think Pronouns are Difficult? French Doesn't Make it Any Easier." *CBC Parents*, October 2022.
- Wilson, Joseph. 2021. "Elder Wisdom: First Nations and Public Health in Toronto." *Spacing Magazine* #56. Spring 2021.
- "A look into the Anxiety-Inducing, Deeply Regulated World of a Kid's Pandemic Spelling Bee." *CBC Parents*. Feb. 2021
- "Archaeologists Unearth Privies from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Toronto." *Spacing Magazine* #54. Summer 2020.
- "aiHACK: Artificial Intelligence Hackathon" (Conference Chair), Georgian College, Barrie, March 28-29, 2019.

## Academic Publications

- Maki, Neda and Joseph Wilson. 2026. "Artistic Bodies: (Re)Imagining Autism Diagnosis through Art Therapy." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry. Special Issue: Transitive Afflictions*. Spring 2026. Submitted.
- Wilson, Joseph. 2026. "Prompt / Completion: Entextualizing and Purifying Multilingual Training Data in an Open-Science Project." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology. Special Issue: Language Machines: Unpacking the Sociotechnical Practices and Ideological Work inside Large Language Models*. Fall 2026. Submitted.
- Wilson, Joseph. 2025. "What Python Can't Do: The reproduction of language ontology in Natural Language Processing courses" *AI & Society: Knowledge, Culture and Communication. Special Issue: AI Technology as Human Interaction –Linguistic and Cultural Framings of AI as Communicative Infrastructure*. Nov. 2025.
- Wilson, Joseph et al. 2024. "Aya Dataset: An Open-Access Collection for Multilingual Instruction Tuning," *Association for Computational Linguistics*, June 2024. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2402.06619>

- Wilson, Joseph. 2022. "The Ghost in the Machine: Metaphors of the 'Virtual' and the 'Artificial' in Post-WW2 Computer Science" in *Perspectives on Science, Special Issue: Virtual Entities in Science*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Wilson, Joseph. 2021. "Decaying Words: The Metaphor of Evolution in Language Becomes Literal in a Canadian Forest." *Technology and Language*. Vol. 1. No. 2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48417/technolang.2021.01.03>
- Wilson, Joseph. 2020. "Constraints on generality: The (mis-)use of generic propositions in scientific prose," *The Digital Scholar: Philosopher's Lab*, 3 (1): 51-66. DOI: 10.5840/dspl2020316
- Wilson, Joseph. 2019. "The Ghost in the Machine: The Ghost in the Machine: Structural Metaphors in the 'Golden Age' of Artificial Intelligence Research, 1956-1976," Master's Thesis, University of Toronto, August 2019.

## Academic Presentations

- "We Just Need to Run This By the Lawyers: Corporate Ethnography and the Reification of 'Intellectual Property'" American Anthropological Association, Transitions 2023. Toronto, Nov. 15, 2023.
- "A Linguistic Anthropologist Lost in the Wilds of NLP" at UBC Computational Linguistic Reading Group with Vered Shwartz. Sept. 14, 2023. (online).
- "What Python Can't Do: Language ideologies in programming courses for Natural Language Processing," part of [Technolinguistics in practice: Socially situating language in AI systems](#), University of Siegen, Germany, May 24-27, 2023.
- "The Anthropology of Outer Space: An interdisciplinary approach to engaging undergraduates in space studies" at [Astronomy Education 2023](#). Toronto, May 10-12, 2023.
- "Local Contingencies: Modelling 'Artificial Intelligence' in Mid-Century America" at [Big Data and the History and Philosophy of Science](#). Toronto, May 18-19, 2023.
- "The Metapragmatic Function of Machine Learning Algorithms" part of "Programming Anthropology: Coding and Culture in the Age of AI" at [Anthropology, AI and the Future of Human Society](#), Royal Anthropological Institute. (Online Conference). June 10, 2022.
- "The Teenage Gaze: A Visual History of Moral Panics About Adolescent Behaviour." PechaKucha talk for *Why the World Needs*

*Anthropologists, Re/Generation*. European Association of Social Anthropologists Applied Anthropology Network, Berlin (online). Sept. 2022.

- "Self-directed Online Learning of the Long Division Algorithm During the COVID Pandemic" at [Centre for Science, Mathematics & Technology Education](#), OISE, University of Toronto (Online meeting). April 8, 2022.
- "The Aporia of Risk: Rejecting Health Care in the Age of Pharmaceutical Dominance" at [American Anthropological Association Annual Conference](#), Baltimore, November 20, 2021
- "Semiosis in the Lab: Translating the Language of Practising Scientists" at [Society for the Social Studies of Science, Annual Conference](#) (Online conference), Oct 6, 2021
- "Linguistic Anthropology Panel 'Doing/Undoing Language'—The Ghost in the Production: Speaking of Time and Agency in an Archaeology Lab," at Canadian Anthropological Association, London, Ontario (Online conference) May 12, 2021.
- "Emergent Metaphors of 'Virtual' and 'Artificial' in Computer Science in the 1950s" at Epistemology of the Large Hadron Collider, CERN. (Online workshop) March 19, 2021.
- "Decomposing Master Texts: A Note on Language and Evolution" part of "Roundtable: Changing Worlds Through Material, Embodied Texts" at Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA) 2021. (Online conference) March 2021.
- "The Network Effect: The Role of Institutional Ethnography in Tracing the Making of Facts," with Marwa Turabi, at American Anthropological Association, Raising Our Voices (Online conference) Nov. 2020.
- "The Ghost in the Machine: Structural Metaphors in the 'Golden Age' of Artificial Intelligence Research, 1956-1976," at Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, U.K. (Online Conference Workshop) May 15, 2020.
- "The Aporia of Risk: Rejecting Health Care in the Age of Pharmaceutical Dominance," at Medusa: University of Toronto Anthropology Graduate Student Conference, Toronto, March 5, 2020
- "Panel: The Extended Life of Things: Vitality, Materiality, and Justice at the Edges of the Person: The Life and Afterlife of Words" at American

Anthropological Association and Canadian Anthropology Society  
joint conference, Vancouver, November 2019.

## References

- **Dr. Jack Sidnell**  
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