This course will engage the constitution of political subjects, the corporeal foundations of sovereignty, the theatrical logics of political ‘representation’, and the coincidence or non-coincidence of right and power in early modern political philosophy. In particular, we will be concerned with:

1) The history of the formation of political ‘bodies’, as both…
   a) metaphors useful for conceiving the structure of the state on a biological/biopolitical model, and
   b) material sites for the inscription of sovereign power on and in the subjects it constitutes.

2) The history of the political ‘agreement’, as both…
   a) the impersonal correspondence of elements in determinate political structures (rather than a willed act of personal affirmation or submission), and
   b) the foundation for theories of political affect that, as Spinoza put it, “take love, hate, anger, envy, glory, compassion, and the other agitations of the mind not as vices of human nature, but as properties that pertain to it in the same way heat, cold, storms, thunder, etc. pertain to the nature of the atmosphere.”

To these ends, I will ask seminar members to bracket the assumption that early modern political philosophy offers proposals for the organization of state institutions, plans for the powers and limitations of governmental bodies, or accounts of how the rights of citizens should be implemented (it does, of course, and many political philosophers see such prescriptive political theory as their reason for writing). It will be more productive, I will suggest, to read early modern political philosophers as practicing forms of descriptive philosophical diagnostics that account for the nature, disposition, and limits of sovereignty, subjection, right, and power. Such a diagnostic approach to political philosophy present, not merely ideologically-charged visions of ideal states, but accounts of the planes on which politics actually occurs.

Our main texts will be Thomas Hobbes’s *De Cive* (1641) and *Leviathan* (1651); Baruch Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) and *Political Treatise* (1677); and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discourse On the Origin of Inequality* (1755) and *On the Social Contract* (1762).

These will be supplemented with selections from a counter-history of resistance to subjection and institution that has accompanied modern notions of subject, state, and right since their inception. This may include Étienne de la Boétie’s critical reformulation of sovereignty as resistible domination grounded on nothing but obedience and docility; Bartolomé de las Casas’s attack on Spanish imperialism and genocide; Marie Le Jars de Gournay’s account of links between early modern sovereignty and the politics of misogyny; proposals for radically egalitarian and communal politics by Leveller and Digger thinkers Richard Overton and Gerrard Winstanley; Huguenot philosopher and refugee Pierre Bayle’s perspective on toleration and radical (rather than ‘merely Christian’) alterity; and Olympe de Gouge’s direct attack on the gendered Rousseauianism of the French Revolution.

In the background, we’ll also read portions of Michel Foucault’s 1975-76 lecture course, *Society Must Be Defended*; Charles Mills’s *The Racial Contract*; Jacques Derrida’s 2001-03 lecture course, *The Beast & the Sovereign*; and Giorgio Agamben’s *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*.

*This course satisfies the Modern distribution requirement*