

PHI 791 – Reading Seminar in Philosophy I - Spinoza's *Ethics*

Professor: James Crooks

Autumn 2013

Monday, 16:30 to 19:00, Preston Room, Divinity House, Bishop's University

Description: Spinoza is one of the most profound and important thinkers of the modern period. He presents to his readers a paradox of style: the most systematic *and* the most mystical of the early rationalists. Often caricatured or ignored in his own lifetime, he became exceedingly influential during the rise and development of German Idealism at the beginning of the 19th century. In this course, we read Spinoza's masterwork – the *Ethics*. It lays out a metaphysics, a theology, an epistemology, a theory of mind, and a detailed description of imaginative/emotional life and political/moral activity that addresses virtually all of philosophy's traditional questions. Our goal will be to read the text as closely and carefully as possible taking note, where we can, of its philosophical antecedents (especially in Aristotle and Descartes) and sketching out some of its repercussions in the work of Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and others.

Text: *Ethics*, Baruch Spinoza, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, Hackett: 1992)