Phil 290J: Promises
Fall, 2022

Tuesday and Thursday, 5:20–6:55pm, Hum 1 400

Contact Information
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Office hours: T.B.D.

Course Description
Readings from the history of philosophy (and religion, and law) on the nature and source of the obligation created by a promise, if indeed a promise can create an obligation. This will necessarily involve a certain amount of discussion of other things. For example: special types of promise such as vows, oaths, and contracts; virtues and/or duties that may be related to the obligation of promises, meaning, for the most part, the virtues and/or duties of justice and veracity (truthfulness); and, because promises are usually (always?) expressed in language, general issues about the force and function of language.

Course Requirements
Seminar participation. One in-class presentation (approximately 15 minutes for presentation and 15 minutes for discussion). One final paper (approximately 10–20 pages), due Wednesday, December 7.

Readings
Thursday, September 22: no reading, first class.
Tuesday, September 27: No class due to the second day of Rosh Hashanah.


Thursday, September 29: Plato, Republic 1.331c–336a, Crito 49a–53a; Aristotle, EN 1.7; Cicero, De officis book 1, ch. 7, ch. 10 and book III, ch. 24–32 (continued here).

Monday, October 3: Thomas Aquinas, ST 2–2, q. 88, a.’s 1–4; q. 89 a. 2 and a.’s 7–8; q. 109 a. 1; q. 110 a.’s 3–4; also, q. 80 obj. 3 and ad 3.

Tuesday, October 4: No class due to Yom Kippur (which begins just before sundown).

Thursday, October 6: Cajetan, commentary to ST 2–2, q. 113; Molina, De iusticia et iure, disp.’s 262 and 266; Lessius, De iusticia et iure, book 2, ch. 17, dub. 5; James Gordley, The Philosophical Origins of Modern Contract Doctrine, ch. 4.

Tuesday, October 11: No class due to the second day of Sukkot.


Thursday, October 13: Grotius, The Laws of War and Peace, 2.11, 2.16.1–2, 2.16.20–27.

Tuesday, October 18: No class due to Simchat Torah.

Wednesday, October 19: Pufendorf, Of the Law of Nature and Nations, 3.5–8; Wolff, Ius naturae methodo scientifica pertractum, Part III, §§361 ff. (if I can find time to translate).
Thursday, October 20: Hume, *Treatise* 3.2.5; *Second Enquiry*, §§3, 5 and 9.2; “Of the Original Contract.”


Thursday, October 27: Kant, *Groundwork*, Ak. 4:420-425 (but especially, of course, example 2, on Ak. 4:422); *Metaphysics of Morals*, Doctrine of Right, §§18–21, Ak. 6:271–6; Doctrine of Virtue, §9, Ak. 6:428–31; Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” five paragraphs beginning “The other terror that scares us” (through “even if shewn in a young person”); Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 2.1–3.

Tuesday, November 1: Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 2.2 (without the Appendices); 2.5.

Thursday, November 3: Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, 3.3; 3.5, 4.4, section 2, and Appendix 2.


Thursday, November 17: Austin, “Other Minds,” section titled “If I know I can’t be wrong” *How to Do Things with Words*, lectures 1, 2, beginning of 4 (through p. 45), and beginning of 6 (through p. 73).

Thursday, November 24: **No class (Thanksgiving)**

Tuesday, November 29: Cavell, “Must We Mean What We Say?,” pp. 12–31; *The Claim of Reason*, ch. 11

Thursday, December 1: David Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game”; “Languages and Language” (selections); “Utilitarianism and Truthfulness”

Wednesday, December 7: **Final paper due.**