This seminar will focus on the philosophy and politics of Thomas Hobbes. We will attempt to understand Hobbes's political thought in the context of his larger intellectual enterprise. We will begin with some background on Hobbes’s philosophical program, the “Elementa philosophiae” or “Elements of Philosophy” project. After that we will work thorough Hobbes’s account of the human being and his science of politics, guided largely by the presentation in the *Leviathan*, but taking account of the earlier versions of his thought in the *Elements of Law* and the *De cive*.

In the syllabus below I set out the sequence of readings that we will follow over the course of the term. In the week before each session, I will send around a more detailed discussion of the readings, and how I propose that we approach them in class.

**Week 1 (9/1)** Introduction to Hobbes.
Reading: Hobbes, *Concerning Body*, epistle dedicatory to …William Earl of Devonshire, Author’s epistle to the reader, chaps. 1, 6. (This is available on Blackboard or from the instructor); *Leviathan*, chapt. 9.
Optional: The (auto)biographical sketches in Curley, pp. liv-lxxi.

**Week 2 (9/8)** Beginning *Leviathan*
Reading: *Leviathan*, frontispiece (Curley, p. lxxviii), introduction, chaps. 1-8; 34.2; 46.18.

**Week 3 (9/15)** The political passions; the seeds of religion; the state of nature.
Reading: *Leviathan*, chaps. 10-13.

**Week 4 (9/22)** Laws of nature, personation, and the formation of the commonwealth
Reading: *Leviathan*, chaps. 14-17.
Optional: *Elements of Law (Human Nature)*, chaps. 15-19; *On Man*, chapt. 15; *On the Citizen*, chaps. 2-5.

**Week 5 (9/29)** Sovereignty
Reading: *Leviathan*, chaps. 18-25.
Optional: *Elements of Law (De corpore politico)*, chaps. 20-24; *On the Citizen*, chaps. 6-10.

**Week 6 (10/6)** Law, crime and punishment; the responsibilities of the sovereign
Reading: *Leviathan*, chaps. 26-30.
Optional: *Elements of Law (De corpore politico)*, chaps. 27-29; *On the Citizen*, chaps. 12-14.

(10/13) Fall Break
Week 7 (10/20) The Kingdom of God; What we learn from scripture
Reading: *Leviathan*, chpts. 31-37
Optional: *On the Citizen*, chpts. 11, 15-17.

Week 8 (10/27) The Kingdom of God: Salvation and the commonwealth
Reading: *Leviathan*, chpts. 38-41, 43
Optional: *Elements of Law (De corpore politico)*, chpts. 25-26; *On the Citizen*, chapt. 18.

Week 9 (11/3) Of power ecclesiastical; the Kingdom of Darkness
Reading: *Leviathan*, chpts. 42, 44-47

Week 10 (11/10) Kingdom of Darkness (ctd.)
Reading: *Leviathan*, chpts. 44-47 (note differences in the Latin edition in Curley)

Week 11 (11/17) Concluding *Leviathan*
Reading: *Leviathan*, “A review and conclusion” (Curley, pp. 489-97); Latin appendix (Curley, pp. 498-548)

Week 12 (11/24) Concluding reflections
Reading: TBD

The seminar will meet Tuesdays, 9:30AM to 12:30PM (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 doing a class presentation and submitting a final term paper of approximately twenty pages on any theme relevant to the course. In addition, anyone who is auditing the class is warmly invited to give a seminar presentation as well.

While I am open to other formats, I am hoping that the student presentations will consist in critical discussions of some item selected from the vast secondary literature on Hobbes, a book, or a chapter or two from a book, or an article or two. The secondary material chosen for discussion should be chosen to relate to the material being discussed during the week in which the presentation is to be given. Appended is a selective bibliography of secondary material, mostly books, but including among them two Cambridge Companions and an Oxford Handbook, which contain bibliographies that include articles and collections of articles as well. I would be happy to meet with any of you (online, of course) to help you figure out what you might want to do for a presentation, and meet with you to discuss your presentation before you are scheduled to give it.
HOBBES: BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRINCIPAL PHILOSOPHICAL AND POLITICAL WORKS

*Elements of Law: Human Nature and De Corpore Politico* (1640, circulated in ms. and published in 1650)


*Elementa Philosophiae*

  *De corpore* [*Concerning Body*] (1655; Eng. ed. 1656)
  *De homine* [*On Man*] (1658)
  *De cive* [*On the Citizen*] (1642, 1647; Eng. ed. 1651)

*Leviathan* (1651, followed by a Latin edition in 1668, with very significant additions and changes.)

REQUIRED BOOKS FOR THE SEMINAR (available at Labyrinth books, or by mail from Hackett Publishing Co. or Amazon.com, etc.):


PRINCIPAL MODERN EDITIONS:

Molesworth is the last complete edition of Hobbes’s work to be published. There are two series, one for the English works, the other for the Latin works. All volumes can be downloaded in PDF from Google Books:


There is a new Clarendon edition of Hobbes, published by OUP. It is still in progress. The following are the volumes which have appeared that are relevant to the themes of our seminar:


The following volumes are part of a French series of Hobbes texts.


INTERNET RESOURCES

All of the original seventeenth-century editions of Hobbes’s writings are available for download in PDF from the website *Early English Books Online*, a database available through the Princeton University Library website.

All of the entries in this bibliography preceded by “*” are available online through the Princeton University Library website. (Get a link through the entry in the main catalogue.)

A certain number of Hobbes texts are available on the *Past Masters* database, available through the Princeton University Library website. The “British Philosophy 1600-1900” collection on *Past Masters* includes the whole of the Molesworth, *English Works*, including the *Leviathan*, the *De cive*, and the *De corpore* (under the title “Elements of Philosophy.”) The “Hobbes: Correspondence” collection contains the entire contents of the Malcolm edition of the Correspondence in the Clarendon Edition.

In addition, there is an extensive annotated bibliography of Hobbes by Johann Sommerville in the *Oxford Bibliographies*, an online collection of bibliographies through OUP. Unfortunately, Princeton doesn’t have a subscription, though free trials are available. The URL is: [https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396577/obo-9780195396577-0096.xml](https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396577/obo-9780195396577-0096.xml)
HOBBES: SELECTED SECONDARY SOURCES


(Entries marked with a star (‘*’) are available online through the Princeton University Library website.)