

# David Thunder

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY RESEARCHER & LECTURER

## PROFILE

My professional passion is the study of the conditions under which a functional human society – that is, a human society that supports the freedom and flourishing of its members - can be created and preserved over time. This fundamental concern has led me to develop a special interest in governance under conditions of complexity, the role of civil society associations in a free society, and normative theories of federalism. I believe my innate curiosity, diverse life experiences (having lived in U.S., Mexico, Europe, and Africa) and intellectual formation (having worked many years in Anglo-American as well as continental European intellectual environments) have afforded me a perspective on social order that is sufficiently broad and versatile to recognize patterns in social life that certain dominant Western narratives tend to conceal. In particular, I have become keenly sensitive to the order-conferring potential of civil society associations and the inability of a State-imposed order to adequately replicate the goods realized in small-scale community and institutional settings. My current book project, *Civil Order After the Sovereign State*, advocates replacing the principle of State sovereignty with a critical reappropriation of the federalist tradition of polycentric governance.

## ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Permanent Research Fellow - Institute for Culture & Society, University of Navarra

AUGUST 2012 — PRESENT

Lecturer - School of Economics & Business, University of Navarra

JANUARY 2017 — DECEMBER 2020

Lecturer - Department of Philosophy, University of Navarra

SEPTEMBER 2012 — DECEMBER 2017

Visiting Assistant Prof. - Department of Political Science, Villanova University

SEPTEMBER 2011 — JUNE 2012

Visiting Assistant Prof. - Matthew J Ryan Center, Villanova University

SEPTEMBER 2019 — JUNE 2011

Postdoctoral Research Fellow - James Madison Program, Princeton University

SEPTEMBER 2008 — JUNE 2009

Junior Visiting Fellow - Witherspoon Institute

SEPTEMBER 2007 — JUNE 2008

Visiting Assistant Professor - Bucknell University

SEPTEMBER 2006 — JUNE 2007

## EDUCATION

M.A. & Ph.D. in Political Science, University of Notre Dame

SEPTEMBER 2000 — JUNE 2006

M.A. in Philosophy, University College Dublin

SEPTEMBER 1997 — JUNE 1998

B.A. in Philosophy & French, University College Dublin

SEPTEMBER 1993 — JUNE 1997

## Current Position

Permanent Research Fellow,  
Institute for Culture & Society,  
University of Navarra,  
Spain

[dthunder@unav.es](mailto:dthunder@unav.es)

## Research Interests

- Polycentric Governance
- Citizenship & Civil Society
- Normative Theories of Federalism

## Skills

- Leadership & Team Management
- Broad Public Engagement
- Critical & Creative Thinking
- Clear & Cogent Writing

## Hobbies

Swing dancing, photography, padel

## For more information

Many of my academic writings, in addition to interviews and op eds, can be accessed directly on my website:

[www.davidthunder.com](http://www.davidthunder.com)

## Languages

English

Spanish

French

Italian

## RESEARCH VISITS

- **University of Oxford**

MAY 2017 — JUNE 2017

Visiting Fellow, Programme for the Foundations of Law and Constitutional Government, Faculty of Law

- **Technische Universität of Munich**

JUNE 2019 — JULY 2019

Visiting Scholar, Hochschule für Politik

## RESEARCH GRANTS AND PROJECTS

- **Ramón y Cajal Research Grant**

JAN 2017 — DEC 2023

I won this grant from the Spanish government to support research activities (€40K) for the duration of 4 years, and co-finance my salary for the duration of 5 years, which has been renewed up to 7 years.

- **RES PUBLICA: Building Res Publica in a Culturally and Morally Complex Society: A Normative Inquiry Informed by History, Law, and Social Science**

SEP 2020 — AUG 2023

I am **Principal Investigator** of this project. We are a group of international researchers based in Spain, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. The project is financed by a private Spanish foundation, FUNCIVA (Fundación Ciudadanía y Valores). We investigate strategies and norms for adapting political structures and practices to the needs of complex societies.

## BOOKS

- *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- *The Ethics of Citizenship in the 21st Century*. Editor & Contributor. Springer, 2017.

