

DAVID THORSTAD

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Vanderbilt University
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EMPLOYMENT

Vanderbilt University
Assistant Professor of Philosophy August 2023-

Global Priorities Institute, Oxford
Postdoctoral Research Fellow July 2020-August 2023

Kellogg College, Oxford
Junior Research Fellow (Nonstipendiary) October 2020-August 2023

AFFILIATIONS

Vanderbilt Lab for Immersive AI Translation
Fellow December 2024-

MINT Lab, Australian National University
Research Associate April 2024-

Global Priorities Institute, Oxford
Senior Research Associate August 2023-July 2025

EDUCATION

Harvard University, PhD in Philosophy May 2020
Haverford College, BA in Philosophy and Mathematics May 2012
Global Priorities Institute, Oxford, Visiting Fellow Summer 2019
Australian National University, Visiting Student Summers 2017, 2018
London School of Economics, Visiting Student Academic Year 2017-18
Pembroke College, Oxford, Visiting Student Academic Year 2010-11

MONOGRAPH

Inquiry under bounds, Oxford University Press (2024).

Reviews: *Mind*, *Philosophical Review*.

EDITED VOLUME

Essays on longtermism (w/Jacob Barrett and Hilary Greaves), Oxford University Press (2025).

ARTICLES

Cognitive bias in large language models: A vindicatory approach, forthcoming in *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*.

Ecological rationality without externalism, forthcoming in *Philosophy of Science*.

Précis of *Inquiry under bounds*, forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*.

Reply to commentators, forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*.

Exploitative informing, forthcoming in *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*.

The zetetic turn and the procedural turn, forthcoming in *Journal of Philosophy*.

The scope of longtermism, forthcoming in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.

General-purpose institutional decisionmaking heuristics, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 76.4 (2025): 1037-58.

The complexity-coherence tradeoff in cognition, *Mind* 134.534 (2025): 422-57.

Against the singularity hypothesis, *Philosophical Studies* 182 (2025): 1627-51.

Mistakes in the moral mathematics of existential risk, *Ethics* 135.1 (2024): 122-50.

The accuracy-coherence tradeoff in cognition, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 75.3 (2024): 695-715.

Why bounded rationality (in epistemology)?, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 108 (2024): 396-413.

Against the newer evidentialists, *Philosophical Studies* 180 (2023): 3511-32.

Norms of inquiry, *Philosophical Topics* 51.2 (2023): 135-60.

High risk, low reward: A challenge to the astronomical value of existential risk mitigation, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 51.4 (2023): 373-412.

There are no epistemic norms of inquiry, *Synthese* 200, 410 (2022).

Two paradoxes of bounded rationality, *Philosophers' Imprint* 22.15 (2022).

Tough enough? Robust satisficing as a decision norm for long-term policy analysis (w/Andreas Mogensen), *Synthese* 200 (2022): 1-26.

Inquiry and the epistemic, *Philosophical Studies* 178.9 (2021): 2913-28.

Permissive metaepistemology, *Mind* 128.511 (2019): 907-26.

SHORTER PIECES

Altruism and normative bargaining, forthcoming in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

Exploitative informing: Can you exploit someone by giving them relevant information?, *BJPS Short Reads* (2024).

Review of *Idealization in epistemology* by Dan Greco, *Mind* fzae026, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzae026>.

Institutional decision-making heuristics: What lies beyond simple rules?, *BJPS Short Reads* (2024).

Accuracy and coherence: Can bounded agents have both?, *BJPS Short*

Reads (2022).

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS	Liverpool-Vanderbilt Joint Research Seed Grant (\$15,113) (w/Robin McKenna), Vanderbilt University and University of Liverpool.	2025-6
	Greg S. Allen Dean's Faculty Fellowship (\$30,000) Vanderbilt University.	2025-7
	Institute for Ethics in AI (full support), University of Oxford Visiting Fellowship.	(2026)
	Center for Philosophy of Science (\$10,000), University of Pittsburgh Visiting Fellowship.	(2025-6)
	Dean's Research Studio (\$5,000), Vanderbilt Conference Grant.	2025
	Survival and Flourishing Fund (\$38,000), S-Process Grant.	2024
	Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities (50% buyout) Vanderbilt Faculty Fellowship.	2024-5
	Effective Altruism Infrastructure Fund (\$24,460) Grant to support a summer diversity program.	2023
	Center for Effective Altruism (£20,000) Event Support Grant (with Bridget Williams).	2023
	Manifund (\$2,000) Grant to support public philosophy connected to effective altruism.	2023
	John Fell Fund (£10,000), University of Oxford Grant to support a workshop on inquiry.	2022
	Center for Effective Altruism (\$40,000) Event Support Grant (with Charlotte Siegmman).	2022
	PPE Society (\$250) Travel Grant.	2022
	Provostial Fund for the Arts and Humanities (\$4,000) Harvard University, Conference Organization Grant (with Branden Fitelson and Ned Hall).	2020
	Dissertation Completion Fellowship (\$32,000) Harvard University.	2019-2020
	GSC Travel Grant (\$750), Harvard University.	2019
	Frank Knox Memorial Traveling Fellowship (\$25,000) Harvard University.	2017-18
	GSAS Predissertation Summer Fellowship (\$6,000) Harvard University.	2015

