

Phil 3121 Modern Philosophy

Class Number 46533 Section MY11 Mon, Wed 11:00am – 12:40pm

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In 1649 Rene Descartes traveled to Sweden to teach at the court of Queen Kristina. In addition to being a great philosopher, scientist, and mathematician, Descartes liked to sleep late. But he had to rise early and travel to Kristina's court to begin teaching at 5:00 AM. He caught pneumonia and died. What did Descartes have to say that was so exciting Kristina couldn't wait? Why was his work, and that of his philosophical interlocutors, so important?

As Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Bernoulli, and Newton revolutionized science, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Hume shaped the modern philosophical worldview. What were their conceptions of the nature of reality? How could we attain knowledge of it? How should natural philosophy or science be practiced?

We will study these questions in order to understand how modern philosophy arose. This will help us understand what it means to be "modern" before deciding whether or not to jump onto the "postmodern" bandwagon.