

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 3010 Fall Term

Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

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Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:35-9:55 AM

Office hours: Paterson Hall 3A38, Mondays 10:00–11:00 AM or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy as practiced in the Islamic world. We will discuss how the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions entered the Arabic and Islamic environment and contributed to the formation of indigenous models of philosophical inquiry that are still taught and practiced to this day in countries such as Indonesia, Iran, and Egypt. Our focus, however, will be on the *formative* period of the tradition. We will examine the emergence of Arabic Peripateticism (*falsafa*) during the late 9th century and its interaction and debates with theological schools and mystical currents. We will also study the revival of Platonism in the Illuminationist tradition (*ishrāqī*) of the 12th century.

This course seeks to highlight the depth, diversity, and significance of a philosophical tradition that is often misunderstood and ignored despite sharing a common set of textual sources and theoretical concerns as Greek and Latin philosophy. We shall cover topics such as logic and epistemology, the nature of the soul, cosmology, theological speculations, Sufism, ethics, and the philosophical interpretation of religious faith and practice. The philosophers we cover are major figures such as al-Fārābī (Alfarabius), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), al-Ghazālī (Algazel), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ayn al-Qudat, al-Suhrawardī, and others.

Learning Objectives

- ❖ To understand the central features of Islamic philosophy and Islamic intellectual thought more broadly
- ❖ To understand the Islamic perspective on major philosophical issues that are still discussed today
- ❖ To understand of how philosophy is practiced in the premodern period and in a major non-European tradition
- ❖ To understand the relationship between culture, religion, and philosophical thought
- ❖ To develop critical thinking skills through the close reading and analysis of philosophical texts

Required Texts

All readings will be made available online on Brightspace.

Requirements and Due Dates

- /20 Commentary exercise 1; due **October 16**
- /30 Commentary exercise 2; due **November 20**
- /40 Term paper; due **December 21**
- /10 Class Participation

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

- Sept. 4** **Introduction: What is Islamic philosophy?**
- Sept. 9** **Greek into Arabic; the emergence of philosophy in Islam; Greek logic vs Arabic grammar**
Readings
- Ibn Khaldun - *The Prolegomena* - On the various kinds of sciences [pp. 333-344; 348-354; 382-386; 388-390]
- Mattā-Sirāfi Debate [pp. 79-91 and 110-129]
- Sept. 11** **The philosopher's way of life; the perennial ideals of the Ancients**
Readings
- Kindī - *On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows* [121-35]
- Āmirī - *The Soul and Its Fate* [pp. 207-215]
- Sept. 16** **Peripatetic logic and the principles of scientific inquiry**
Readings
- Fārābī - *The Eisagoge and the Book on Demonstration* [pp. 55-68]
- Abū Bishr Mattā - *On the Four Causes* [pp. 122-28]
- Sept. 18** **The study of the soul; Aristotelian hylomorphism and Neoplatonic hierarchy of beings**
Readings
- Fārābī - *On the Intellect; On the Principles of Existence* [pp. 68-78; 81-104]
- Sept. 23** **From the 'Unmoved Mover' to the 'One'; Divinalia and the cosmic system**
Readings
- Fārābī - *The Perfect State* - On the One [pp. 55-105]
- Sept. 25** **The Perfect City and the Prophet-King; the philosopher and religious law**
Readings
- Fārābī - *The Attainment of Happiness* [pp. 24-50]
- Sept. 30** **Ibn Sīnā and 'Eastern' philosophy; methodic experience, abstraction, demonstration, and intuition**
Readings
- Ibn Sīnā, *Autobiography* [pp. 22-30]
- Ibn Sīnā, *Philosophy for 'Alā' al-Dawla* – logic [pp. 13-15; 16-17; 18-19]
- Ibn Sīnā, *On Demonstration* [pp. 147-156]
- Oct. 2** **Immortality and individuation of the human soul; transcendental noetics**
Readings
- Ibn Sīnā, *On the Soul* [pp. 175-209]
- Oct. 7** **The two poles of metaphysics: being *qua* being and the Necessary of Existence**
Readings
- Ibn Sīnā, *The Healing* – Introduction to the science of metaphysics [pp. 1-13]
- Ibn Sīnā, Selections on the Necessary of existence [pp. 74-84]