	Magill-Rhoades Scholarship (full need), Haverford College.	2008-12
AWARDS / HONORS (ACADEMIC)	Francis Bowen Prize , Harvard University. Recognizes the best essay on a subject in moral or political philosophy.	2020
	Bechtel Prize , Harvard University. Recognizes the best essay on a philosophical topic.	2019
	Summa Cum Laude , Haverford College.	2012
	Phi Beta Kappa (as junior), Haverford College.	2011
	Collection Prizes (all subjects), Pembroke College, Oxford.	2010-11
AWARDS / HONORS (TEACHING)	Special Commendation for Extraordinary Teaching in Extraordinary Times , Harvard University.	2020
	Derek C Bok Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching , Harvard University. Harvard's highest graduate teaching award. 5 awarded annually university-wide.	2019
	Certificates of Distinction and Excellence in Teaching (x6) , Harvard University:	2016-19
	Virtue	Spring 2019
	Social epistemology	Fall 2018
	Saints, heretics, and atheists	Spring 2017
	Fundamentals of logic	Fall 2016
	Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein	Fall 2016
	Logic and philosophy	Spring 2016
TALKS	Procedurally rational framing effects	
(†) Refereed	<i>Center for Philosophy of Science</i> , University of Pittsburgh	(February 2026)
	Level separation in epistemology	
	University of Tennessee, Knoxville	(February 2026)
	<i>Normativity and Reasoning Workshop</i> , NYU Abu Dhabi	January 2026
	<i>Southeastern Epistemology Conference</i> , Flagler College	October 2025
	† <i>St. Louis Annual Conference on Reasons and Rationality</i>	May 2025
	“Instrumental convergence and power seeking”	
	<i>AI and Humanity Lab</i> , University of Hong Kong	September 2025
	<i>Hong Kong Catastrophic Risk Center</i> , Lingnan University	February 2025
	† <i>Central APA</i> , PPE Society Session	February 2025
	† <i>15th Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i>	December 2024
	† <i>PPE Society Conference</i> , New Orleans	November 2024
	<i>Global Priorities Institute</i> , Oxford	November 2024
	Inquiry under bounds	

<i>Rationality Seminar</i> , Purdue University	September 2025
<i>Inquiry Reading Group</i> , University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	July 2025

Ecological rationality without externalism

<i>Mind and Cognition Group</i> , Purdue University	September 2025
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Symposium on *Inquiry under bounds*

<i>American Philosophical Association</i> Central Division Meeting	February 2025
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“Humility, ability and group inquiry: A counsel of moderation”

<i>Humility in Inquiry Integration Workshop</i> , Denver	February 2025
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“Beyond longtermism”

<i>Global Priorities Institute</i> , Oxford	November 2024
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“Cognitive bias in large language models: Cautious optimism meets anti-Panglossian meliorism”

<i>UC Irvine</i> , Center for Theoretical Behavioral Sciences	October 2024
† <i>Third International Conference on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence</i> , University of the Azores	September 2024
<i>MINT Lab</i> , ANU	August 2024

“Exploitative informing”

<i>UC Irvine</i> , Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science	October 2024
† <i>Axiology Workshop</i> , McGill University	October 2024

“The zetetic turn and the procedural turn”

