



[home](#) > [events](#) > [feb 2011](#) > geoffrey brennan

[September](#)

[October](#)

[November](#)

[December](#)

[January](#)

[February](#)

[March](#)

[April](#)

[May](#)

[Events Archive](#)

Seminar Series on Ideas, Identities and Decisional Processes that Affect Security

Geoffrey Brennan

"Causal Responsibility and Voting"

Friday, February 18, 2011

3:30 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

To see the streaming video of this event, [click here](#)

Geoffrey Brennan is distinguished research professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In addition to his position at UNC-Chapel Hill, he is a professor of economics in the Research School of Social Sciences at Australian National University and research professor in the Department of Political Science at Duke University. He is co-director of the UNC-Duke joint program in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.

Brennan works actively on issues at the intersection of economics, rationality, and political philosophy. He is currently editor of the journal *Economics and Philosophy* and has recently, with Hartmut Kliemt and Robert Tollison, edited the *Collected Works of James Buchanan* (Liberty Press, 1999-2000) in 20 volumes.

Brennan is author of nine books including the collaborations *Democracy and Decision: The Pure Theory of Electoral Preference* (Cambridge University Press, 1993; Oxford University Press, 2002), with Loren Lomasky; *Democratic Devices and Desires* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), with Alan Hamlin; and *The Economy of Esteem* (Oxford University Press, 2004), with Philip Pettit.

He is also the author of over a hundred articles that have been published in scholarly journals around the world. Brennan received the 1999 Duncan Black Memorial Prize for best article published in *Public*



Geoffrey Brennan
Professor of Economics
Australian National
University
Distinguished Research
Professor
Duke University and
University of North
Carolina - Chapel Hill

Choice, and he and Loren Lomasky were awarded the American Philosophical Association's 2003 Gregory Kavka Prize in Political Philosophy for their paper "Is There a Duty to Vote?".

Brennan received his Bachelor of Economics (with honors) and Ph.D. from Australian National University.

Brennan's discussion will be based off of a paper that is a response to a line of argument developed in a 1999 paper by Al Goldman and endorsed with minor modifications in Richard Tuck's book *Free-Riding* (Harvard University Press, 2008). The argument seeks to extend the scope of voter responsibility by appeal to a broadened account of causal efficacy. Goldman sees this argument as supplying moral reasons why individuals should vote and also as explaining why so many of them do vote.

Brennan will argue that in the voting case responsibility and causal efficacy should be maintained as independent notions, that Goldman's line yields the wrong advice for action-guidingness, and that the explanatory argument appeals to dubious logic.

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1501 Neil Ave.

Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614.292.1681 614.292.1681

Fax: 614.292.2407

Email: mershoncenter@osu.edu