

The syllabi listed here are from the last term during which the course was taught and are posted only as a guide to some of the typical topics the course may cover. Please note that the readings and materials may change from term to term. An updated syllabus for the course for the coming semester will be posted closer to the start of the semester.

Rutgers University  
Fall 2011

Prof. Mark Colby  
Philosophy 404

## Spinoza

FALL 2011

### Course Description

This course is an intensive examination of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise (TPT)* of 1670, which was banned and condemned by most of Europe. This work is seminal in the development of Western moral and political views about the importance of individual freedom and autonomy and their protection by the secular, democratic state. We will analyze his theological views on God and his attributes, prophecy, and miracles; the basis for these views in his hermeneutical theory of scriptural interpretation; his epistemological views on faith and reason; and the moral, social, and political consequences which he derives from all these views, especially the need for religious tolerance and freedom of conscience, thought, and expression.

### Text

Required: Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. by Jonathan Israel and transl. by Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Recommended: Spinoza, *Ethics*; Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2005); Steven Nadler, *Spinoza's "Ethics": an Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. by Don Garrett (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In addition, I will provide handouts via the Sakai site.

### Course Prerequisites

Two previous courses in philosophy are required; recommended are Philosophy 205 (Introduction to Modern Philosophy), Philosophy 307 (Descartes, Locke & the 17th Century) or Philosophy 265 (Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion). Familiarity with Hobbes' *Leviathan* is helpful. This course is not open to first-year students under any circumstances.

### Course Requirements

(1) Two 10-page papers are required, each determining 45% of the course grade (extensive guidelines will be provided); (2) regular class participation is expected and determines 10% of the course grade. **Students are expected to attend all classes; if you miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website at <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An e-mail is automatically sent to me. If you miss more than two classes without documentation, your course grade will be reduced.** Always bring the text to class. Do not repeatedly come late to class, leave early, or talk to each other during class. Turn all cell phones and beepers off. No text messaging is allowed. No solid food is allowed.

### Office Hours

On Tuesdays and Fridays before 9:15 a.m. or after 1:55 p.m. or by appointment (location to be announced). You are encouraged to speak with me about any aspect of this course in particular or philosophy in general. My e-mail address is [mcolby@rutgers.edu](mailto:mcolby@rutgers.edu). The philosophy department's undergraduate secretary is Anna Lipovsky ([alipovsky@philosophy.rutgers.edu](mailto:alipovsky@philosophy.rutgers.edu)), 732-932-9861.

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### **Date and Reading Assignment**

- 9/2 Introduction: Spinoza's seminal role in Western philosophy and the modern era
- 9/9 Editor's Introduction and Note on the Text and Translation; Preface and Ch. I
- 9/16 Chs. II and III
- 9/23 Chs. IV and V
- 9/30 Ch. VI
- 10/7 Ch. VII
- 10/14 Chs. VIII, IX, and X
- 10/21 Chs. XI and XII. *First paper due*
- 10/28 Chs. XIII and XIV
- 11/4 Ch. XV
- 11/11 Ch. XVI
- 11/18 Chs. XVII and XVIII
- 12/2 Ch. XIX
- 12/9 Ch. XX. *Second paper due*