<i>Inquiry Workshop</i> , Brown University	April 2024
<i>Southeast Graduate Philosophy Conference</i> (Keynote), University of Florida	April 2024
<i>Workshop on the Nature and Normativity of Inquiry</i> , University of Pavia	January 2024
<i>Southeastern Epistemology Conference</i> , Spartanburg, South Carolina	October 2023
† <i>Duke-UNC Epistemology Workshop</i>	September 2023
† <i>Australasian Association of Philosophy Annual Conference</i>	July 2022
<i>Workshop on Norms of Inquiry</i> , Complutense University of Madrid	June 2022
<i>University of Zürich</i>	May 2022
<i>Groupe de Recherche Interuniversitaire Sur la Normativité (GRIN)</i> , Montreal	March 2022
<i>Cologne Center for Contemporary Epistemology and the Kantian Tradition (CONCEPT)</i> , University of Cologne	January 2022
<i>Ideal and Non-Ideal Epistemology Seminar Series</i> (Organized by Robin McKenna and Michael Hannon)	December 2021

“The complexity-coherence tradeoff in cognition”

<i>Australasian Association of Philosophy Online Conference</i>	October 2024
<i>Berkeley Bounded Rationality Conference</i>	May 2024
† <i>Formal Epistemology Workshop</i> , Boston	June 2023
<i>Formal Methods Group</i> , King’s College, London	May 2023

“Against the singularity hypothesis”

<i>AI and the Human Seminar</i> , Vanderbilt	April 2025
<i>Ethics of Increasing AI Capacities</i> , Hannover	August 2024
<i>International Society for Utilitarian Studies Conference</i> University College, London	June 2024
<i>Colloquium on Artificial Intelligence and Catastrophic Risk</i> Australian National University	March 2024

“Mistakes in the moral mathematics of existential risk”

<i>Moral philosophy working group</i> , Yale	April 2024
<i>Mimir Institute for Long-Term Future Studies</i> , Stockholm	December 2023
<i>7th PPE Society Conference</i> , New Orleans	November 2023
<i>Global Priorities Institute / LSE Joint Workshop</i> , London	May 2023
<i>Workshop on Pluralisms in Existential Risk Studies</i> , Oxford	May 2023

“Why bounded rationality (in epistemology)?”

<i>7th PPE Society Conference</i> , New Orleans	November 2023
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“Norms of inquiry”

† <i>Central APA</i> , Chicago, Illinois	February 2022
<i>Workshop on Inquiry</i> , Southern Normativity Group <i>Aarhus University</i> , Aarhus	September 2021 May 2021
† <i>Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology</i> <i>Annual Meeting</i> , Louisville, Kentucky	December 2020
<i>Workshop on Bounded Rationality</i> , Harvard	October 2019

“Three paradoxes of bounded rationality”

† <i>Between Formal and Informal Methods in</i> <i>Philosophy</i> , Warsaw	September 2021
<i>Group for Analytic Metaphysics and Epistemology</i> Texas A&M	July 2020
† <i>British Society for the Philosophy of Science</i> <i>Conference</i> , Kent	July 2020

“There are no epistemic norms of inquiry”

<i>Episteme group</i> , University of Cambridge	March 2023
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“High risk, low reward: A challenge to the astronomical value of existential risk mitigation”

Seminar on Longtermism, Princeton	October 2025
<i>Ethics of Human Extinction Reading Group</i>	June 2024

† <i>Philadelphia Normativity Conference</i> , UPenn	October 2023
† <i>International Society for Utilitarian Studies 2023</i> , Rome	July 2023
† <i>Ethics After Parfit</i> , LMU Munich	January 2023
† <i>6th PPE Society Conference</i> , New Orleans	November 2022
† <i>Formal Philosophy 2022</i> , Moscow (Hybrid)	October 2022
<i>Tenth Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i>	June 2022
<i>Center for Population-Level Bioethics</i> , Rutgers	April 2022
<i>Ninth Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i>	March 2022
“General-purpose institutional decisionmaking heuristics: The case of decisionmaking under deep uncertainty”	
<i>17th International Congress on Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science and Technology</i> , Buenos Aires	July 2023
“The scope of longtermism”	
<i>Legal Priorities Project</i> , Harvard	February 2022
<i>Seventh Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i>	June 2021
“Inquiry and the epistemic”	
<i>Oxford Epistemology Group</i> , Oxford	November 2020
<i>Inquiry Network</i> , Online	November 2020
“The dual deontic role of unpossessed evidence”	
† <i>Great Lakes Philosophy Conference</i> Siena Heights University	April 2021
“Satisficing reclaimed”	
† <i>PLM Network Conference</i> , St. Andrews	August 2019
<i>Bounded Rationality Reading Group</i> , Oxford	July 2019
“Heuristics and longtermism”	
<i>Second Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i> , Oxford	July 2019
<i>Global Priorities Institute</i> , Oxford	June 2019
<i>Future of Humanity Institute</i> , Oxford	June 2019
“Pure time-preference: some error-theoretic remarks”	
<i>Workshop on Longtermism</i> , Oxford	March 2019
“Omission bias revisited”	
† <i>Australasian Association of Philosophy / New Zealand Association of Philosophy Annual Conference</i> , University of Wellington, NZ	July 2018
<i>ANU Modeling Ethical Theories Reading Group</i> Australian National University	July 2018
“Inquiry under bounds”	
<i>LSE Work in Progress Group</i> , London School of Economics	February 2018

