



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON
OSTROM WORKSHOP

TOCQUEVILLE LECTURE SERIES

George Thomas

Claremont McKenna College

Discussant:

Matthew Lucky, Political Science, IUB



Friday, February 12, 2021: 12:00 – 1:30 pm EST

Virtual via Zoom: [Click here for link to Zoom meeting](#)

James Madison and America's Republican Experiment*

James Madison defended America's republican experiment as an innovation in popular government. While Madison began from the premise that the will of the people ought to ultimately govern us, he insisted that political institutions and intermediary civic institutions were essential in cultivating the "cool and deliberate sense of the community." By way of representation and other devices, Madison sought to put distance between the government and the people to better secure the public good. But, just as surely, Madison ultimately wanted the government accountable to the people. How to strike this balance? How to create a popular government that would not succumb either to the irrationality of the people or to a tyrannical government? This talk works through Madison's thinking on these questions with particular attention to how his understanding differs from contemporary challenges of populism and technocracy.

George Thomas is Wohlford Professor of American Political Institutions and Director of the Salvatori Center at Claremont McKenna College. He is the author of *The (Un)Written Constitution* (Oxford University Press forthcoming), as well as *The Founders and the Idea of a National University: Constituting the American Mind* (Cambridge University Press) and *The Madisonian Constitution* (Johns Hopkins University Press). His work has also appeared in popular journals such as *The Washington Post* and *The Atlantic*.

**Part of "The Idea of America" Series*

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