DAVID THORSTAD

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-

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	**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) Vanderbilt University	2025-7
	Institute for Ethics in AI, University of Oxford (full support) Visiting Fellowship	(2026)
	Center for Ethics, Murphy Institute, Tulane University ($70,000) Visiting Faculty 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 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

(†) Refereed

"What power-seeking theorems do not show"

Hong Kong Catastrophic Risk Center	(February 2025)
† *Central APA*, 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 *Inquiry under bounds*

American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting	(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
† *Third International Conference on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, University of the Azores	September 2024
MINT Lab, ANU	August 2024

"Exploitative informing"

UC Irvine, Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science	October 2024
† *Axiology Workshop*, McGill University	October 2024

"The zetetic turn and the procedural turn"

Inquiry Workshop, Brown University	April 2024
Southeast Graduate Philosophy Conference (Keynote), University of Florida	April 2024
Workshop on the Nature and Normativity of Inquiry, University of Pavia	January 2024
Southeastern Epistemology Conference, Spartanburg, South Carolina	October 2023
† *Duke-UNC Epistemology Workshop*	September 2023

† *Australasian Association of Philosophy Annual Conference*	July 2022
Workshop on Norms of Inquiry, Complutense University of Madrid	June 2022
University of Zürich	May 2022
Groupe de Recherche Interuniversitaire Sur la Normativité (GRIN), Montreal	March 2022
Cologne Center for Contemporary Epistemology and the Kantian Tradition (CONCEPT), University of Cologne	January 2022
Ideal and Non-Ideal Epistemology Seminar Series (Organized by Robin McKenna and Michael Hannon)	December 2021

"The complexity-coherence tradeoff in cognition"

Australasian Association of Philosophy Online Conference	October 2024
Berkeley Bounded Rationality Conference	May 2024
† *Formal Epistemology Workshop*, Boston	June 2023
Formal Methods Group, King's College, London	May 2023

"Against the singularity hypothesis"

Ethics of Increasing AI Capacities, Hannover	August 2024
International Society for Utilitarian Studies Conference University College, London	June 2024
Colloquium on Artificial Intelligence and Catastrophic Risk Australian National University	March 2024

"Mistakes in the moral mathematics of existential risk"

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

"Why bounded rationality (in epistemology)?"

7th PPE society Conference, New Orleans	November 2023

"Norms of inquiry"

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

"Three paradoxes of bounded rationality"

† *Between Formal and Informal Methods in Philosophy*, Warsaw	September 2021
Group for Analytic Metaphysics and Epistemology Texas A&M	July 2020

† *British Society for the Philosophy of Science Conference*, Kent	July 2020

"There are no epistemic norms of inquiry"

Episteme group, University of Cambridge	March 2023

"High risk, low reward: A challenge to the astronomical value of existential risk mitigation"

Ethics of Human Extinction Reading Group	June 2024
† *Philadelphia Normativity Conference*, UPenn	October 2023
† *International Society for Utilitarian Studies 2023*, Rome	July 2023
† *Ethics After Parfit*, LMU Munich	January 2023
† *6th PPE Society Conference*, New Orleans	November 2022
† *Formal Philosophy 2022*, Moscow (Hybrid)	October 2022
Tenth Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research	June 2022
Center for Population-Level Bioethics, Rutgers	April 2022
Ninth Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research	March 2022

"General-purpose institutional decisionmaking heuristics: The case of decisionmaking under deep uncertainty"

17th International Congress on Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science and Technology, Buenos Aires	July 2023

"The scope of longtermism"

Legal Priorities Project, Harvard	February 2022
Seventh Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research	June 2021

"Inquiry and the epistemic"

Oxford Epistemology Group, Oxford	November 2020
Inquiry Network, Online	November 2020

"The dual deontic role of unpossessed evidence"

† *Great Lakes Philosophy Conference* Siena Heights University	April 2021

"Satisficing reclaimed"

† *PLM Network Conference*, St. Andrews	August 2019
Bounded Rationality Reading Group, Oxford	July 2019

"Heuristics and longtermism"

Second Oxford Workshop on Global Priorities Research, Oxford	July 2019
Global Priorities Institute, Oxford	June 2019
Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford	June 2019

"Pure time-preference: some error-theoretic remarks"

Workshop on Longtermism, Oxford	March 2019

"Omission bias revisited"

† *Australasian Association of Philosophy / New Zealand Association of Philosophy Annual Conference*, University of Wellington, NZ	July 2018
ANU Modeling Ethical Theories Reading Group Australian National University	July 2018

"Inquiry under bounds"

LSE Work in Progress Group, London School of Economics	February 2018

"Permissive metaepistemology"

ANU Epistemology Reading Group, Australian National University	June 2018
† *Yale Graduate Philosophy Conference*, Yale	April 2017
† *UT-Austin Graduate Philosophy Conference*, UT-Austin	April 2017
† *Northwestern/Notre Dame Graduate Epistemology Conference*, Notre Dame	April 2017
† *BARSEA Epistemology Workshop*, Cambridge University	February 2017
† *UConn Graduate Philosophy Conference*, 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

"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**

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.

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

Honors thesis supervisor, Thomas Edman (2025), Joshua Uterstaedt (2025, second reader).

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).

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

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

Second Inquiry Network workshop (with Jared Millson), Rhodes College	(2025)
Southeastern epistemology conference, Vanderbilt University	2024
Inquiry Network workshop, Vanderbilt University	2024
Bayesianism and its rivals (with Branden Fitelson, Will Fleisher and Ned Hall), Harvard	2022

Oxford workshops on global priorities research

Twelfth Oxford workshop on global priorities research (with Loren Fryxell)	2023
Eleventh Oxford workshop on global priorities research (with Loren Fryxell)	2022
Tenth Oxford workshop on global priorities research (with Loren Fryxell)	2022

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

Panels organized

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

Reading groups organized

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

Other organizing

Inquiry Network, Founder and co-organizer (w/Dennis Whitcomb and Arianna Falbo)	2020-
Second Open Student Workshop on Global Priorities Research (w/Bridget Williams), for members of traditionally underrepresented groups in global priorities research	2023

First Open Student Workshop on Global Priorities Research (w/Charlotte Siegmann)	2022
GPI + WANBAM (Women and Non-Binary Altruism Mentorship) workshop (w/Charlotte Siegmann)	2021

Departmental service

Search committee, Philosophy of Mind (senior)	2024-2025
Steering Committee, Vanderbilt Grand Challenge on AI	2024-
Colloquium Committee, Vanderbilt Philosophy Department	2024-
Secretary, Vanderbilt Philosophy Department	2023-
Diversity Initiative Chair, Global Priorities Institute	2021-2023
College Advisor, 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