“Permissive metaepistemology”

<i>ANU Epistemology Reading Group</i> , Australian National University	June 2018
† <i>Yale Graduate Philosophy Conference</i> , Yale	April 2017
† <i>UT-Austin Graduate Philosophy Conference</i> , UT-Austin	April 2017
† <i>Northwestern/Notre Dame Graduate Epistemology Conference</i> , Notre Dame	April 2017
† <i>BARSEA Epistemology Workshop</i> , Cambridge University	February 2017
† <i>UConn Graduate Philosophy Conference</i> , University of Connecticut Storrs	November 2016

PUBLIC TALKS “Against the singularity hypothesis”

Apart Research	February 2025
EAGxVirtual	November 2024

“Mistakes in the moral mathematics of existential risk”

Effective Altruism Tübingen	July 2024
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“Against the singularity hypothesis”

AI safety reading group	June 2024
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“Existential risk pessimism and the time of perils”

ERA Fellowship, Cambridge	August 2023
EAGxCambridge	March 2023
EAGxSingapore	September 2022
EAGxOxford	March 2022

“Challenges to effective altruism”

Tarbell Fellowship Program, Oxford	March 2023
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TEACHING

At Vanderbilt University

Epistemology (graduate seminar)	Spring 2025
Logic	Fall 2024
Ethics of AI	Spring 2024
Introduction to philosophy of AI	Spring 2024
Introduction to philosophy	Fall 2023
Inquiry (graduate seminar)	Fall 2023

As primary instructor at Harvard University

Rationality	Spring 2020
Virtue	Spring 2019
Social epistemology	Fall 2018
Introduction to logic (Harvard Summer School)	Summers 2018, 2019

As teaching fellow at Harvard University

Saints, heretics, and atheists	Spring 2017
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Fundamentals of logic	Fall 2016
Frege, Russell, and the early Wittgenstein	Fall 2016
Logic and philosophy	Spring 2016

As grader at Harvard University

Topics in logic	Spring 2017
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Supervision, etc.

PhD committee member: Ismail Kurun (Vanderbilt, in progress).

External dissertation committee member, Dario Vaccro (UT-Knoxville, in progress).

External PhD examiner, Leonardo Flamini (Zurich/Pavia, 2024).

Advisor, Global Priorities Institute Early Career Conference Program.

Thomas Rowe (2021), Paul Forrester (2022), Leah Pierson (2021 and 2023), Tena Thau (2023).

Advisor, Oxford UNIQ+ Graduate Access Program, Elsie Lidington (2023).

Fellowship supervisor, Vanderbilt Lab for Immersive AI Translation (VALIANT), Cameron Pattison (2024-), Sun Jung Han (2025-)

Honors thesis supervisor Thomas Edman (2025).

Honors thesis second reader: Pax Poggi (2025), Joshua Uterstaedt (2025).

Other teaching

Harvard edX, Content developer	2018-2020
Harvard Precollege Passport Program, Instructor	2019
Lawrence International High School, Mathematics teacher	2012-13

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE Conferences organized

<i>Sociotechnical AI safety for generative AI</i> (with Robin McKenna), University of Leeds	(2026)
<i>Workshop on Beyond longtermism,</i> Vanderbilt University	(2026)
<i>Explanation</i> (with Ted Poston), Vanderbilt University	2025
<i>Inquiry Network workshops</i>	
<i>Second Inquiry Network workshop,</i> Rhodes College (with Jared Millson)	2025
<i>First Inquiry Network workshop,</i> Vanderbilt University	2024
<i>Southeastern epistemology conference,</i> Vanderbilt University	2024
<i>Bayesianism and its rivals</i> (with Branden Fitelson, Will Fleisher and Ned Hall), Harvard	2022
<i>Oxford workshops on global priorities research</i>	
<i>Twelfth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell)	2023
<i>Eleventh Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell)	2022

