

## HUM 595/PHI 595 NOVELTY

The early-modern period was the time when modern philosophy was first born, in figures like Bacon, Descartes, and Hobbes. It is also the period of the so-called Scientific Revolution, generally associated with Copernicus, Galileo and their confederates. In both cases we are dealing with the introduction of radically new ideas. In this seminar we will try to put these innovative projects into historical context. In particular, we will examine what “novelty” meant at a time in which tradition and authority were generally more valued than innovation. How were these new ideas new? And on what grounds were they opposed and by whom? How did novelty move from something to be studiously avoided to a valued commodity? Figures and topics to be discussed include Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, the Royal Society and the new Experimental Philosophy, the invention of newspapers and journals, the debate over Protestantism and radical Protestant sects in the English Civil War, the emergence of both the original and the forged artwork, the rise of a new style in music, and the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. Issues discussed will include the relations among novelty in theology, philosophy and the sciences, technology and the arts (literature and music), the connection between novelty (and its critics) and authority, the role of institutions new and old in either encouraging or subverting novelty, and the question of freedom of expression in the period. We will also survey the contemporary historical and critical literature on novelty and the new.

This seminar is being taught in the context of the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities (IHUM). The instructors are Daniel Garber (Philosophy) and Eileen Reeves (Comparative Literature)