 Philosophy 301-001
Philosophical Fundamentals
This course is open to Honour Students who have already satisfied their requirement in Logic.

Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 10:05–11:25
Place: Leacock 927
Maximum Enrollment: 15 students
Instructor: Prof. George di Giovanni
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Course Description:
The goal of this course is to improve a student’s ability to read a philosophical text critically and to write on it concisely and precisely. To this end we shall read three texts together: (1) Niccolò Machiavelli’s The Prince (1513); (2) Thomas Hobbes’ On the Citizen (1647); and (3) Benedict de Spinoza’s Political Treatise (published right after the author’s death in 1677). The question is the extent, if any, to which these three works, produced in widely different cultural contexts, might share a common view of political power and its relation to the moral sphere. I have no firm opinion on the matter. We shall all work together in an effort to (1) read the prescribed texts intelligently, (2) form an opinion about them, (3) express the opinion in a convincing manner. I shall vacate several of the class periods so that I can meet with you on an individual basis to discuss your written work. This course is more in the nature of a workshop than a usual lecture course.

Requirements and Mode of Assessment:
1. Because of the nature of the course, attendance is mandatory (10% of final mark). Even one unexcused absence will cost the allotted 10% in full. Excused absences, also any incurred during the add/drop period, will not absolve a student from the written work due on the day of the absence.
2. There will be short assignments of 100 to 150 words to be presented in class. The final mark will be based, however, on three papers, no more than 7 pages each, even less if appropriate (double spaced), to be submitted first in draft, then in polished form, according to the schedule below (30% of the final mark each).

Texts:
The translations are all in the public domain and available on line as indicated. Hard copies are also
easily available if you wish them.

https://www.google.ca/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=OO1qVsWzN6eC8Qel1rvIDQ&gws_rd=ssl#q=hobbes+on+the+citizen+pdf

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm#link2HCH0012


**Tentative Schedule (I stress “tentative”):**

**September:**

6. Introductory  
8. Machiavelli  
13 Machiavelli  
15 Machiavelli  
20 Draft of first essay due on line. Class vacated  
22 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated  
27 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated  
29 First essay due on line. Class vacated.

**October:**

4 Hobbes  
6 Hobbes  
11 Hobbes  
13 Hobbes  
18 Draft of second essay due on line. Class vacated  
20 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated  
25 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated  
27 Second essay due on line. Class vacated.

**November:**

1 Spinoza
3 Spinoza
8 Spinoza
10 Spinoza
15 Machiavelli/Hobbes/Spinoza
17 Draft of third paper due on line. Class vacated
22 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated
24 Individual meetings with students. Class vacated
29 Third essay due on line. Class vacated

December:
1 Concluding session.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see http/www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.