CLASSICAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY (TH 684)
Yahya M. Michot

This course explores the evolution and main debates of Islamic philosophy (falsafa) from the great translation movement of ancient Greek texts under the ‘Abbâsid dynasty (8th-9th centuries) until the golden age of inter-disciplinary intellectual, scientific and spiritual debates under the Mamlûks of Egypt and the Mongols of Iran (13th-14th centuries). Besides the major falâsifa known to the medieval Latins (Kindî, Fârâbî, Avicenna, Ghazâlî, Averroes…), attention will also be given to several other thinkers, generally less famous in the West, but nevertheless important: the Ikhwân al-Ṣafâ’, Miskawayh, Ibn Ṭufayl, Râzî, Ṭûsî, Qûnawî… A selection of representative texts will be read in English translation and commented on. A basic knowledge of Greek philosophy, Islam and the history of Muslim societies (7th-14th centuries) would be useful for this course.

Class will meet: Tuesdays 4:30-6:50 p.m., beginning January 26.

Course Objectives
1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on classical Islamic philosophy.
2) They are expected to gain an acquaintance with the thought and writings of the most important falâsifa.
3) They should be able to benefit from the methodological approach adopted in these classes and apply them for their own studies and/or research projects.

Course Requirements
1) It is strongly recommended that the student arrive at the first class already having a general knowledge about the religion of Islam, as well as about the history and geography of Muslim peoples. They should also be able to find their way around in the major reference tools for Islamic Studies (Encyclopaedia of Islam, Index Islamicus…).
2) Weekly readings, class participation (including presentations of assigned readings), regular attendance. If you are unable to attend class, please contact the Professor.
3) A final research paper and a viva voce, as described infra.

The final grade will be based upon the following:
1) Active class participation & presentations (THE ASSIGNED READINGS ARE ESSENTIAL). (30%).
2) A final research paper of a least 15 pages* on an aspect of classical Islamic philosophy (8th–14th c.). The topic should be chosen by the end of class VI in consultation with the Professor. This paper will be due by the end of class XII (45%).
3) A final viva voce exam discussing the course, with an emphasis on the final research paper submitted (25%).
General references

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, INDEX ISLAMICUS…


ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY ONLINE. On: www.muslimphilosophy.com/.

Class Schedule

Topics: Pre-Islamic background. Translation Movement. Arab historians of falsafa.
General references:


Reading Assignment:


II. February 2. Al-Kindī
General references:


Reading Assignment:


III. February 9. Abû Bakr al-Râzî, the « Heretic »
General reference:


Reading Assignments:

### IV. February 23. Abû Naṣr al-Fârâbî’s alternative society

**Topics:** The «Second Master». The Baghdādī Peripatetic literati.

**General references:**


**Reading Assignment:**


### V. February 23. Abû Naṣr al-Fârâbî’s alternative society

**Topics:** The «Second Master». The Baghdadī Peripatetic literati.

**General references:**


**Reading Assignment:**


**Reading Assignments:**


AND


**VIII. March 16. Autodestructions (Tahāfūt), from Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazâlî to Ibn Rushd**

Topics: Opposing Avicenna. Reconciling reason and Islam.

**General references:**


**Reading Assignments:**


OR


**IX. March 23. « Oriental Wisdom » East & West, from Yahyâ l-Suhrawardî to Ibn Ṭūfayl**

Topics: Re-inventing Avicenna.

**General references:**


**Reading Assignments:**


OR


**X. April 6. Philosopherizing (tafalsuf) after the Falâsifa**

Topics: Philosopherizing Sufis, theologians and scientists. The primacy of logic.

**General references:**

XI. April 13. Beyond the boundaries of Islam, from Maimonides to George Bush

Topics: the influence of falsafa in Judaism and the West from the Middle Ages to the modern period.

General references:


Reading Assignment:


XII. April 20. « Poisoned by Falsafa »: Ibn Taymiyya

Topics: Refutation of Greek logic. Commentaries on Thābit, IS, etc. Opposition to the rationalism of Ghaz & Rāzî. Influence of IS (theodicy). Subki’s accusations.

General references:


Reading Assignment: