



## **Cognitive Science Colloquium**

Wednesday, 4 May 2022, 2:00 P.M.

Park 280

<https://buffalo.zoom.us/j/96005350470?pwd=aUFUeVpjc0UzcmFEL3BUa08zSkFYUT09>

### **Sarah Vincent**

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#### **Evidence of Cognitive Empathy in Non-Human Animals (and Why a Philosopher Cares)**

Are humans the only beings capable of empathy? Does the answer to that question change depending on the type of empathy we are discussing? If other animals are capable of empathy, does that matter morally? In this presentation, I will engage these questions along with recent studies from cognitive science, ultimately making the case that evidence of empathy in a variety of other species has philosophical implications regarding their moral status. It will be helpful to differentiate some terminology as I pursue this goal. First, we will need to distinguish between three types of related abilities, following de Waal [2008]: (1) emotional contagion, or the ability to match the emotional state of another; (2) sympathetic concern, or the ability to be concerned about another's emotional state such that you are motivated to try to ameliorate that state; and (3) empathic perspective-taking, or the ability to adopt the perspective of another such that you experience emotional arousal. The latter two are sometimes jointly called cognitive empathy. Second, we will need to distinguish between three types of moral status, following Rowlands [2012]: (1) moral patients are those who are objects of moral concern but who do not possess moral responsibilities; (2) moral subjects are those who are objects of moral concern and who can be motivated to act by morally laden emotions; and (3) moral agents are those who are objects of moral concern and who can be motivated to act by moral reflection. Putting all of this together then, I defend the claim that those nonhuman animals whose behavior indicates the presence of cognitive empathy are – at least – moral subjects.