PHIL 214: Early Modern Philosophy  
Spring 2015  
Spinoza's Ethics

Th 1-3:50 p.m., Philosophy Seminar Room  
Don Rutherford; H&SS 8046  
Office hours: M 4-5 p.m., and by appointment

The goals of this seminar are to undertake a careful study of Spinoza’s Ethics (1677); to acquire an understanding of the scope of Spinoza’s philosophical project and the details of the doctrines he defends; and to address some of the outstanding interpretative issues raised in the recent secondary literature. This will count as a core course in the history of philosophy, which means it makes no assumption that participants have read Spinoza before; as a graduate seminar in philosophy, however, it assumes that you will work to get up to speed quickly on the material and engage the texts and issues in a serious manner.

Required Text  
A Spinoza Reader, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1994). All other readings will be made available in electronic form or as hard copies in the department library.

Course Format and Requirements  
Following the first meeting, we'll spend two weeks each of parts 1-4 of the Ethics and one week on part 5. The seminar will involve alternating meetings devoted to explication of the basic doctrines (even weeks) and deeper analysis of particular topics (odd weeks). All participants are expected to do all the assigned reading each week. On even weeks, we will focus on the text and try to get as clear as we can on the scope and content of Spinoza’s views. On odd weeks, participants will take the lead in presenting on particular topics through recent articles from the secondary literature. In the lists of articles below, # indicates a required article for discussion.

Everyone registered for credit will be required to submit a 15-20 pp. term paper by Friday of exam week (June 12). I will meet with all registered students to discuss your paper topics during 9th week. Final grades will be determined by the following rough formula: Term paper = 50%; Research presentation/Participation = 50%.

Schedule of Readings

Meeting 1  4/2  
Philosophy and Religion

Theological-Political Treatise, Preface, chs. 12-15

#Carlos Frankel, "Could Spinoza Have Presented the Ethics as the True Content of the Bible?"  
#Daniel Garber, "Should Spinoza Have Published His Philosophy", in Interpreting Spinoza:  

Meeting 2  4/9  
Ethics, Part I  
Issues: Substance/God and Attributes

Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, secs. 1-17 (Spinoza Reader, pp. 3-6)  
Ethics, Part I (Spinoza Reader, pp. 85-115).  
Letters 8-10, 80-83 (Spinoza Reader, pp. 77-82, 274-276)  
Special attention to: Definitions and Axioms; Props. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 29, 33, 34;  
Appendix


Meeting 3  4/16  Part I Issues: Substance-Mode Relation, Necessitarianism


Edwin Curley and Gregory Walski, "Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered," in Gennaro and Huenemann (1999), 241-262

Meeting 4  4/23  Ethics, Part II

Ethics, Part II
Letters 32, 63-66, 70, 72 (Spinoza Reader, pp. 82-4, 269-274)

Special attention to: Definitions and Axioms; Props. 7, 8, 11, 13; Physical Digression after 13; 16, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30, 33, 35, 38, 40&S, 43-49


Meeting 5  4/30  Part II Issues: Parallelism/Identity Theory; Consciousness; Will

Margaret Wilson, "Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge," in Cambridge Companion to Spinoza, 89-141

Meeting 6  5/7  Ethics, Part III

Ethics, Part III
Special attention to: Preface, Definitions; Props. 2&S, 4-12, 27, 39&S, 43, 58-59&S; Definitions of the Affects; General Definition of the Affects


Meeting 7  5/14  Part III Issues: Teleology, Passions, Good/Evil


Meeting 8  5/21  Ethics, Part IV

Ethics, Part IV

Letter 58 (Spinoza Reader, pp. 267-9)

Special attention to: Preface and Definition; Props. 4-8, 15, 18-28, 34-37, 46-47, 52, 59, 62-73; Appendix

#Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Ethical Theory," in Cambridge Companion to Spinoza,

Meeting 9  5/28  Part IV Issues: Virtue, Morality, the Free Man


Michael LeBuffe, "Spinoza's Summum Bonum," PPQ 86 (2005), 243-266


Daniel Garber, "Dr. Fischelson's Dilemma: Spinoza on Freedom and Sociability," in Spinoza on Reason and the Free Man, ed. Yovel and Segal (2004), 183-207


Edwin Curley, "Kissinger, Spinoza, and Genghis Khan," in Cambridge Companion to Spinoza, 315-342

Meeting 10  6/4  Ethics, Part V

Issues: Remedy for the Passions, Eternity of Mind, Salvation

Ethics, Part V
Special attention to: Preface; Props. 2-4, 20&S, 23-36, 39&S, 42&S


Michael LeBuffe, "Change and the Eternal Part of the Mind in Spinoza," *PPQ* 91 (2010), 369-84

Spinoza-Selected Bibliography
(* = in Philosophy Department library; for the sake of other members of the seminar, please do not borrow these during fall quarter)

Spinoza’s Works
*Spinoza Opera, ed. Carl Gebhardt (1925)  [critical edition with original language text]
*The Collected Works of Spinoza, vol. 1. Edited and translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton, 1985)  [now the standard English translation; the translations in the Spinoza Reader are excerpts from it]

General
Steven Nadler, Spinoza: A Life (Cambridge, 1999)

Monographs
*Henry E. Allison, Benedict de Spinoza: An Introduction (Yale, 2nd ed. 1987)
Jonathan Bennett, A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics (Hackett, 1984)
Edwin Curley, Behind the Geometrical Method: A Reading of Spinoza’s Ethics (Princeton, 1988)

Michael Della Rocca, Spinoza, Spinoza (Routledge, 2008)
R. J. Delahunty, Spinoza (Routledge, 1985)
Alan Donagan, Spinoza (Chicago, 1988)

Matthew Kisner, Spinoza on Human Freedom: Reason, Autonomy and the Good Life (CUP, 2011)


Steven Nadler, Spinoza’s Heresy (Oxford, 2002)

Steven Nadler, Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction (Cambridge, 2006)


Collections
The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza’s Ethics, ed. Olli Koistinen (Cambridge, 2009)
*Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation, ed. M. Mandelbaum and E. Freeman (Open Court, 1975)
Spinoza: Issues and Directions, ed. E. Curley and P.-F. Moreau (Brill, 1990)
Spinoza on Reason and the Free Man, ed. Y. Yovel and G. Segal (Little Room Press, 2004)
*Studies in Spinoza, ed. S. Paul Kashup (California, 1972)