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

- “Moral Parochialism and the Limits of Impartiality” - *The Heythrop Journal*, vol. 61 (2020), pp. 24-34.
- “Can a Good Person Be a Good Trader? An Ethical Defense of Financial Trading” - *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 159, no. 1 (Sep 2019), pp. 89-103. With Marta Rocchi.
- “The Public Role of Humanities Scholarship, in the Humboldtian Tradition” - *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 85, n. 4 (Fall 2016), pp. 46-66.
- “Rethinking the Ethics of Giving: The Normative and Motivational Inadequacy of Resource Management Approaches to Beneficence.” - *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 297-317.

- “Why Respect for Freedom Cannot Explain the Content and Grounds of Human Rights: A Response to Valentini.” - *Political Theory*, vol. 42, n. 4 (August 2014), pp. 490-497.
- “Am I My Brother’s Keeper? Grounding and Motivating an Ethos of Social Responsibility in a Free Society.” - *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 4 (December 2009), pp. 559-580.
- “Why Value Pluralism Does Not Support the State’s Enforcement of Liberal Autonomy: A Response to Crowder.” - *Political Theory*, vol. 37, no. 1 (February 2009), pp. 154-160.
- “A Rawlsian Argument Against the Duty of Civility.” - *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 50, no. 3 (July 2006), pp. 676-690.
- “Can a Good Person Be a Lawyer?” *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2006), pp. 313-334.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

- **“The ‘Neighbourhood as a Pivotal Element of the Infrastructure of a Flourishing Society.”** In *Happiness and Domestic Life: The Influence of the Home on Subjective and Social Wellbeing* (New York: Routledge). With Ana Cecilia Serran-Núñez. Forthcoming in 2022.
- **“Overcoming the Myth of the Sovereign, Self-Governing People.”** In *Dynamics of Authority in Citizenship and Political Community*, ed. Trevor Stack & Rose Luminiello. (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2022). pp. 125-146.
- **“From Polis to Metropolis: On the Limits of Classical Approaches to Governance in a Fragmented Social Landscape.”** In *Disciplines of the City: New Forms of Governance in Today’s Postmetropolises*, ed. Julia Urabayen & Jorge León Casero (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019), pp. 3-31.
- **“The Place of Conscience-Based Exemptions in the Struggle Against Injustice.”** In *Contemporary Challenges to Conscience: Legal & Ethical Frameworks for Professional Conduct*, ed. A. Stepkowski (Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 41-56.
- **“What is the Use of an Ethical Theory of Citizenship?” & “An Ethical Defense of Citizenship.”** In *The Ethics of Citizenship in the 21st Century*. Springer, 2017.
- **“Managing the Social and Moral Costs of a Culture of Choice.”** In *Margaret S. Archer sobre Cultura y Socialización en la Modernidad Tardía [Margaret S. Archer on Culture and Socialization in Late Modernity]*. Eunsa, 2015.
- **“Public Reason and Abortion Revisited.”** In *Persons, Moral Worth, and Embryos: A Critical Analysis of Pro-Choice Arguments*, ed. Stephen Napier. Springer, 2011, pp. 239-254.
- **“Can the Political Priority of Liberty be Squared with the Ethical Priority of Flourishing?”** In *Reading Rasmussen and Den Uyl: Critical Essays on Norms of Liberty*. Lexington Books, 2008, pp. 27-39.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

- *Civil Order After the Sovereign State: How Bottom-Up Federalism Undergirds a Free and Flourishing Society.*

