Course Title: Early Modern Philosophy
Course Code: PHI518
Recommended Study Year: -
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours: 2 hours lecture per week
1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme: Traditions and Practical Wisdom
Prerequisite(s): -
Co-requisite(s): -
Exclusion(s): -
Exemption Requirement(s): -

Brief Course Description
This course addresses what is certainly one of the most exciting periods in the history of philosophy, the pre-Kantian modern period. The course investigates the views of some of the principal European philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries: the rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz; the empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Towards the end of the course Kant’s contribution to this great debate will be considered.

Aims
The primary goal of this course is to gain an appreciation of the ideas and arguments of these philosophers, and to see how the views they gave voice to remain prominent in our thinking about the world to the present day. A secondary, but no less important goal, is to help students read and understand classic texts in the history of philosophy, and develop their exegetical and critical skills.

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of the course, student will:
1. acquire basic knowledge of philosophical systems of early modern philosophers;
2. understand the importance of those philosophical views in our worldview;
3. understand classic texts of the early modern philosophers;
4. grasp the exegetical and critical skills in philosophical reading and writing.

Indicative Content
- Descartes’ “cogito ergo sum” and his dualism.
- Spinoza’s double aspect theory and his pantheism.
- Locke’s case against innate knowledge
- Locke on primary and secondary qualities
- Berkeley’s objection to material substance
- Berkeley: immaterialism and common sense
- Hume on belief of an external world
- Hume on causality and personal identity
- Leibniz’s “monadology”
- Leibniz on necessity and freedom

Teaching Method
Lecture and Tutorial
Students are reminded that we will spend a good deal of time interacting with the assigned texts.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes
1. Students will give an individual or group oral presentation on certain early modern
philosophers which would be based upon assigned readings. They are expected to show the ability of clear explanation, summarization and criticism of the philosophical system of the assigned philosopher.

2. Students will write several short essays on the topics of which correspond to the contents of the lectures. They are expected to present their interpretations and criticisms effectively.

3. Students will write a term-end paper which examine or compare different philosophers’ thoughts. They are expected to show their thorough understand of those philosophical system reflected in the paper.

**Assessment**
50% Continuous Assessment
50% Term-end Paper

**Required Readings**
Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (eds), *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources.*

**Supplementary Readings**