



# Alumni Profile

## Thomas Cooke

BA '11 Political Science

### Current Career

**Organization:** King's University College

**Title:** Part-Time Professor of Sociology

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### Career Overview

I'm a sociologist of technology, researching Big Data, algorithmic profiling, and digital privacy. Currently, I'm a part-time Professor instructing the Sociology of Terrorism here at King's, and I'll be beginning two new research positions this year. The first is in Bochum, Germany for a summer-long Research Fellowship at the Centre for Advanced Internet Studies. I'll be doing theoretical work on alternative means of digital privacy, specifically through the kind of hacktivist software technologies that aggravate people like Mark Zuckerberg.

The second position begins this fall at the Surveillance Studies Centre, Queen's University as a Post-Doctoral Fellow funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. I'll be establishing an interdisciplinary research team with Professor David Lyon in order to investigate how small bits of smartphone data end are handled by aggressive security algorithms in ways that create inaccurate risk profiles governments use to screen travelers, migrants, and refugees.

### How has King's helped you get where you are today?

There simply isn't enough space to explain how much King's has assisted me over the years. I began my undergrad in Political Science in 2004 and finished many years later, around 2010. I wasn't exactly the most committed student at the get-go, but I met numerous professors along the way that pushed me to grow.

King's is filled with wonderful people who always want to help. My most cherished memory at King's was working for Erin Hannah and Benjamin Muller as a Teaching Assistant. They took me under their wings through the 2011/12 academic year. It was an incredibly rewarding and enriching learning opportunity. They taught me how to synthesize complex theories, how to read closely, and how to engage students with invigoration, passion, and care that inspired me to become a career scholar.

During my Master's, I was supervised by Benjamin Muller, which was the most eye-opening and formative year of my life. Ben coached me to think creatively, critically, and reflexively, in ways that continue to impact my writing and lecturing today. He continued to mentor me throughout my PhD in Communication and Culture. In 2014, near the end of my PhD, I returned to King's as a Professor. It was a dream come true.

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### **What advice do you have for current students**

Engage - not just everything, but everyone, by asking tons of questions. Questions are a hallmark of any academic field. They are what makes study and learning possible. This is a principle I learned from Erin and Ben, and it has propelled me throughout my career since. At any one time, there are oodles of professors, teaching assistants, librarians, secretaries, and support staff around you. Ask them questions. You'll not only be given valuable insight, but you'll strengthen your ability to ask the kind of questions that will fuel your creativity.

### **Further Degrees / Certifications**

MA American Studies · 2012  
Western University

PhD Communication and Culture · 2017  
York University

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