



WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

Department of Philosophy

welcomes:

Michael DePaul
University of Notre Dame

“Voles, Vampire Bats and Character Traits”

“In recent years some philosophers have been mightily impressed by results from social psychology. They interpret the research as showing that there are not character traits of the type required for traditional virtues such as courage or honesty. One gets the impression from some of their work that believing in character traits, virtues and vices is decidedly unscientific. I'll examine some recent work from biology on voles and human beings that suggests there is a genetic component for monogamy in males. Fidelity sounds like a fairly traditional virtue. I'll then turn to work on altruism, specifically the theory of reciprocal altruism, which is nicely illustrated by some behavior of vampire bats. Reciprocal altruism plays a fundamental role in evolutionary psychology. For the theory to work, it must be possible for individuals to identify "cheaters", which is a good old-fashioned vice. So it seems that there is not a unified "scientific" view on the existence of character traits.”

Thursday, November 13, 2008
Tribble Hall Philosophy Library
B316 4:30 p.m.

For special assistance please call 336-758-5359 so reasonable accommodations can be made.

Supported by the Thomas Jack Lynch Funds

