CLASSICAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY (TH 684)
Yahya M. Michot
Hartford Seminary, Winter-Spring 2018

This course explores the evolution and main debates of Islamic philosophy (falsafa) from the great translation movement of ancient Greek texts under the ‘Abbāsid 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 (al-Kindî, al-Fârâbî, Avicenna, al-Ghazâlî, Averroes...), attention will also be given to several other thinkers, generally less famous in the West, but nevertheless important: the Ikhwân al-Ṣafā’, Miskawayh, Ibn Ṭufayl, al-Râzî, al-Ṭûsî, al-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 twice a week for 12 weeks: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4 to 5:45 p.m., beginning Tuesday 23 January 2018. Each of these twelve classes will be divided in two sessions: A) Lecture; B) Discussion of the required readings. The teacher can be contacted at ymichot@hartsem.edu. Office hours TBA.

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.

Seminary Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity (MARS 4). Competence to teach this area in religious communities and academia (PhD 3).

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) Attendance in class is required. If you know that you will be unable to attend a class please inform the professor in advance. Missing two classes will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 30%. Missing three or more classes will result in automatic failure of the course.
3) For each session A of weeks 2-12, students shall submit a summary of the reading assignments and be ready to speak about them in class. Each student can skip any two weeks during that time for a total of 10 submissions. Here are the guidelines for these summaries:
   - Approximately 2 pages (3 pages maximum)
   - One modern study must be used in each summary
4) A final research paper and a *viva voce*, as described below.

5) PhD students are moreover expected to read two books concerning *Falsafa* chosen in consultation with the professor from the general references listed in this syllabus and to use them in their final paper.

**The final grade will be based upon the following:**

1) Weekly summaries (20%) and class participation (20%).

2) A final research paper of a least 15 pages* (For PhD students, 25 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 (35%).

4) On Tuesday May 1, 2018, a final *viva voce* exam discussing the course, with an emphasis on the final research paper submitted (25%).

* All written work is to conform to the seminary writing guidelines, which can be found online at: [http://www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf](http://www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf). It must use the transliteration system given in class I. It must be run through a grammar and spell-check program or read by the writing tutor if necessary before submission. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for work in the course.

**IMPORTANT:** Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged. Credit will not be given for work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism will lead to failure of a course. Please see the Hartford Seminary Catalogue for the full plagiarism policy.

**General references**

*ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, INDEX ISLAMICUS…*


STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY. On: [https://plato.stanford.edu/](https://plato.stanford.edu/).


**Class Schedule**


**General references:**


Reading Assignment:


General references:


Reading Assignment:


General references:


Reading Assignments:


AND


General references:


Reading Assignment:


General references:


Reading Assignment:


Class VI. A: Feb. 27. B: March 1. Ibn Sînà. I: Milieu, Life, Works

General references:


Reading Assignment:


General references:

Reading Assignments:

AND


Class VIII. A: March 13. B: March 15. Autodestructions (Tahâfut), from Abû Ḥâmid al-Ghazâlî to Ibn Rushd

General references:

Reading Assignments:

OR
Class IX. A: March 20. B: March 22. « Oriental Wisdom », from Yahyâ l-Suhrawardî to Ibn Tufayl

General references:


Reading Assignment:


Class X. A: April 3. B: April 5. Philosophizing (tafalsuf) after the Falâisfa

General references:


Reading Assignment:


Class XI. A: April 17. B: April 19. Beyond the boundaries of Islam, from Maimonides to George Bush

General references:


Reading Assignment:


General references:


Reading Assignment:

Tuesday May 1. Viva voce examination