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PHI 511/REL 540
SPINOZA: *TRACTATUS THEOLOGICO-POLITICUS*

This course is a close reading of Spinoza's "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus." Topics discussed include the relation between philosophy and theology, the status of revelation and prophesy, Spinoza's account of miracles, Spinoza on the interpretation of Scripture, the relation between religion and politics, and the freedom of religious practice and expression. We are especially interested in the relation of this text to others of Spinoza's writings, and to the writings of other contemporary figures, including Descartes, Hobbes, and Maimonides.

This course is being taught jointly with Prof. Yitzhak Malamed (Department of Philosophy, Johns Hopkins University). The class will be taught over Zoom. In addition to the main instructors, a large number of the sessions will be taught by visitors, distinguished scholars who have been invited to bring their different perspectives and special knowledge to illuminate different parts of the text.

Because this is a joint class, we will have to adjust our schedule somewhat. We will begin on January 25, one week before the Princeton schedule begins to accommodate the Johns Hopkins schedule. We will meet during both the Princeton break week and the Johns Hopkins break week (March 15 and March 22), but we will not meet on March 29 to observe the Jewish holiday of Passover. In addition, we have scheduled one session on a Sunday afternoon to enable us to add a general session on Spinoza and the Bible that doesn't otherwise fit into the term.

SEMINAR SESSIONS

W1 (Jan. 25) Introduction and background to the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* (TTP)

Reading: TTP, preface; Letters 29-30; Spinoza's library inventory.

W2 (Feb. 1) A primer on Spinoza's metaphysics of God

Reading: *Ethics* part I; part II, prop. 40 scholium 2; handout (*Ethica* circa 1665)

W3 (Feb. 8) Prophets and prophesy

Reading: TTP, chaps. 1-2; Maimonides, *Guide*, Part II, chaps. 32-38

W4 (Feb. 15) The chosen people and divine law

Reading: TTP, chaps. 3-4; excerpts from Hobbes, *Leviathan* (to be distributed)

W5 (Feb. 22) Divine law (continued), ceremonies, and history

Reading: TTP, chaps. 4-5; handout (Who were the authors of the bible? The rabbis' views – whatever that means).

W6 (March 1) Miracles (Guest instructor: Emanuela Scribano)

Reading: TTP, chapt. 6; E1app

W7 (March 8) Scripture: Interpretation, authorship, and the constitution of canonical texts
(Guest instructor: Warren Zev Harvey)

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 7-9; Letters 75, 77-79; Maimonides, *Guide*, Part II, chap. 25

W8 (March 15) Scripture, continued (Visiting scholar: Oded Schechter)

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 10-11

Special session (March 21) General discussion of Spinoza and the Bible. (Guest instructor: Michael Segal)

W9 (March 22) The word of God; what we can learn from Scripture (Guest instructor: Steven Nadler)

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 12-13

[March 29: Passover: no class]

W10 (April 5) Faith, and the distinction between Theology and Philosophy (Guest Instructor: Edwin Curley)

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 11, 14-15.

W11 (April 12) Spinoza's politics

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 16-18; excerpts from *Ethics* IV (props. 35-37, 68, 72-73 ?) and TP, to be announced.

W12 (April 19) Politics and religion: Control and freedom (Guest Instructor: Mogens Laerke)

Reading: *TTP*, chaps. 19-20; excerpts from Hobbes, *Leviathan* (to be distributed) & TP.

W13 (April 26) The reception of the *TTP* (Guest Instructor: Jonathan Israel)

Reading: to be announced

The seminar will meet Mondays, 1:30PM-4:20PM (Princeton time), online. Graduate students in the Department of Philosophy are invited to work on Unit Papers in connection with the seminar, if they would like. They can also volunteer to give a seminar presentation which can be used to satisfy the Department's requirement that students give three seminar presentations. Graduate students from other departments can take the course for a grade by submitting a final term paper of approximately twenty pages on any theme relevant to the course.

The required books for the course are Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. by E.M. Curley, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985-2016), and a bible. We will mainly be using vol. 2, which contains Curley's translation of the *TTP*, as well as the *Tractatus Politicus*, but it will be handy to have vol. 1, which contains the *Ethics* and other writings to which we will be referring from time to time. Both volumes are available from Labyrinth Books in Princeton. We also strongly recommend to have Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, and Hobbes, *Leviathan* (?) at hand during class meetings.

Recommended texts:

1. Spinoza, *Oeuvres III: Traite Theologico-Politique*, edited and translated by Fokke Akkerman, P.F. Moreau, and Jacqueline Lagree, PUF, 1999.
2. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by Shlomo Pines, University of Chicago Press.
3. Hobbes, *Leviathan* [Which edition: Malcolm or Curley?].
4. Lodewijk Meyer, *Philosophy as the Interpreter of Holy Scripture*, translated by Samuel Shirley, Marquette University Press, 2005.
5. Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide*, eds. Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Michael Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (Paperback 2012)).

The URL for the course Zoom site will be available through the Princeton Canvas website for the course, or by emailing the instructor.