Maimonides and Spinoza

The Guide of the Perplexed, written in Arabic by Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), is the most influential book in medieval Jewish philosophy. It is a difficult but enchanting book, composed in the form of a puzzle. It had a formative influence on Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), whose early reading in philosophy was in Jewish texts and who read the Guide in Hebrew translation. We shall read Maimonides' Guide together with Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise and his Ethics, both written in Latin. Our focus will be on Spinoza's use and criticism of Maimonidean themes. All texts will be read in English translation.

Requirements

Mini-essay (2pp.): assigned Feb. 20; due Mar. 5.

Term paper (15-20pp.) on topic chosen by student with approval of instructor: approval by Mar. 19; due May 7.

Three Required Books


Topics and Dates (subject to change)


Secondary Literature


Note. Further references to the secondary literature will be given during the semester.

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