

Philosophy 32: Philosophy and the Rise of Modern Science

UC San Diego—Winter 2015

Professor Don Rutherford

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Class: MWF 11:00-11:50 pm, Pepper Canyon Hall 120

Course Description

In this class, we will study the intersecting developments of philosophy and science in the seventeenth century from a variety of perspectives. We will examine how modern science emerges in reaction to Aristotle's theory of nature, the dominant account of the universe for the previous two millennia. We will consider how philosophical issues—concerning space, matter, motion and force—drive scientific inquiry, and how new philosophical theories of knowledge and human nature track the progress of science. And we will investigate the relation of the new science to traditional, Biblical religion, noting the points at which the two come into conflict and the efforts made by scientists and philosophers to reconcile their theories with religious doctrines. Our world takes shape in the seventeenth century and is largely defined by the rise of modern science. We will use the lens of philosophy to examine that development and its continuing relevance for our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Required Text

The Scientific Background to Modern Philosophy: Selected Readings, ed. Michael R. Matthews (Hackett, 1989)

All other readings for the class will be made available via the class TED site.