

Phil 100B: Second Paper Assignment

Winter, 2026

Instructions

Due, as an attachment, via the “Assignments” tool on Canvas, by 11:55pm on Friday, February 20.

Please choose one of the eight definitions or one of the seven axioms at the beginning of the *Ethics*. Point out some way in which the axiom or definition is odd or surprising — i.e., a way in which someone might argue that the definition or axiom in question should be corrected — and explain briefly why Spinoza would not be able to prove one of his key conclusions (either Prop. 11 or Prop. 14) unless this definition or axiom were put the way it is. (Note that the axiom or definition need not appear directly in the proof of the proposition in question; it might be in the proof of one of the earlier propositions. If so you need to explain both how Spinoza’s version is necessary for the proof of the earlier proposition, and how that earlier proposition is necessary for the proof of Prop. 11 or 14.) Finally, suggest briefly how Spinoza might defend his version of the axiom or definition.

Needless to say, this should be your own original work. You probably should not need to use external sources for this assignment, but, if you do, you must cite them. If you have any questions about what plagiarism is or how to avoid it, you can ask me, or consult the resources listed on the Library website.¹ For possible consequences of plagiarism, see the Academic Integrity Policy.²

AI policy: I encourage the use of AI assistance with proper caution (i.e., keeping in mind that current AI is often wrong). You may use AI assistance basically in any way that would not constitute cheating if you used a human for the same thing. Similarly, you should cite the AI in cases where you would cite a human. If in doubt, feel free to ask me for clarification.

Note that, as with the first assignment, this is not a full scale paper — you

¹<https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/c.php?g=1349850&p=9960819>.

²<https://undergraduate.ucsc.edu/our-units/academic-integrity-office/academic-misconduct/>.

need not, and should not, write an introduction and conclusion, summarize other parts of the *Ethics*, etc.

You can find answers to some commonly asked questions about my assignments and grading in my FAQ (<https://people.ucsc.edu/~abestone/courses/faq.html>).