- Oct. 9** **The Necessary of Existence: How does a metaphysical principle become deserving of worship?**
Readings
 - Ibn Sīnā, *Philosophy for 'Alā' al-Dawla* [pp. 247-261]
 - Ibn Sīnā, *The Healing* – on Divine knowledge [pp. 216-219]
- Oct. 14** **Thanksgiving holiday – No class**
- Oct. 16** **Emanation, the Divine order, and providence**
 - **Due:** Commentary assignment 1
Readings
 - Ibn Sīnā, *The Healing* – on the Divine Order [pp. 326-334]
 - Ibn Sīnā, *The Healing* – on Divine Providence; good and evil [pp. 339-47]
- Oct. 21-25** **No classes – Fall break**
- Oct. 28** **The Prophet and the Divine Law; dramaturgy of the human soul and its fate in the afterlife**
Readings
 - Ibn Sīnā, Selections on politics and prophecy [pp. 98-110; 112-21]
 - Ibn Sīnā, *Living, Son of the Awake (Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān)* [pp. 312-320]
- Oct. 30** **Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers I; methodic doubt and Sufism**
Readings
 - Ghazālī, *The Deliverance from Error* [pp. 19-43]
- Nov. 4** **Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers II; the limits of the Peripatetic method and the question of the eternity of the world**
Readings
 - Ghazālī, *The Standard of Knowledge* [pp. 239-241]
 - Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* [pp. 241-265]
- Nov. 6** **Revealed knowledge and prophecy; Ghazālī's symbolic cosmology of light**
Readings
 - Ghazālī, *The Deliverance from Error* [pp. 63-77]
 - Ghazālī, *The Niche of Lights* [pp. 43-68]
- Nov. 11** **Ibn Ṭufayl and 'Western' philosophy; the speculative fiction of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān (Living, son of the Awake)**
Readings
 - Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* [pp. 143-62]
- Nov. 13** **Ibn Rushd and the 'double truth' theory: are philosophy and religious doctrine reconcilable?**
Readings
 - Ibn Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise* [pp. 309-30]
- Nov. 18** **'Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadānī and the emergence of philosophical Sufism**

Readings

- Ḥayy al-Qudat, *The Essence of Reality - Selections* [pp. 27-58]

Nov. 20 **Suhrawardī and the revival of Platonism; Illuminationism and the visionary recitals**

- **Due:** Commentary assignment 2

Readings

- Suhrawardī, *Recital of the Red Intellect* and *Recital of the Occidental Exile* [pp. 20-32; 112-124]
- Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination* – ‘Introduction’ and on existence as a mental construct [pp. 1-4; 45-51]

Nov. 25 **The metaphysics of light, divine providence, and Platonic forms**

Readings

- Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination* – Metaphysics of light and the divine order of reality [pp. 1-4; 45-51]

Nov. 27 **Light psychology, knowledge by presence, and the occult powers of the soul**

Readings

- Suhrawardī, *The Philosophy of Illumination* – Psychology [pp. 135-55]

Dec. 2 **Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s perfectionist model of ethics; the Akbarian tradition**

Readings

- F. D. al-Rāzī, *The Book on the Soul and Spirit* [pp. 44-83]
- Ibn al-‘Arabī’s letter to F. D. al-Rāzī [pp. 126-137]

Dec. 4 **Nasir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on the gnostics; the commentary tradition and the ‘post-classical’ period of Islamic philosophy**

Readings

- Ṭūsī - *Commentary on the Pointers and Reminders of Ibn Sīnā* - Selection on the gnostics [184-201]

Dec. 21 **Due:** Term Paper

Assignments and Evaluations

❖ **Attendance and participation**

- Attendance in class and participation in the discussions are strongly encouraged.
- Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. I will lecture on the assumption that you have read the texts carefully. Lectures will go beyond the readings by situating them in historical context, bringing them in dialogue with other texts, and drawing out their philosophical implications. Attending lectures is not a substitute for reading the texts. Nor is reading the texts a substitute for attending lectures.
- Your participation grades (10%) are based on the frequency and relevance of questions posed in class and responses made during discussion.

❖ **Readings**

- Careful reading of the assigned texts is your most important task in this course.
- You should expect to spend 3-4 hours per week on the assigned readings. Having a good understanding of the texts should be your prime motivation for taking this course. Reading

is essential for understanding the lectures and for contributing meaningfully to discussion. The assignments and final exam are designed to test your ability to closely read the texts. You are expected to have the readings on hand during class.

