

The OSU Social Behavior Interest Group  
Colloquium Series Presents:

# Sense in the Face of Nonsense:

How a Search for Meaning Underlies  
Many Key Psychological Motivations



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**Thursday, January 19th :: 4:00 - 5:00PM**  
**Psychology Building 035**

The meaning maintenance model proposes that people have a need for meaning; that is, a need to perceive the world through mental representations of expected relations. When people encounter anomalies that are inconsistent with their schemas they may affirm or abstract alternative schemas as a way to regain meaning – even if those schemas are from domains entirely different from the original meaning threat. This model provides a common account for people’s reactions to self-esteem threats, feelings of uncertainty, cognitive dissonance, perceptions of an unjust world, and mortality salience. I will discuss the findings from more than a dozen experiments that show the diverse compensatory responses that people have to a broad range of meaning threats, and the conditions under which these reactions emerge.

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