

PHIL 070B, Section: 01, "Modern Philosophy"

Fall 2020

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:45 AM

Sweeney Hall 241

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Course Description

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were marked by great political upheaval and scientific progress. This was the era of the Thirty Years War in central Europe, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, the French Revolution, the condemnation of Galileo by the Roman Catholic Church and Newton's new physics. In response, the philosophers of the period made great efforts to provide new foundations for human knowledge, reconcile the new scientific spirit with religious belief, develop rigorous methods for the pursuit of science, as well as apply these new methods to the problems of ethics and politics. In the process they framed questions and developed concepts that still dominate contemporary thought and discussion – questions about the sources and limits of human knowledge, about the possibility of proving the existence of God, about the relations of our minds to our bodies, and the grounds of moral judgment and political authority. As part of our course, we will consider how the social and scientific developments of this time contributed to the new questions and methods of the modern philosophers, and how their philosophical ideas influenced their scientific and social communities. Finally, we will evaluate the importance of the early modern philosophical movement for those of us living at the end of the 20th century.

Philosophy 70B satisfies GE Area C2: Letters