

730:404 Spinoza  
Fall 2021  
syllabus

Instructor: Martin Lin  
Location: Tillett Hall  
Time: 1:00-2:20  
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Office hours: by appointment on Zoom  
Website: Canvas

Learning goals:

Students will learn to examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production by studying the works of Spinoza. Students will also learn to formulate rationally persuasive arguments and present them in written essays.

Course description:

This course is an introduction to the major figures and ideas of early modern philosophy. The early modern period is shaped in large part by two major changes to European society. One is the scientific revolution. The other is the century of war and conflict between various Christian churches that proliferated in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. With respect to the metaphysical and epistemological questions that arose in connection with the scientific revolution, some of our questions will be: (1) What is the nature of the physical world? (2) What is the place of the mind the physical world? (3) What are the respective roles of reason and sense experience in our ability to know about the world? (4) How can we have knowledge by induction? With respect to issues of politics, society, and religion as they were shaped by the religious and political developments and conflicts of the period, our questions will be: (1) What are the limits of religious toleration? (2) What is the basis of the legitimacy of the state? (3) What is the best form of government? (4) what is justice?

Course requirements:

Midterm exam: 50%  
Term paper: 50%

Required Texts:

B. Spinoza, E. Curley (ed.) *A Spinoza Reader: the Ethics and Other Works*.

Available at the University Bookstore.

Absence Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please contact me to tell me the date and reason for your absence.

### Plagiarism:

You are required to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. You can find the University's plagiarism policy here:

<http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

If you have any questions, you must ask me.

### Important dates:

October 13<sup>th</sup>: Midterm study guide distributed  
Wed. October 20<sup>th</sup>: Midterm (in class).  
Thurs. Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> – Sunday Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>: Thanksgiving recess.  
Wed. Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>: Last class.  
Final paper due: TBD.

### Tentative schedule of topics and readings:

#### **Weeks 1**

##### Definitions and Axioms and Spinoza's Goals

Read the definitions and axioms of part 1 of the *Ethics* as well as the appendix to part 1.

#### **Weeks 2**

##### Proof of the Existence of God

*Ethics*, part 1, propositions 1-11.

#### **Week 3:**

##### Monism

*Ethics*, part 1, propositions 12-14.

#### **Week 3 cont.:**

##### The Creation of the World

*Ethics*, part 1, propositions 15-16

#### **Week 4**

##### Causation and Modality

*Ethics*, part 1, propositions 16-36

#### **Week 5**

##### Parallelism of Mind and Body

Read the definitions and axioms of part 2 of the *Ethics*, as well as propositions 1-7 of part 2.

**Week 6**

The Human Mind

*Ethics*, part 2, propositions 8-13.

**Week 7**

Sense Perception and the Imagination

*Ethics*, part 2, propositions 14-22.

**Week 8**

Truth and Knowledge

*Ethics*, part 2, propositions 23-49.

**Week 9**

Self-Preservation

Read the preface, definitions, and axioms of part 3 as well as propositions 1-9.

**Week 10**

Good and Evil

Read the preface, definitions, and axioms of part 4 as well as propositions 1-8, 19-73 and appendix.

**Week 11**

Prophecy

*Theological and Political Treatise*, part 1, chap. 1.

**Week 12**

Divine Law

*Theological and Political Treatise*, part 1, chap. 4.

**Week 12**

Prophecy

*Theological and Political Treatise*, part 1, chap. 1.

**Week 13**

Miracles

*Theological and Political Treatise*, part 2, chap. 6

**Week 14**

The Interpretation of Scripture

*Theological and Political Treatise*, part 2, chap. 7

**Week 15**

Freedom

