

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY



WINTER 2026 *Colloquium*

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"Openness and Transparency: Attitudes and Accountability"

Science communication is increasingly being incorporated into philosophy of science and social epistemology research, especially as it pertains to values in science and public trust in science. A common strategy has been to fold ethical reflection into these debates by examining the virtues of science communication—an approach that has prompted critiques of widely assumed virtues. For example, Stephen John (2018) questions whether science communicators should possess honesty, sincerity, transparency and openness. Subsequent responses have defended these virtues as important for acknowledging the role of values in science and for mediating public trust. I approach the debate differently. By focusing on the concept of transparency, and its relation to openness, I critique John's example of transparency, provide recommendations for how transparency can be legitimately obtained, and argue that transparency and openness are not synonymous. To make this defense compelling, I reconceive transparency as an exercise of agency and underscore the often-overlooked value of secrecy as an essential dimension of openness.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27

1:30 P.M.

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