

Women in Philosophy, 1600-1800

Philosophy 3013/4120

Spring 2018

The typical story we're told about the emergence of Modern philosophy is a trajectory from Descartes to Kant with a set of canonical figures in between, all of whom are male. This story is a fiction, however, in that women philosophers were a significant part of the philosophical conversation throughout the early Modern period. This course is part of the ongoing recovery of that lost history of women philosophers.

We'll look at philosophical contributions from a number of figures, including, among others, ÉMILIE DU CHÂTELET, who helped discover the Law of Conservation of Energy, MARGARET CAVENDISH, who wrote science fiction to accompany her philosophical treatises, and SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ, one of the few philosophers to ever appear on currency.

The course will cover what these philosophers had to argue on three important topics:

- **LOVE, SEX, AND HAPPINESS**
 - *Is marriage worth it?*
 - *What does good romantic love look like?*
 - *What is the effect of a patriarchal society on romantic relationships?*
- **EDUCATION**
 - *How did lack of educational opportunities harm early modern women?*
 - *What role do the arts play in a well-rounded education?*
 - *What are the advantages and disadvantages of co-education vs. single-sex education?*
- **SCIENCE**
 - *What is the relationship between science and philosophy?*
 - *What is the relationship between science and religion?*
 - *Why should we trust scientific instruments over our own senses?*

For the most part, we will read and discuss primary texts by the philosophers in question, but we will also look at contemporary analyses of those texts to help us learn how to engage with these historical figures. We will also, as a class, work on a collaborative project to situate these philosophers among their contemporaries, both famous and lesser-known.