

Hobbes and Spinoza

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Mondays 11-1pm Menzies N602

1. Overview

Thomas Hobbes is widely considered the greatest political philosopher in the English language. His main work, *Leviathan*, is a wide-ranging work that covers not only issues that we might consider directly political, but also many other areas of philosophy. Importantly, over half of *Leviathan* is concerned with religion and the relationship between religion and politics. To understand these issues clearly in Hobbes, we will read *Leviathan* in its entirety. Although less well known for his work on politics, Spinoza was also deeply concerned with the relationship between religion and politics and was also influenced by the work of Hobbes. By considering these two thinkers together, we will be able to not only evaluate their arguments but also learn what lessons these thinkers have for us today.

2. Readings

This seminar will make significant demands on you in terms of the reading. You will likely find many of them difficult. Some of the readings will require some background knowledge in the history of moral philosophy or, in some cases, economics—make note of anything that seems odd in the reading or that you don't immediately understand and we will discuss some of those issues in the seminar. If you are more comfortable emailing questions you have about the reading before class, that is fine too but I will not, for the most part, respond to the questions via email. Rather I will address them in class because it is likely more than one person had a similar question.

I expect students to come to the seminar prepared to discuss the readings and to go beyond them. The readings are, in many ways, just a starting point for the discussion in the seminar but it will be impossible to probe some of the deeper issues that they raise if you are not already familiar with the readings. Doing philosophy well requires that you have a diverse range of ideas to draw on so that you can see problems in new ways and possibly find solutions or new ways of thinking that others may have missed. This requires a depth of knowledge that only comes from reading and understanding the great thinkers who have come before you.

While reading and writing are solitary pursuits, philosophy is also done collaboratively in the seminar room through discussion. I expect everyone to contribute to the discussion and to remain respectful throughout. You should not free ride on the contributions of others, but instead be prepared to contribute each seminar.

Mere cleverness is no substitute for insight that comes from the deep reflection on serious problems. All of this will require a good amount of work but I think you will find the rewards will be substantial.

Required Reading:

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Any edition is fine, but I recommend the Hurley edition published by Hackett, that is the edition I will be using)
2. Baruch Spinoza, *Theological—Political Treatise* (Again, any edition is fine, but I recommend the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy edition, edited by Jonathan Israel, which is the edition that I will be using)
3. Baruch Spinoza, *Political Treatise* (The Hackett edition translated by Shirley is the one I will be using)

Recommended Reading:

Although these texts are no required, you will benefit from having them on hand and from reading them throughout the class. Sometimes excerpts will be required reading, but I will post those on Moodle.

1. Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* (Still the best secondary resource on Hobbes)
2. Gregory Kavka, *Hobbesian Moral and Political Philosophy* (Not quite as good as Hampton, but still interesting and important)
3. David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation*
4. Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes and Civil Association*
5. David Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan* (dated but still important)
6. Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Somewhat Strange, but still useful)

3. Schedule

1. Week 1—Introduction to *Leviathan*

Reading:

- i. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* Introduction – Chapter 12
- ii. Thomas Hobbes, *Verse Autobiography*

2. Week 2—The State of Nature and its Problems

Readings:

- i. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters 13-16
- ii. Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* Chapter 2

3. Week 3—The Commonwealth

Readings:

- i. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters 17-31

4. Week 4—The Christian Commonwealth

Readings:

- i. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters 32-43

5. Week 5—Of The Kingdom of Darkness

Readings:

- i. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters 44-47, Review and Conclusion

6. Week 6—Spinoza on Reason and Revelation

Readings:

- i. Spinoza, *TTP*, Chapters 1-15

7. Week 7—Foundations of the State

Readings

- i. Spinoza, *TTP*, Chapters 16-20

8. Week 8—Politics

- i. Spinoza, *PT*, Chapters 1-5

9. Week 9—Forms of Regimes

Reading:

- i. Spinoza, *PT*, Chapters 6-11

4. Assessment

Assessment Task	Weight	Due Date
Introduction	20%	Throughout
Participation	15%	Throughout
Essay Plan	Hurdle	Before Seminar 8
Final Essay	65%	18 October or 8 November

Introduction

To aid the discussion, each student (whether enrolled or not), must give an introduction to a seminar session. These introductions should be short (5-10

minutes max) and should set up the main ideas, themes, and end with 2-3 questions or challenges to start the discussion.

Essay Plan

The main assessment exercise for this unit is a long final essay. In order to improve the quality of those essays, each student is required to submit a brief essay plan that identifies the thesis of the proposed paper, any supporting sub-arguments, and the intended references. The essay plan should be delivered *as a hard copy* to me in person during a consultation in my office. There will be a link to schedule the consultation on Moodle. This consultation should be scheduled no later than Seminar 8 and may be scheduled any time before that. If you decide to change your topic substantially after our consultation, you should briefly talk to me again, but you will not need to submit another essay plan. If, however, I deem the essay plan to be inadequate, I may ask you for a revision.

Final Essay

The final essay will be based on the topic from your essay plan of no more than 4,500 words. A more detailed rubric and tips on writing a good essay will be posted on Moodle.