

Write a 1200- to 1800-word essay (4–6 pages) on one of the following two topics. **Do not use so-called AI or anything like it.** Take the time to work through this on your own, with reading, note-taking, and typing. The paper is due on Fri., October 10th by 11:59pm.

Topic #1: Can actions in the state of nature count as sinful? In some places, Hobbes seems to suggest that they cannot: especially Ch. XIII, §10. But in other places, he seems to suggest that they can: especially Ch. XXVIII, §3. In view of this apparent contradiction, your main task is to spell out an apparently promising solution and assess whether it succeeds in giving Hobbes a consistent view on the matter. Presumably any solution will have something to say about the status of the law(s) of nature (see especially Ch. XV, §§34–41).

Topic #2: Can there be valid covenants in the state of nature? In some places, Hobbes seems to suggest that there cannot: especially Ch. XV, §3. But in other places, he seems to suggest that there can: especially Ch. XIV, §§18–20, 27. In view of this apparent contradiction, your main task is to spell out an apparently promising solution and assess whether it succeeds in giving Hobbes a consistent view on the matter. Presumably any solution will have something to say about the status of the law(s) of nature (see especially Ch. XV, §§34–41).

Organization is very important. Structure your essay as follows:

Section 1: Introduce your paper. Briefly explain what you are going to do in the essay.

Section 2: Briefly familiarize the reader with the problem you'll be addressing. This means providing the basics of Hobbes's views as you understand them, as they relate to the apparent contradiction. You might briefly explain what the state of nature is, what the law of nature is, what sin or covenant is, etc.; but the purpose of these explanations should be limited to helping you state the apparent contradiction and helping the reader understand what is involved.

Section 3: Develop and spell out an apparently promising solution that at least initially seems like it might resolve the apparent contradiction. This means digging into the details and subtleties involved. You might have to draw fine distinctions: e.g., the text doesn't actually say *p*, but *p**, and the tiny difference between them might really matter; or an incompatibility between two statements holds only if a certain assumption is made, and the assumption is one that Hobbes might not accept.

Section 4: Assess whether this potential solution succeeds, by either criticizing it or defending it against objections. Here you might argue that the solution fails because of something Hobbes explicitly says on the topic, or some other commitment he has that is difficult to reconcile with the potential solution. Alternatively, you might think of one or more objections the potential solution faces and show what's wrong with them.

Section 5: Briefly summarize what you've done with your essay.

Pointers and guidelines:

- Just use standard formatting: Times New Roman or Calibri, 12-point font, double spacing, normal 1" margins.
- Unless you clear it with me, do not use any other sources. Other than section citations from *Leviathan* (e.g., something like "Leviathan Ch. XIII, §10" or "Lev. 13.10" enclosed in parentheses), do not bother with citations or a bibliography.
- Try to make your prose style simple, clear, precise, and reader-friendly. Don't try to impress anyone with your honeyed eloquence or rich vocabulary. Don't pretend to understand something that you don't.
- Don't write lofty filler like "Since the dawn of time..." or "...one of the most important contributions to political philosophy..."
- If you think it will be useful, you can illustrate a point with a concrete example. But there's no need to force it.
- Do not use the words "valid", "invalid", "sound", or "unsound" unless you are discussing an argument, whether its conclusion logically follows from its premises, and/or whether its premises are true.
- Do not write **Hobbe's**. The possessive form in English is typically **Hobbes's** (although **Hobbes'** is also accepted).

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.