Instructor: Charlotte Sabourin
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Office hours:
LEA 935
   Wednesday 3:00 – 4:00
   Friday 3:00 – 4:00

Lectures:
September 7th – December 2nd
MCMED 1027 (McIntyre building)
   Wednesday 1:05 – 2:25
   Friday 1:05 – 2:25

Course outline
This course will focus on self-knowledge, a topic of foremost importance in early modern philosophy. It raises a number of fascinating questions such as:

i) What is the self? (should we think of the self as embodied, or rather as something purely rational? is the self permanent and immutable, or constructed and always evolving? etc.)

ii) What is it to know oneself? (is it a special kind of knowledge? must all knowledge begin with self-knowledge? is it possible to know anything outside of one’s mind? can external factors (society, prejudices, etc.) have an impact on one’s self-knowledge? etc.)

In order to investigate as many of these questions as possible, the course will be divided into five units:

I. Descartes and the cogito: must all knowledge begin with knowledge of the self?

II. Spinoza and the idea of an emancipatory self-knowledge: the joyful outcomes of knowing oneself.

III. Gournay, Suchon, Poulain de la Barre, Astell and the impact of prejudices on self-knowledge: thinking sexual difference in the early modern era.

IV. Cavendish and her materialist, organic and vitalistic conception of the self.

V. Locke, Leibniz and the debate on innate knowledge: can we have an innate conception of ourselves, or is this something that we build over time?

Assignments
30% 1st short paper (Spinoza)
35% 2nd short paper (Cavendish)
30% final exam (take-home)
5% participation