ISLA 380
Islamic Philosophy and Theology
Fall 2016
Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:05PM-5:25PM, in Leacock 116

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ISLA 380 is an introduction to the most important philosophers and theologians in Islamic intellectual history, with a focus on the concepts they articulated and the movements they engendered. Although many of the philosophical and theological problems we will examine first arose a thousand years ago, debates over how to solve them still resonate throughout the Islamic world. The classes will alternate between those devoted to lecturing and to answering questions, and those devoted to student-led debates over particular philosophical and theological problems. All the readings are in English.

Requirements

Students will be required to:

a) Lead one side of one debate. In each debate, two student debaters will give twenty-minute presentations of their opposing positions, and then respond to questions and criticisms from the rest of the class. There are only ten debates. If more than twenty students end up enrolling in the class, the remaining students will each choose a debate and submit a 3000-word (+/- 100 words) essay in which they lay out the arguments in favor of one side of that debate, and against the other side. This essay will be due at the beginning of the class in which that debate is held.

b) Complete three in-class exams. For each in-class exam, students will choose one of three essay questions to answer. The exams are closed-book, and will be written by hand on an exam booklet. The October 3 exam will cover topics and materials listed in the syllabus between September 7 and September 28, inclusive; the November 2 exam will cover topics and materials listed in the syllabus between October 5 and October 31, inclusive; and the December 5 exam will cover topics and materials listed in the syllabus between November 7 and November 30, inclusive. There will be no Final Exam.

c) Come to class i) having read the assigned readings / listened to the assigned podcasts, and ii) prepared to participate in the discussions, especially those during the debates. The readings average about 100 pages per class (lecture or debate).

Course grades will be determined as follows:

a) debate: 20%
b) exam #1: 20%
c) exam #2: 20%
d) exam #3: 20%
e) class participation: 20%
Textbooks

The following textbook is available for purchase at the Paragraphe Bookstore.


Copies of the remaining textbooks are on reserve at the Islamic Studies Library.

L. Gauthier. *Hayy ben Yaqdhan, roman philosophique d'Ibn Thofail* (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1999)
A. Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

In addition, PDFs of the readings other than Adamson and Taylor are available for download from the MyCourses webpage.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).
Schedule

Fri Sep 2 (Lecture): Logistics; introduction

Mon Sep 5: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Wed Sep 7 (Lecture): Early Sectarianism; Mu'tazilism
- Watt, 1-63
- Wolfson, 1-58

Mon Sep 12 (Debate): “If God creates our actions, isn’t He unjust to punish us for them?”
- Wolfson, 601-624; 644-719

Wed Sep 14 (Lecture): The Miḥna; Ashʿarī and Ashʿarism
- Watt, 64-68 and 75-84
- Podcast #121: “This is a Test: the Mu'tazilites”, available on [http://historyofphilosophy.net/mutazilites](http://historyofphilosophy.net/mutazilites)
- Podcast #137: “God Willing: the Ash'arites”, available on [http://historyofphilosophy.net/asharism](http://historyofphilosophy.net/asharism)

Mon Sep 19 (Debate): “Is the Qurʿān created or uncreated?”
- Wolfson, 235-303

Wed Sep 21 (Lecture): Greek into Arabic; Kindī; logic and epistemology
- Adamson and Taylor, 10-51
- Podcast #122: “Founded in Translation: From Greek to Syriac and Arabic”, available on [http://historyofphilosophy.net/translation-movement](http://historyofphilosophy.net/translation-movement)

Mon Sep 26 (Debate): “Do we need a divine text in order to know things with certainty, or can we use logic instead?”
- Kindī [d. 865], *Sketch of Aristotle’s Organon* [N. Rescher, trans., “Al-Kindi’s sketch of Aristotle’s Organon”, *The New Scholasticism* 37 (Baltimore: The American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1963), 44-58]
- Abrahamov, 1-64
Wed Sep 28 (Lecture): Fārābī; ethics and political philosophy
- Adamson and Taylor, 52-71
- Fārābī [d. 950], The Enumeration of the Sciences [R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, eds and trans, Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 22-30]

Mon Oct 3: In-class exam #1

Wed Oct 5 (Debate): “Do prophets or philosophers make better lawgivers?”
- Adamson and Taylor, 266-286
- Ash'arī [d. ca. 936], Highlights of the Polemic against Deviators and Innovators [R. J. McCarthy, trans., The Theology of al-Ash’arī (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953), 112-116]
- Avicenna [d. 1037], On the Proof of Prophecies [R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, eds and trans, Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 112-121]

Mon Oct 10: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Wed Oct 12 (Lecture): Avicenna (Ibn Sinā); metaphysics and psychology
- Adamson and Taylor, 92-136
- Avicenna [d. 1037], On Necessary and Possible Existence [G. Hourani, “Ibn Sina on necessary and possible existence”, Philosophical Forum 6 (Boston: Boston University Department of Philosophy, 1974), 74-86]

Mon Oct 17 (Debate): “After we die, do our souls alone survive, or will our bodies be resurrected as well?”
- Adamson and Taylor, 308-326
- Ghazālī [d. 1111]/Averroes [d. 1198], Incoherence, 333-363

Wed Oct 19 (Lecture): Ghazālī; reactions to falsafa
- Adamson and Taylor, 137-154; 247-265

Mon Oct 24 (Debate): “Are God’s hands tied by the laws of nature, or can He override nature in order to create miracles?”
- Wolfson, 518-600
- Ghazālī [d. 1111]/Averroes [d. 1198], Incoherence, 311-333

Wed Oct 26 (Lecture): Philosophy in Andalusia; Ibn Ṭufayl and Averroes (Ibn Rushd)
- Adamson and Taylor, 155-200
- Averroes [d. 1198], Harmony, 44-81 / Discours décisif, 103-171
- Ibn Ṭufayl, Hayy ibn Yaqẓān, 95-166 (Goodman) / 1-114 (Gauthier)

Mon Oct 31 (Debate): “Is God so sublime that He only knows things in a general way, or can He know particular things just as we do?”
- Ghazālī [d. 1111]/Averroes [d. 1198], Incoherence, 255-285

Wed Nov 2: In-class exam #2

Mon Nov 7 (Lecture): Post-classical Sunni and Shiʿite muḥaqqiqūn and mutakallimūn

Wed Nov 9 (Debate): “Was the world created out of nothing or is it eternal, just as God is?”
- Ghazālī [d. 1111]/Averroes [d. 1198], Incoherence, 1-58, 156-170

Mon Nov 14 (Lecture): Illuminationism; the Akbarian Turn
- Adamson and Taylor, 201-246 and 405-425
- Shahrazūrī [d. after 1288], “Introduction” to his Commentary on Suhrawardī’s [d. 1191] Philosophy of Illumination [J. Walbridge and H. Ziai, trans., Suhrawardī: The Philosophy of Illumination (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), xxxviii-xliv]

Wed Nov 16 (Lecture): Early Modernism
- Hourani, 1-160
Mon Nov 21 (Debate): “Does progress presuppose Westernization?”
- Martin and Woodward, 128-138

Wed Nov 23 (Lecture): Late Modernism
- Rahman, 1-162
- Martin and Woodward, 199-203

Mon Nov 28 (Debate): “How useful is the Islamic philosophical and theological tradition to modern Muslims?”
- Martin and Woodward, 158-179

Wed Nov 30 (Lecture): Postmodernism and Postcoloniality
- Martin and Woodward, 204-219
- Wadud, ix-xxvi and 1-108

Mon Dec 5: In-class exam #3