Highly centralised schemes of social cooperation that place an immense amount of regulatory, fiscal, and police power in the hands of a single government, are the contingent historical outcome of protracted struggles between rival powers. This contingent settlement may have contributed to a certain sort of social stability, but it also contains within it a logic of normative and institutional homogenisation that is fundamentally regressive from the perspective of those who wish to enjoy the benefits of a complex and multi-dimensional social ecology. The basic goal of this book is to weaken the grip of ontologically austere, reductively individualist visions of society over the imagination of political theorists, and exhibit the advantages of a style of political theory that is more finely attuned to the complex needs of human associations and their participants.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- I have conducted **ten radio interviews, two live TV discussions, and four podcast/YouTube interviews**, on a variety of issues related to current affairs, including the rise of populism, the future of the European Union, the limits of the sovereign State, and pandemic policies in the West.
- I have published **over 60 opinion articles** in English and Spanish-speaking newspapers and online media, including *The Irish Times*, *Spiked*, *Mercatornet*, *Gript*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *Expansión*, *El Confidencial*, and *Diario de Navarra*, on a wide range of issues, including corruption in public life, the rise of populism in the West, the future of UK after Brexit, and the handling of the pandemic by Western governments.
- I have given **guest talks to numerous civic and cultural associations**, including **Kratos** (a Spanish/Navarran association aimed at educating the public about the nature of a free and responsible society), **TASC** (Think-Tank for Action on Social Change), **Sociedad de Estudios Vascos** (Society of Basque Studies), **Encuentro Mundial de Valores** (Mexico), **Unión Social de Empresario Mexicanos**, and **World Youth Alliance**.

## TEACHING

I have taught a wide variety of courses, mostly on topics within political theory. Here is a representative sample of the courses I have taught at Bucknell Univ. (2006-07), Villanova Univ. (2009-12), and Univ. of Navarra (2012 onwards):

- **Democracy and Self-Government** — Humanities & PPE elective
- **Society & Politics: The Quest for Order in a Fragmented World** — PPE
- **Ethics and Social Order** — MA in Governance & Culture of Organisations
- **Ancient & Modern Political Philosophy** — undergraduate philosophy
- **Freedom, Power, and Authority** — undergraduate philosophy
- **Introduction to Ethics**
- **Globalization and Community** — undergraduate political science course
- **Religion and Politics** — undergraduate political science course
- **Social Justice** — MA political science course
- **Great Books** — Core Curriculum
- **Citizenship in Practice** — MA political science course
- **Introduction to Political Theory**
- **American Political Thought** — senior seminar

## DELIVERED PAPERS/PRESENTATIONS

I have given over **50 public talks/presentations** between 2005 and 2021, mostly at academic conferences and universities, occasionally for civil society and cultural associations. Please find below a small selection of topics and venues:

- Civil order beyond the sovereign State — Guest speaker, Department of Political Economy, **King's College London**.
- Social ecology of freedom — Hochschule für Politik, **Tech. Universität, München**.
- On the idea of territorial cohesion — Guest speaker, **Sociedad de Estudios Vascos** (Society of Basque Studies)
- Republican freedom and limits of sovereign rule — **Dept of Political Science, University of Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona**
- Particularist and universalist impulses of radical democracy — Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society, and the Rule of Law, **University of Aberdeen**.
- Renewing civic life from the heart of civil society — Guest speaker, **Ninth Worldwide Meeting on Human Values**, Monterrey, Mexico.
- Myth of popular Sovereignty and its implications for rational self-government — James Madison Program, **Princeton University**.
- Two conceptions of civic order: The Sovereign People vs. The Polyarchal Republic. — Guest speaker, Programme for the Foundations of Law and Constitutional Government, **Oxford University**
- Colloquium on my book *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life* — hosted by political theory programme at the **University of Notre Dame**.
- In defense of local self-government. — Programme for the Foundations of Law and Constitutional Government, **Oxford University**.
- Presentation of my book, *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life* — James Madison Program, **Princeton University**.
- De la libertad e integridad de la universidad ["On the freedom and integrity of the university"] — Keynote speaker at annual plenary faculty meeting, **Universidad de los Andes**, Santiago, Chile.
- What the idea of vocation can add to a theory of our global obligations. — **American Political Science Association** annual conference, Chicago.
- The Defense of Reasonable Faith? A Commentary on Rawls's Senior Thesis — **American Political Science Association** annual conference, Washington, DC
- Commentator on concluding panel of conference on "The Ethics of Patriotism." — Organized by Political Science Department, **Dartmouth College**, New Haven.
- The Entrepreneurial and Dynamic Dimensions of Responsibility in a Modern Society." — Guest speaker, **Universidad Panamericana, Bonaterra, Mexico**.