❖ **Two commentary exercises**

- You are responsible for two commentary exercises.
 - The first, due on **October 16**, will cover material assigned for September 9 – 25.
 - The second, due on **November 20**, will cover material assigned for September 30 to November 13.
- Instructions
 - On Brightspace I will post a list of passages from the assigned material. You will need to unpack the idea, proposal, or argument these passages convey. You will also need to explain the significance or function of the passages in the specific context of the work in which they appear and in the broader context of what we have learned so far of the Islamic philosophical tradition. For this part of the exercise, you should strive to be an impartial reader. If you wish, you can also critically evaluate the cogency, coherence, or plausibility of the idea or argument conveyed in the passage. But make sure that before attempting criticism you have shown that you have a clear understanding of the substance and implications of the passage.
 - The commentary to each passage should have a minimum of **400 words**.
 - For **commentary exercise 1**, you will comment on **two** passages (for 20% of your grades); while for **commentary exercise 2**, you will comment on **three** passages (for 30% of your grades)
- Form
 - Unless granted permission, all submissions of the commentary exercise must be printed out.
 - The paper should be double spaced and written in Times New Roman font (size 12).
 - Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable.
 - At the top right of the first page of your paper, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment's due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).
 - When citing materials, provide the passages in quotation marks, and then, in brackets directly following the quoted passage, include the page number, preceded by a "p."

❖ **Term Paper**

- The examination questions will be posted on Brightspace. The term paper is due on the last day of exams, **December 21**.
- Instructions
 - This paper has two components, each counting for 20% of your grades for a total of 40%.
 1. Comment on **two (2)** passages selected from material covered from November 18 – December 4. The content and grading criteria of this component of the term paper is the same as the previous commentary exercises. The commentary should have a minimum of **400 words**. This portion of the paper is worth 20% of your grades.
 2. Respond to a question. This question is designed to synthesize your knowledge of major themes of the course. You will need to draw from and cite relevant material and demonstrate that you have grasped the philosophical substance and implications of the question. You should ask yourself, what is the

philosophical problem at hand and what is its significance for the relevant thinkers? Finally, what is its significance in view of the Islamic philosophical tradition as presented in this course. The response this question should have a minimum of **700 words**. This portion of the is worth 20% of your grades.

o Form

- Submit the paper via Brightspace.
- The paper should be double spaced and written in Times New Roman font (size 12).
- Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable.
- At the top right of the first page of your paper, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment’s due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).
- When citing materials, provide the passages in quotation marks, and then, in brackets directly following the quoted passage, include the page number, preceded by a “p.”

Bibliography

Adamson, Peter. *Philosophy in the Islamic World*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Adamson, Peter, and Richard C Taylor, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Corbin, Henry. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard and Philip Sherrard. London; New York; London: Kegan Paul International; in association with Islamic Publications for the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1993.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled, and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2017.

McGinnis, Jon, and David C Reisman. *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2007.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, and Mehdi. Aminrazavi. *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia. Vols. 1-5*. London: I.B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 1999–2015.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, and Oliver Leaman. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. London; New York: Routledge, 2001.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*. Edinburgh: University Press, 1979.

Winter, Tim, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Grading System

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A+ = 90-100 (12) | B = 73-76 (8) | C - = 60-62 (4) |
| A = 85-89 (11) | B- = 70-72 (7) | D+ = 57-59 (3) |
| A- = 80-84 (10) | C+ = 67-69 (6) | D = 53-56 (2) |
| B+ = 77-79 (9) | C = 63-66 (5) | D - = 50-52 (1) |

F Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
 ABS Absent from final examination, equivalent to F

- DEF Official deferral (see "Petitions to Defer")
- FND Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

Statement on Academic Integrity

- ❖ The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.
- ❖ The use of **generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT)** will automatically be considered to be violations of academic integrity.
- ❖ Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor.
- ❖ The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of “F” for the course.
- ❖ For details, please consult Carleton’s Academic Integrity Policy, which you can find here: <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-2021.pdf>

Statement on Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

Requests for Extensions and Deferrals

- ❖ Late submissions of the assignments and term paper will be penalized by one third of a grade per day for every day that they are late. For instance, an assignment marked B+ will be reduced to a B if it is one day late and B- if it is two days late.
- ❖ Any requests for extensions must be provided at least 24 hours in advance, except in emergency cases.
 - You should provide any **additional information** on your requirements for short-term informal accommodations.
 - If you require supporting documentation for short-term considerations, you may only request the Academic Consideration for Coursework form. You may **not** request medical notes or documentation.

- ❖ **Deferrals for Final Exams:** Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar). Visit the Registrar's Office for further information.

Academic Accommodations

- ❖ Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).
- ❖ *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EDC website.
- ❖ *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- ❖ *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy.
- ❖ *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.