

PHILOS 4A03/6A03 EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY - SPINOZA

Fall Term, 2016: Tuesday 7:00 – 10:00 PM – University Hall 316 (Tower Room)

Instructor: Dr. James L Sikkema
Office: University Hall 314A
Office Hour: Tuesday 5:00 – 6:00 PM
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Description

This course will offer an advanced study of Spinoza's mature philosophy by investigating his masterwork *Ethics* in its entirety and, additionally, selections from his *Letters*, the *Theological-Political Treatise*, and the *Political Treatise*.

Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

- *Have an understanding of Spinoza's philosophy, its problems, and influence*
- *Become better readers of, and writers on, philosophical texts*

Required Texts

SPINOZA COMPLETE WORKS, translated by Samuel Shirley, edited by Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002. **Available in the Campus Bookstore*

Course Requirements

1) *Undergraduate Students (4A03)*

- Participation – 10%
- 5 Text Summaries – 40%
- 10-12 page Essay – 50%

2) *Graduate Students (6A03)*

- Participation – 10%
- 5 Text Summaries – 30%
- 15-20 page Essay – 60%

Note on Participation

Read the material and come to class prepared to discuss it. Full stop.

Note on Text Summaries

A text summary involves selecting a short selection from the required reading for the week and providing a 1-2 page synopsis and criticism of that portion of text. You will need to identify the context within which the selected portion takes place, the relevance and/or importance of the selection for the author's overall goal(s), an articulation of your understanding of the main claims in the selection, and one or two questions this selection raises in your mind. You are required to complete 5 text summaries for the term. Summaries must be submitted in the class corresponding to the reading selection. Summaries will be graded on a pass/fail basis. A pass will be granted if the work is submitted on time and according to the stated criteria. Unless extenuating circumstances intervene, there will not be an opportunity for late submissions.

Note on Final Essays

- 1) *Undergraduate Students (4A03)*: Essays should seek to identify a particular problem found in Spinoza's philosophy, should provide a well-founded exposition of the text in relation to this problem, and should provide a critical evaluation of it with the help of secondary sources.
- 2) *Graduate Students (6A03)*: Essays should critically evaluate a claim made in the secondary literature in relation to an identified problem in Spinoza's philosophy, should involve a well-founded exposition of the text in relation to this problem, and, by means of such exposition, should seek to make a distinctive claim in contrast to that found in the secondary literature.
- 3) 4A03/6A03: All students are encouraged to consult with me on essay topics well in advance of the due date.

Important Dates

September 6 – Classes Begin

October 10 – 16 – Mid-Term Recess

November 4 – Last Day to Cancel Class

December 7 – Classes End and **Final Essays Due**

Lecture Schedule and Readings

09/06 – *Introduction: Conflict, Cartesianism, and Coordination*

No Assigned Reading

09/13 – *Theology 1: Superstition, Revelation and Miracles*

Reading: Letters: 17, 52 – 56, 67 – 68, 76; **Theological Political Treatise:** Preface, Chapter 1 (pp.394 – 396B, 402D – 404); Chapter 2 (404-407C, 409A-B, 414C – 415), Chapters 4 – 7 (pp.456 – 458C)

09/20 – *Theology 2: Authority, Faith and Finality*

Reading: Letters: 18 – 23, 71, 73 – 75; **Theological Political Treatise:** Chapters 13 – 15; **Ethics:** I Appendix

09/27 – *Conatus, Capacity and Affect*

Reading: Ethics: III Preface – IIIp57; **Theological Political Treatise:** Chapter 16; **Political Treatise:** Chapter 2

10/4 – *Bondage: Emotion, Imagination, and Error*

Reading: Ethics: II Preface – IIp36; IIIp58 – IVp17; **Political Treatise:** Chapter 1

10/11 – *Mid-Semester Break – No Class*

10/18 – *Transitioning to Freedom: Joy and Active Emotions*

Reading: Ethics: IIIp58 – IV; IVp18 -

10/25 – *Adequate Ideas, Common Notions, and Inter-Relations*

Reading: Letters: 59, 60, 64; **Ethics:** IIp37 – III; IVp23 – IVp36; V Preface – Vp20

11/1 – *Substance, Attributes, Modes*

Reading: Ethics: I

11/8 – *Necessity, Contingency, Possibility*

Reading: *Letters:* 12, 57; *Ethics:* I

11/15 – *Parthood, Particularity and Infinity*

Reading: *Letters:* 12, 32, 65 – 66; *Ethics:* I; IVp4 – IVp6

11/22 – *Causality, Multiplicity, and Modification*

Reading: *Ethics:* I, IIp13s – IIp17; IVp38 – IVp39

11/29 – *Virtue, Combination and Community*

Reading: *Ethics:* IVp35 – V; *Political Treatise:* Chapters 3 – 5; *Theological Political Treatise:* Chapter 17, 19

12/6 – *Intuition and Excellence*

Reading: *Ethics:* Vp21 - END

Please note the following policies and statements:

Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Modification of course outlines

McMaster University reserves the right to change or revise information contained in course outlines in extreme circumstances. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check regularly their primary email account via their @mcmaster.ca alias and course websites.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.
