



The Old Library, Trinity College Dublin

**HIU12046**      **Thinking About Thought: Ideas in History**

**Co-ordinator**      **Robert Armstrong**

**Credits**      **5 ECTS**

**Semester**      **Michaelmas Term**

**Assessment**      A 1,000-1,500 word essay (40%), and an end-of-term in-person exam (60%).

**Module Description:** How might we understand how people thought in past centuries? About the natural world, or the supernatural? About ways to do politics? About their own past? This module offers an introduction to 'intellectual history' or the 'history of ideas', ways of doing history which attempt to answer these kinds of questions.

The module will focus on case-studies from three fields in particular: the history of political thought; questions about understanding the natural world; scholarly and popular approaches to history. Examples of topics could include: what did 'Republicanism' mean for early modern people? How did 'scientists' understand the 'supernatural'? How was western 'liberalism' appropriated or rejected by people living under colonial rule? In what ways were responses to Darwin's ideas on evolution shaped by existing ideas and values in different societies? 'Thinking about thought' aims to investigate the kinds of assumptions, and the intellectual resources, which people brought to the task of thinking about questions of importance to them. It also seeks to open up questions about how we might go about examining and understanding the ideas of other societies, in light of our own limitations.