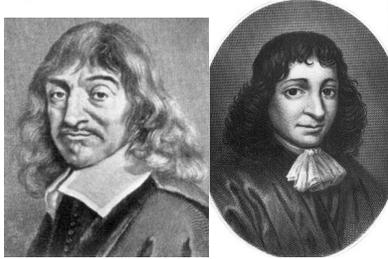


# Phil 422: Descartes and Spinoza on Passion and Value

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/949953>



Instructor: Colin Marshall, Office 382, Savery Hall.

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursdays, 10:30am-11:30am. Email: [crmarsh@uw.edu](mailto:crmarsh@uw.edu)

## Course description

Passion and value are central to our lives. In this course, we will consider how two 17th century arch-rationalists approached these topics: Rene Descartes and Baruch Spinoza. More specifically, we will examine their answers to questions such as: How do the passions relate to the mind and the body? In what ways are passions valuable for (semi-)rational creatures like us? Can we control our passions with reason? What do our passions tell us about value? Some background in the history of philosophy will be helpful, but is not required.

## Required Texts

- Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*; Stephen Voss, translator. Hackett Press (1989).
- Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*; Samuel Shirley, translator, Seymour Feldman, editor. Hackett Press (1992).

## Assessment

### Reading responses (20% of final grade)

No later than one hour before each class (starting on Jan. 8 ending on March 10), post the following on Canvas:

1. Exactly one sentence stating what you think is the most important claim in the primary reading.
2. No more than two sentences saying whether you accept that claim, and why.
3. No run-on sentences or additional sentences!

Each reading response will be graded on a 2-point scale. Any reasonable response will get 2 points. A response will receive only 1 point if it goes over 2 sentences, if it is off-topic, or if it is superficial.

### Presentation (10% of final grade)

Every member of the class will do at least one presentation. Your goal in the presentation is to raise some objection to the reading that the class will then discuss.

In your presentation, you should:

1. Identify what you think is the most philosophically significant claim from that day's reading (35 words or less). Write that claim on the board.
2. On the board, address one or two obstacles to understanding the claim (jargon, ambiguities, etc.).
3. Present what you think is the strongest objection to the claim, as you understand it.
4. Direct a (brief!) discussion in which the members of the class try to address the objection

### Draft and Peer Review (10% of final grade)

Prior to each paper, you should bring in a draft of at least 1000 words, which we will exchange for peer review.

### Paper 1 (20% of final grade)

Your paper should pick a fight with some piece of secondary literature on Descartes' views of the passions. Here is a list of recommended articles (if you choose to write something not on this list, check with me first):

- Shoshana Brassfield (2012). "Never Let the Passions Be Your Guide: Descartes and the Role of the Passions." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20:3.
- Sean Greenberg (2007). "Descartes on the Passions: Function, Representation, and Motivation." *Noûs* 41:4.

- Basileios Kroustallis (2005). "Descartes on Passion Reformation." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 87:3.
- Amy M. Schmitter (2002). "Descartes and the Primacy of Practice: The Role of the Passions in the Search for Truth." *Philosophical Studies* 108:1-2.
- Lisa Shapiro (2003). "Descartes' Passions of the Soul and the Union of Mind and Body." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 85:3.
- Hasana Sharp (2011). "Hate's Body: Danger and the Flesh in Descartes' Passions of the Soul." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 28.4.

Additional directions:

- Length: 7-8 pages (~2000 words). You should write the number of words on your paper.
- Format: Use .doc format.
- Your final paper should be prepared for blind grading.
- No more than half of your paper should be exposition.
- Your writing should be clear and minimize jargon, and your paper should be focused and well-organized (divide it into sections!). Pick a small fight – you don't have to disagree with everything in the piece of secondary literature you choose.

### Paper 2 (40% of final grade)

All the general directions for Paper 1 apply to Paper 2.

For this paper, you should pick a fight with some piece of secondary literature on Spinoza (preferably on some topic connected to passions or value). Here are some recommended articles:

- John Grey (2013). "Use Them At Our Pleasure': Spinoza on Animal Ethics." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 30 (4).
- Karolina Hübner (2014). "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection." In Matthew Kisner Andrew Youpa (ed.), *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory*.
- Charles Jarrett (2014). "Spinozistic Constructivism." In Matthew Kisner Andrew Youpa (ed.), *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory*.
- Matthew J. Kisner (2010). "Perfection and Desire: Spinoza on the Good." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (1).
- Colin Marshall (2012). "Spinoza on Destroying Passions with Reason." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85:1.
- Yitzhak Melamed (forthcoming). "Spinoza's Amor Dei Intellectualis." In Noa Naaman (ed.), *Descartes and Spinoza on the Passions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sanem Soyarslan (2014). "The Susceptibility of Intuitive Knowledge to Akrasia in Spinoza's Ethical Thought." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22 (4).

### **⊗ Late work and plagiarism policies ⊗**

No late work will be accepted, except in cases of emergencies where documentation is provided.

Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a 0 for the course. It is your responsibility to know what counts as plagiarism.

