

The Melden Chair in Moral Philosophy & the Philosophy Department
at University of California, Irvine presents...

Melden Colloquium

DEBORAH TOLLEFSEN

Professor of Philosophy, University of Memphis

“Groups with Attitudes”

In everyday contexts and in the context of social scientific research we often attribute attitudes such as intention and belief to groups. What are we to make of this practice? Do groups really have such attitudes? Recent attempts to answer this question (e.g. List and Pettit, 2013; Huebner, 2014) in the affirmative adopt a coarse-grained functionalist approach. In this talk I argue that these approaches are problematic for a variety of different reasons. I conclude that any attempt to extend a representational theory of mental states to groups will ultimately fail. The only plausible way to understand how groups can have mental states is to see such states as dispositional states. I argue that understanding group mental states as dispositional states of the group provides us with (1) an explanation of our practice of attributing attitudes to groups and why it is explanatorily powerful, (2) a way to acknowledge the difference between the mental states of individuals and the mental states of groups, and (3) a moderate realism about group mental states.

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

4:00-6:00p.m.

55 Humanities Instructional Building

(Building 610 on the UCI Campus)

Refreshments provided after the talk.