<i>Tenth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell)	2022
<i>Ninth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell)	2022
<i>Eighth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell)	2021
<i>Seventh Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Loren Fryxell, Rossa O’Keeffe-O’Donovan, and Benjamin Tereick)	2021
<i>Sixth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i>	2021
<i>Fifth Oxford workshop on global priorities research</i> (with Andreas Mogensen and Rossa O’Keeffe-O’Donovan)	2020
<i>Workshop on bounded rationality</i> (with Branden Fitelson and Ned Hall), Harvard	2019
<i>Harvard-MIT graduate philosophy conference</i> (with Kevin Dorst, Jen Nguyen, and Max Siegel), Harvard	2015

Panels organized

<i>The moral and political implications of human extinction</i> Central APA, PPE Society Affiliated Session	2025
<i>Longtermism 1</i> (w/Emma Curran), PPE Society Conference	2024
<i>Longtermism 2</i> (w/Emma Curran), PPE Society Conference	2024
<i>Non-ideal theory</i> , PPE Society Conference	2023
<i>Ethics and the far future</i> , PPE Society Conference	2023
<i>Inquiry</i> , Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology	2020

Reading groups organized

<i>Critiques of effective altruism</i> (with Jacob Barrett) Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	2023
<i>The scope of longtermism</i> (with Hilary Greaves and Christian Tarsney), Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	2021
<i>Social justice and longtermism</i> (with Christian Tarsney), Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	2020
<i>Bounded rationality reading group</i> (with Sven Neth), Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	2019
<i>Epistemology reading group</i> (Four sessions. Unit on epistemic permissivism), ANU	2018
<i>Formal philosophy reading group</i> , Harvard	2016
<i>Accuracy-first reading group</i> , Harvard	2016
<i>Ethics and mathematics reading group</i> (with Zeynep Soysal), Harvard	2013-14

Program Committee

<i>Social ontology and empirical inquiry conflicts and connections</i> , Center for Philosophy of Science, University of Pittsburgh	2026
<i>18th annual conference on artificial general intelligence</i>	2025

Other organizing

<i>Inquiry Network</i> , Founder and co-organizer (w/Dennis Whitcomb and Arianna Falbo)	2020-
<i>Second Open Student Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i> (w/Bridget Williams), for members of traditionally underrepresented groups in global priorities research	2023
<i>First Open Student Workshop on Global Priorities Research</i> (w/Charlotte Siegmann)	2022
<i>GPI + WANBAM (Women and Non-Binary Altruism Mentorship) workshop</i> (w/Charlotte Siegmann)	2021

Departmental service

<i>Search committee</i> , Philosophy of Mind (senior)	2024-2025
<i>Steering committee</i> , Vanderbilt Grand Challenge on AI	2024-2025
<i>Colloquium committee</i> , Vanderbilt Philosophy Department	2024-
<i>Secretary</i> , Vanderbilt Philosophy Department	2023-
<i>Diversity initiative Chair</i> , Global Priorities Institute	2021-2023
<i>College advisor</i> , Kellogg College	2020-2023

Journal Refereeing (* denotes multiple): *AI & Society*, **Analysis*, **Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, **Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *Dialectica*, **Episteme*, *Ergo*, **Erkenntnis*, *Ethics*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, **Journal of Philosophy*, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, **Mind*, **Noûs*, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophy Compass*, **Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Philosophical Review*, **Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophical Topics*, **Synthese*, *Utilitas*.

Other Refereeing: (* denotes multiple, † denotes program committee):

*†18th Annual AGI Conference, Austrian Science Fund, Cambridge University Press, *Open Philanthropy, Oxford University Press, Rethink Priorities, *Routledge, Simon Institute for Longterm Governance, Southwestern Philosophical Society, *Swiss National Science Foundation, Tennessee Philosophical Association, University of Chicago Press.

REFERENCES

Ned Hall

Norman E. Vuilleumier Professor of Philosophy and Chair, Department of Philosophy, Harvard University
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Hilary Greaves

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Susanna Rinard

Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University
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Susanna Siegel

Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University

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Warren Goldfarb (Teaching Reference)

Walter Beverly Pearson Professor of Modern Mathematics and Mathematical Logic,
Harvard University

goldfarb@fas.harvard.edu