# The Wolfe Institute

*The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute,*
*in cooperation with the Department of Psychology,*
*presents*

A Wolfe Fellows Series Event

# What Can Animals Tell Us About Belief?

**Robert Lurz** is associate professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College. He received his Ph.D. from Temple University in 1998 and works on philosophical and scientific issues concerning consciousness and animal consciousness and cognition in particular. He has published on these topic in *Philosophical Psychology, Brain and Behavioral Sciences*, and *Mind and Language*. Dr. Lurz is also the editor of the book *The Philosophy of Animal Minds* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Do animals have beliefs (in addition to perception, learning, and instinct)? And if so, do they understand that other animals have beliefs, too? Regarding the first question, I argue that there is empirical evidence (in particular, evidence drawn from a recent appearance-reality discrimination study with chimpanzees) that strongly suggests that animals have beliefs, but there is also a compelling philosophical argument (à la Donald Davidson) against taking these beliefs in animals to be propositional attitudes. I sketch a non-propositional attitude model of belief suitable for animals. Regarding the second question, I argue that the question of whether animals (specifically, great apes) are capable of attributing beliefs to other agents is still very much an open empirical question, the various philosophical and empirical arguments to the contrary notwithstanding. To move the empirical field forward on this question, an alternative belief-attribution test for animals is needed. In the latter part of the talk, I outline such a test and show how it solves a persistent methodological puzzle in the field, often called 'Povinelli's problem.'

## Thursday, April 7, 2011
## 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
## Woody Tanger Auditorium
## Brooklyn College Library

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