

DAVID THORSTAD

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Vanderbilt University
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Website: www.dthorstad.com

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-

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

BOOK

Inquiry under bounds, Oxford University Press (2024).

ARTICLES

The complexity-coherence tradeoff in cognition, forthcoming in *Mind*.

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

Norms of inquiry, forthcoming in *Philosophical Topics*.

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.

Against the singularity hypothesis, *Philosophical Studies* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-024-02143-5>.

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

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

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).

IN PRODUCTION

Essays on longtermism (w/Hilary Greaves and Jacob Barrett), edited volume in production with Oxford University Press (Scheduled release: April 2025).

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

Greg S. Allen Dean's Faculty Fellowship (\$30,000) 2025-7
Vanderbilt University

Institute for Ethics in AI (full support), University of Oxford (2026)
Visiting Fellowship

Center for Philosophy of Science (\$10,000), University of Pittsburgh (2025-6)
Visiting Fellowship

	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 Siegmann)	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	2019
	Harvard's highest graduate teaching award. 5 awarded annually university-wide.	
	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	Symposium on <i>Inquiry under bounds</i>	
(†) Refereed	† St. Louis Annual Conference on Reasons and Rationality	(May 2025)
	“What power-seeking theorems do not show”	
	Hong Kong Catastrophic Risk Center	February 2025
	† <i>Central APA</i> , PPE Society Session	February 2025
	† 15th Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research	December 2024
	† PPE Society Conference, New Orleans	November 2024
	Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	November 2024
	Symposium on <i>Inquiry under bounds</i>	
	American Philosophical Association	February 2025
	Central Division Meeting	
	“Humility, ability and group inquiry: A counsel of moderation”	
	Humility in Inquiry Integration Workshop, Denver	February 2025
	“Beyond longtermism”	
	Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	November 2024
	“Cognitive bias in large language models: Cautious optimism meets anti-Panglossian meliorism”	
	UC Irvine, 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”	
	UC Irvine, 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</i> (GRIN), 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	September 2021

<i>Aarhus University</i>	May 2021
† <i>Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology 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 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 Conference</i> , Kent	July 2020
“There are no epistemic norms of inquiry”	
<i>Episteme group</i> , University of Cambridge	March 2023
“High risk, low reward: A challenge to the astronomical value of existential risk mitigation”	
<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, Oxford</i>	July 2019
	“Heuristics and longtermism”	
	<i>Second Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research, Oxford</i>	July 2019
	<i>Global Priorities Institute, Oxford</i>	June 2019
	<i>Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford</i>	June 2019
	“Pure time-preference: some error-theoretic remarks”	
	<i>Workshop on Longtermism, Oxford</i>	March 2019
	“Omission bias revisited”	
	† <i>Australasian Association of Philosophy / New Zealand Association of Philosophy Annual Conference, University of Wellington, NZ</i>	July 2018
	<i>ANU Modeling Ethical Theories Reading Group</i>	July 2018
	Australian National University	
	“Inquiry under bounds”	
	<i>LSE Work in Progress Group, London School of Economics</i>	February 2018
	“Permissive metaepistemology”	
	<i>ANU Epistemology Reading Group, Australian National University</i>	June 2018
	† <i>Yale Graduate Philosophy Conference, Yale</i>	April 2017
	† <i>UT-Austin Graduate Philosophy Conference, UT-Austin</i>	April 2017
	† <i>Northwestern/Notre Dame Graduate Epistemology Conference, Notre Dame</i>	April 2017
	† <i>BARSEA Epistemology Workshop, Cambridge University</i>	February 2017
	† <i>UConn Graduate Philosophy Conference, University of Connecticut Storrs</i>	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
	“Against the singularity hypothesis”	
	AI safety reading group	June 2024
	“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

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

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

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**

Inquiry Network workshops

<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

Other organizing

<i>Program Committee</i> , 18th Annual Conference on Artificial General Intelligence	2025
<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-
<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

Refereeing (* denotes multiple): *AI & Society*, **Analysis*, **Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Austrian Science Fund, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, **Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *Dialectica*, **Episteme*, **Erkenntnis*, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *Journal of Philosophy*, **Mind*, **Noûs*, *Open Philanthropy, Oxford University Press, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, *Philosophy Compass*, **Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Philosophical Review*, **Philosophical Studies*, *Philosophical Topics*, Rethink Priorities, *Routledge, Simon Institute for Longterm Governance, Southwestern Philosophical Society, Swiss National Science Foundation, **Synthese*, *Utilitas*.

REFERENCES

Ned Hall

Norman E. Vuilleumier Professor of Philosophy and Chair, Department of Philosophy, Harvard University
ehall@fas.harvard.edu

Hilary Greaves

Professor of Philosophy and Director, Global Priorities Institute, Oxford University
hilary.greaves@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Susanna Rinard

Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University
susannarinard@fas.harvard.edu

Susanna Siegel

Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University
ssiegel@fas.harvard.edu

Warren Goldfarb (Teaching Reference)

Walter Beverly Pearson Professor of Modern Mathematics and Mathematical Logic, Harvard University
goldfarb@fas.harvard.edu