

Department of Philosophy
Dr. David Ross Boyd Colloquium Series



Dr. Alison Simmons

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Harvard University

Descartes and the Modern Mind

November 3, 2017, 2:30-4:30pm, Dale Hall Tower, Room 607
Reception to follow

It's often said that Descartes invented the modern mind. But what *is* the Cartesian mind? And how new or modern is it? The first question is harder to answer than you might think and so, therefore, is the second. Descartes tells us that the mind is a thinking thing. But there's nothing new about that unless Descartes is changing the concept of thought. What, then, is Cartesian thought? After exploring some of the large-scale structural changes Descartes introduces into the mind, an exercise that will give us some much needed constraints for interpreting his concept of thought, I consider three ways in which we might try to understand it: two that are popular in the literature and one that I think gets it right. I'll conclude with a suggestion about what is old and what is genuinely new about this Cartesian mind.

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The lecture is free and open to the public