Hobbes’s *Leviathan*

**Schedule**

1. **26 September**  QUESTIONS


2. **3 October**  LIBERTY

   [1] What is the relationship between the metaphysical, moral, and legal uses of “liberty”?  [2] Liberty, according to Hobbes, is compatible with coercive threats and absolute government. What is the relationship between liberty, in his sense, and the liberty that we value?  [3] Hobbes’s theory of rights. Officially, rights are liberties, meaning the entail the absence of obligations. But he has to have the notion of a power (the ability to change obligations) and immunity (the inability of others to change one’s obligations) as well.

   Note: we will start with the Political Theory Workshop, 12-1:20, Pick Hall 506. The seminar will regroup after the workshop.


3. **10 October**  OBLIGATION IN THE STATE OF NATURE

   Are there such things as right and wrong prior to the commonwealth? Barry and Martinich agree that the answer is yes, but they disagree about why. According to Barry, it’s because there are valid contracts in the state of nature. According to Martinich, it’s because there are valid laws, issued by God, in the state of nature.

4. 17 October  JUSTICE

Revisiting the same basic question about the existence of right and wrong in the state of nature, but focusing on justice. There are multiple definitions of justice in play: understood one way, there is no such thing as justice in the state of nature, understood another way, there is.


5. 24 October  THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

There appear to be two versions of the social contract. In one, subjects authorize the sovereign to act on their rights. In the other, they abandon or alienate their rights. Are these two versions of the social contract consistent with one another?

Leviathan 16-18. Selections from Gauthier, Martinich.

5. 24 October  AUTHORIZATION

[1] Broad themes of Hobbes’s conception of sovereignty: how the social contracts (there are two: the commonwealth by institution in chapter 18 and the commonwealth by acquisition in chapter 21) work: what the sovereign’s rights are; different kinds of states; and justice between sovereigns and subjects. [2] Skinner’s interpretation of the theory of authority in ch. 16.


6. 31 October  THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

There appear to be two versions of the social contract. In one, subjects authorize the sovereign to act on their rights. In the other, they abandon or alienate their rights. Are these two versions of the social contract consistent with one another? If subjects abandon their rights, how do sovereigns act on them?
7. 7 November  EPISTEMOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

How does the way our minds work bear on what we can know? Pay special attention to: [a] the distinction between human beings and other animals and [b] what language adds to our cognitive toolkit.

Leviathan ch. 1-5.

8. 14 November  PASSION, ACTION, COGNITION


9. 21 November  SOCIAL RELATIONS, ACTION, COGNITION

Social interactions cause both behavior and belief. I’m especially interested in the latter. It seems to me that there is a thematic change after ch. 9. My hypothesis is that it involves moving from causes of belief and action internal to an individual to social causes of belief and action.

Leviathan ch. 10-13, 44-47 (part 4).

10. 28 November  PRESENTATIONS

Course Information

All readings will be available through the Regenstein Library’s reserve system.

Announcements and comments on lectures will be posted on the web at this address: http://humanities.uchicago.edu/faculty/mgreen/HobbesF05/
My office is 210 Stuart; phone: 702-8503. Office hours are Thursdays 2-4.

A 15-20 page paper is required for credit. You will be asked to make a 5-10 minute presentation about your paper in the last session and (possibly) one additional session during reading week. Papers are due December 10.