



CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY

COLLOQUIUM SERIES



* All talks will be held on Fridays in Room 218 Paterson Hall at 11:30 am unless otherwise noted *

* Please visit our website at <http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy/> for detailed abstracts *

**“What is a Cartesian?
Fontenelle's construction of Cartesianism”**

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In this paper, I present some features of the early reception of Descartes' philosophy by Fontenelle (1657-1757), a French philosopher who played a determining role in the 18th century understanding of Cartesian philosophy. I show first that his emphasis on Descartes' modernity is founded on a peculiar, purposeful misreading of Descartes' own account. This inaccurate reading is, interestingly, a means to define what should be taken as good Cartesianism - a version of Descartes' philosophy which is different from our standard understanding of it. I show finally that this understanding of Cartesianism made Fontenelle ultimately defend Descartes' widely discarded scientific views, but for epistemological reasons that merit attention. I conclude with some methodological remarks on the history of philosophy and its fruitfulness.

**Friday, March 9, 2018
Room: 218 Paterson Hall
Time: 11:30 a.m.**