

Spinoza and Leibniz
Mike Griffin (griffinm@ceu.edu)
Winter 2019
4 Credits/8 ECTS Credits

Description. This course will consist in a close reading of Spinoza of selected works of Spinoza and Leibniz. We will focus on metaphysics and epistemology, though at the end of the term we will try to bring these to bear on broadly ethical questions the role of theoretical understanding in living the good life.

Outcomes. By the end of the course students should have detailed knowledge of the main elements of Spinoza's and Leibniz's metaphysics as well as the principal lines of interpretation in the secondary literature. They will also be able to reconstruct and evaluate philosophical texts in accordance with the current standards of scholarly practice. And they will be able to design and execute a research project that demonstrates knowledge of the primary and secondary literature, sensitivity to historical context, and independent philosophical thought.

Requirements. Attendance and active participation is required and will account for 10% of your final grade. The remainder of your grade will be determined by a 2000 word term paper. You will be asked to submit a draft of the paper by the end of the tenth week of class. You will receive detailed comments on the draft and a provisional grade. There will be presentations of the papers during the last two weeks of the course. Papers should then be revised on the basis of my feedback and feedback received in presentation. Your final paper grade will be based on the provisional grade of the first draft and the grade on the revised version.

Topics and Readings. This is a reading seminar, so the topics covered will be determined by the pace of the discussion and participant interest. A tentative list of topics and readings is below. Texts will be posted to the course e-learning site.

Weeks 1-3: Substance, Attribute and Mode

Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, Part I, sections 1-65.
Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part I, through propositions 23; selections from the letters.
Leibniz's commentaries on Part I of Descartes's *Principles* and Part I of Spinoza's *Ethics*;
selections from *De Summa Rerum* on the concept of a supreme being.

Weeks 4-6: Necessitarianism

Ethics, Part I, propositions 24-36, Appendix; selections from the letters.
Leibniz's letter to Wedderkopf, Conversation with Steno, selections from the Confession of a Philosopher.

Week 6-8: Mind and Body

Ethics, Part II, through proposition 15
Leibniz, selections from the Arnauld correspondence.

Week 9: Theory of Knowledge (Adequate Ideas)

Ethics, Part II, propositions 16-49
Leibniz, What is an Idea? Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas, selections from The New Essays.

Week 10: Spinoza's Conatus Doctrine

Ethics, Part III, through proposition 13

Week 11: Leibniz's Doctrine of Striving Possibles

Leibniz, On the Ultimate Origination of Things and other selections

Week 12: Freedom, Immortality and the Intellectual Love of God

Selections from Ethics, Part V and Leibniz's Confession of a Philosopher