

# EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

**Code and section:** PHIL\*2160\*01

**Term:** Winter 2023

**Instructor:** John Russon

## Method of Delivery:

This course will meet in person, Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30-12:50

## Course Synopsis:

Philosophers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries gave voice to the ideas that lie at the basis of our contemporary world, and the tensions and ambiguities in those ideas correspond to the tensions and ambiguities in our world today. At the root of their insights was the recognition of the distinctive power—the autonomy—of the human mind especially in the epistemological capacity it affords us to grasp and manipulate the inner workings of nature and in the moral capacity it affords us for grappling with matters of right and wrong. It is this insight that lies behind the Scientific Revolution, to which we owe our airplanes, refrigerators and atomic bombs, the concept of Human Rights, to which we owe our democratic political institutions, and the notion of Free Enterprise, to which we owe our contemporary system of global capitalism. We will begin with Hobbes and Descartes, considering the tension between our existence as bodies and our existence as minds, and then turn to Spinoza and the attempt to comprehend our human existence within the study of nature as a whole. Next, we will turn to Locke and Smith to study the nature of human politics especially as that relates to role of economics in human life. We will conclude our study with Smith and Vico and the interpretation of human history.

## Required Textbooks:

Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Penguin)

Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations* (Hackett)

Spinoza, *Ethics, Treatise and Selected Letters* (Hackett)

Locke, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, [selected edition, ed. Sutherland] (Oxford)

Vico, *The New Science*, [trans. Marsh] (Penguin)

## Disclaimer:

*\* Please note: This is a preliminary web course outline only. The Philosophy Department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.*