

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

FEATURING EUGENE GARVER

BIOGRAPHY



Eugene Garver's latest, forthcoming, book is *Spinoza and the Cunning of Imagination* (Chicago, 2018). His earlier books include *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (1987), *For the Sake of Argument: Practical Reasoning, Character and the Ethics of Belief* (2011), and the trilogy, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (1994), *Confronting Aristotle's Ethics: Ancient and Modern Morality* (2006), and *Living Well and Living Together: Aristotle's Politics* (2011). He retired from teaching at Saint John's University (Minnesota), but since that time has been unretired four times to teach again, once at Yale Law School and three times for the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at the University of Texas, Austin. He also has retired from triathlons after finishing first in his age group at the North American Ironman Championships.

SPINOZA AND THE CUNNING OF IMAGINATION

ABSTRACT

Spinoza's *Ethics* moves, via the geometric method, from God to human freedom, blessedness and immortality. Between those two poles is a single, sustained argument with surprising and puzzling turns. People are born ignorant and weak. Like all other animals, they can rely on nothing but the imagination – the ideas one has of how one is affected. *The Cunning of Imagination* guides the reader through the argument of the *Ethics*, through its complex reversals and discoveries, all the dead-ends and interruptions of the human comedy that finally lead the human individual – or some of us – back to God. It allows people – or some of us – to progress to the rationality and sociability, and even immortality, a triumph that is literally unimaginable, and so it is hard to see how we could get there with the imagination as initially our only resource. Through the cunning of imagination, people can achieve things that no one guided by imagination alone could possibly aim at.

Thursday, January 18th • 3:45-5:30 • YMCA 401