**See end of syllabus for additional policies.**

## Reading schedule

Tuesday, Jan. 6

- *Passions*, Preface
- Optional: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Thursday, Jan 8

- *Passions*, Articles 1-30

Tuesday, Jan. 13

- *Passions*, Articles 31-50

Thursday, Jan 15

- *Passions*, Articles 51-106

Tuesday, Jan. 20

- *Passions*, Articles 107-148

Thursday, Jan 22

- *Passions*, Articles 149-184

Tuesday, Jan. 27

- *Passions*, Articles 185-212

Thursday, Jan 29

- *Ethics*, Book I, through Prop. 14

Tuesday, February 3

- *Ethics*, rest of Book I

Thursday, February 5

- *Ethics*, Book II, up to Prop. 14
- Due in class: Draft of Paper 1

Tuesday, February 10

- *Ethics*, rest of Book II
- Due in class: Peer comments

Thursday, February 12

- *Ethics*, Book III, through Prop 14

Friday, February 13

- Due on Canvas by noon: Paper 1

Tuesday, February 17

- *Ethics*, Book III, through Prop. 51

Thursday, February 19

- *Ethics*, rest of Book III

Tuesday, February 24

- *Ethics*, Book IV, through Prop. 28

Thursday, February 26

- *Ethics*, Book IV, through Prop. 60

Tuesday, March 3

- *Ethics*, rest of Book IV

Thursday, March 5

- *Ethics*, Book V, through Prop. 20

Tuesday, March 10

- *Ethics*, rest of Book V

Thursday, March 12

- Optional: Marshall, "Spinoza's revisionist metaethics"
- Due in class: Draft of Paper 1

Friday, March 13

- Due via email: Peer comments

Wednesday, March 18

- Due on Canvas by noon: Paper 2

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS\***

*\*Adapted from material prepared by the UW Department of History and used with permission.*

**COURSES, GRADING, ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as the use of creations, ideas or words of publicly available work without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like.

Plagiarizing is presenting someone else's work as one's own original work or thought. This constitutes plagiarism whether it is intentional or unintentional. The University of Washington takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism may lead to disciplinary action by the University against the student who submitted the work. Any student who is uncertain whether his or her use of the work of others constitutes plagiarism should consult the course instructor for guidance before formally submitting the course work involved. *(Sources: UW Graduate School Style Manual; UW Bothell Catalog; UW Student Conduct Code)*

**Incompletes**

An incomplete is given only when the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work until within two weeks of the end of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control. *(Source: UW General Catalog Online, "Student Guide/Grading")*

**Grade Appeal Procedure**

A student who believes he or she has been improperly graded must first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, the student may submit a written appeal to the chair of the Department of Philosophy with a copy of the appeal also sent to the instructor. The chair consults with the instructor to ensure that the evaluation of the student's performance has not been arbitrary or capricious. Should the chair believe the instructor's conduct to be arbitrary or capricious and the instructor declines to revise the grade, the chair, with the approval of the voting members of his or her faculty, shall appoint an appropriate member, or members, of the faculty of the Department of Philosophy to evaluate the performance of the student and assign a grade. The Dean and Provost should be informed of this action. Once a student submits a written appeal, this document and all subsequent actions on this appeal are recorded in written form for deposit in a School file. *(Source: UW General Catalog Online, "Student Guide/Grading")*

**Concerns About a Course, an Instructor, or a Teaching Assistant**

If you have any concerns about a Philosophy course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall).

If you have any concerns about a teaching assistant, please see the teaching assistant about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the teaching assistant or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the instructor in charge of the course. If you are still not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall), or the Graduate School at G-1 Communications Building (543-5900).

For your reference, these procedures are posted on a Philosophy bulletin board outside the Department of Philosophy main office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Savery Hall.

## **POLICIES, RULES, RESOURCES**

### **Equal Opportunity**

The University of Washington reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran in accordance with University of Washington policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

### **Disability Accommodation**

The University of Washington is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education and employment for individuals with disabilities. For information or to request disability accommodation contact: Disabled Students Services (Seattle campus) at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379/Fax, or e-mail at [uwdss@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwdss@u.washington.edu); Bothell Student Affairs at (425) 352-5000/V; (425) 352-5303/TTY, (425) 352-5335/Fax, or e-mail at [uwbothel@u.washington.edu](mailto:uwbothel@u.washington.edu); Tacoma Student Services at (253) 552-4000/V, (253) 552-4413/TTY, (253) 552-4414/Fax.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is defined as the use of one's authority or power, either explicitly or implicitly, to coerce another into unwanted sexual relations or to punish another for his or her refusal, or as the creation by a member of the University community of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment through verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

If you believe that you are being harassed, seek help—the earlier the better. You may speak with your instructor, your teaching assistant, the undergraduate advisor (363 Savery Hall), graduate program assistant (366 Savery Hall), or the chair of the Philosophy Department (364 Savery Hall). In addition, you should be aware that the University has designated special people to help you. They are: University Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment (for complaints involving faculty members and teaching assistants) Susan Neff, 301 Student Union (HUB), 543-6028; and the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office, 616-2028. (*Sources: UW Graduate School, CIDR, Office of the President*)

### **Office of Scholarly Integrity**

The Office of Scholarly Integrity is housed in the Office of the Vice-Provost. The Office of Scholarly Integrity assumes responsibility for investigating and resolving allegations of scientific and scholarly misconduct by faculty, students, and staff of the University of Washington. The Office of Scholarly Integrity coordinates, in consultation and cooperation with the Schools and Colleges, inquiries and investigations into allegations of scientific and scholarly misconduct. The Office of Scholarly Integrity is responsible for compliance with reporting requirements established by various Federal and other funding agencies in matters of scientific or scholarly misconduct. The Office of Scholarly Integrity maintains all records resulting from inquiries and investigations of such allegations. University rules (Handbook, Vol. II, Section 25-51, Executive Order #61) define scientific and scholarly misconduct to include the following forms of inappropriate activities: intentional misrepresentation of credentials; falsification of data; plagiarism; abuse of confidentiality; deliberate violation of regulations applicable to research. Students can report cases of scientific or scholarly misconduct either to the Office of Scholarly Integrity, to their faculty adviser, or the department chair. The student should report such problems to whomever he or she feels most comfortable. (*Sources: UW web page (<http://www.grad.washington.edu/OSI/osi.htm>); minutes of Grad School Executive Staff and Division Heads meeting, 7/23/98*)