



COLLOQUIUM SERIES

# “Fairness, Participation and the Real Problem of Collective Harm”

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In a wide variety of cases, people *collectively* cause harm, or fail to prevent it, but no *individual* act seems to make a difference. For example, while climate change is caused in part by millions of people acting in certain ways, it does not seem that any individual such act makes a difference. The problem in these cases is that it seems each person can argue, “it makes no difference whether or not I do X, so I have no reason to do it.” The challenge is to explain where this argument goes wrong. In this paper, I discuss one class of responses to this challenge: responses that accept the ‘it makes no difference’ claim but argue that there are *other sorts* of reasons for action – reasons that don’t have to do with the difference you might make in outcome. I argue that proposals of this sort face a shared problem. While they do identify considerations other than the difference you make, it is not clear that these considerations can apply as long as it’s true that your act won’t make a difference. Through discussing this shared problem, we will obtain a sharper understanding of what is uniquely challenging about these cases and, thus, of what the central task needs to be if we are to properly address them.

**Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Room: 3202 River Building**

**Time: 3:00 pm**

***All are welcome!***