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**Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico Politicus***

Fall 2018, University of Haifa,

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Schneider

**Course Summary:**

Spinoza's Theological Political Treatise (*TTP*) was described by an early critic as "a book forged in hell by an apostate Jew working together with the Devil." It is today widely regarded "one of the most important books of Western thought ever written." In this course we closely examine the arguments contained in Spinoza's *TTP* concerning the meaning and history Scripture, the relationship between reason, religion, and faith, and the origin and purpose of the political state—seeking to understand how this book helped give rise to "the secular age." The University of Haifa is

**Method:**

Our goal in this course is to engage philosophically with the ideas and arguments contained within Spinoza's *TTP*.

Philosophical engagement involves both a private component and a social component. The private component consists of the careful reading of texts, rumination upon ideas and argumentation, as well as an on going struggle to articulate the results of these efforts in a clear and accessible manner. The social component is something of a test of this struggle: It is in discussion—both spoken and written—that we come to discover the limits of our understanding and where our thoughts are most confused.

The structure and the assignments of this course are aimed at facilitating philosophical engagement.

**Course Structure:**

Class will consisted of structured discussion. Sometimes discussion will be instructor lead, sometimes it will be student led. For the sake of class discussion, Students are expected to not only have read the texts assigned for the week, but also to have thought carefully about them.

***Everyone is expected to come to class with questions about the material already prepared.*** While no one is expected to possess a complete grasp of all the content of the text, students should come to



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A Free PDF of Israel's translation can be found on our course moodle site.

Also available on Moodle:

A pdf of Hobbes Leviathan

A pdf of Maimonides *Guide for the Perplexed*

**Some Recommended Commentaries:**

James, Susan. *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

ISBN: 978-0-19-969812-7

Melamed, Yitzhak Y., and Rosenthal, Michael A. *Spinoza's 'Theological-political Treatise': A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; pbk 2013. (Paperback ISBN: 978110763

Nadler, Steven. *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

ISBN: 9780691160184

**Course Schedule:**

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**Week 1:** Introduction to Spinoza and the TTP, Spinoza Biography, TTP Preface and General Themes and Questions:

**Week 2:** Read *TTP* Chapter 1 and 2 (Of Prophecy, Of the Prophets)

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chaps. 36, 41; Maimonides, *The Guide*, part II, chapters 32-48.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 3:** *TTP* Chapter 3, 4, (Of the vocation of the Hebrews, Of the Divine Law, Of the reason for ceremonial observances, Belief in the Biblical Narratives)

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 14-15; Maimonides, *The Guide*, part III, chapters 8-24;

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 4:** *TTP* Chapter 5 6, (Of Miracles, Of the Interpretation of Scripture) (First Paper due by email on Nov 26<sup>th</sup>)

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 37

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 5:** *TTP* Chapter 7, 8, (Authorship of Pentateuch through Kings) Testament?)

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 33-35

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 6:** *TTP* Chapter 9, 10 (Who edited/wrote the bible?)

Recommended: Maimonides, *Guide*, I,1.

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 7:** *TTP* Chapter 11, 12 (On Apostles, Divine Law, In what respect Scripture is holy and Word of God)

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 8:** *TTP* Chapter 13, 14 (Scripture teaches simple doctrines and obedience, Faith vs. Philosophy)

Recommended:

**Discussion leader(s):**

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**Week 9:** *TTP* Chapter 15 (Reason vs Theology, Authority of Scripture);

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 12,44; Maimonides, "Sanhedrin: Perek Helek"

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 10:** *TTP* Chapter 16 (The basis of the state; natural and civil right of individuals, right of sovereign powers); Ep. 50

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 11:** *TTP* Chapter 17, 18 (Rights of individual, State of Moses, reasons for this state's fall. Political Principles deduced from this study)

Recommended: Hobbes *Leviathan*, ch. 40.

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 12:** *TTP* Chapter 19, 20 (State has right over religion, freedom of speech)

Recommended: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42.

**Discussion leader(s):**

**Week 13: (Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>): Tutorial Week (Paper due Sunday)**