



COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## **"Descartes on Responsibility and Judgment"**

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Descartes's contributions to moral philosophy are little known. This is understandable. Although he expresses a high regard for "morals," the general area of inquiry does not receive much of his attention until the end of his career. And then his treatment is oblique, set for the most part in the context of his theory of the passions of the soul. I will show that Descartes has more to say about responsibility, in a moral sense, than has been recognized. For Descartes, responsibility is tied to the faculty of the will: in a letter to Christina he says, "only what depends on the will provides grounds for reward or punishment." I will explore two ways Descartes characterizes the will—volitions as "actions of the mind" and the will as essentially free—and show that each is connected to an aspect of responsibility. The account of responsibility I develop, I will argue, has significant payoff: it explains, clarifies, and renders more philosophically plausible Descartes's notorious theory of judgment.

**Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Room: 3228 River Building**

**Time: 3:00 pm**

***All are welcome!***