Short Description:

This course will be devoted to philosophy in the medieval Islamic world, looking mainly at falsafa (Greek-style philosophy modeled on Plato and Aristotle), but also at the distinctively Islamic disciplines of kalâm (dialectical theology) and ṣūfism, starting from a review of selected issues in Greek philosophy and of the religious context in Islam. We will be interested in the conflicts and debates between these different approaches to philosophy, as well as in ways that they positively shaped each other. We will be particularly interested in the concept of ʿilm, [scientific] knowledge: what must a mental state be like to count as scientific knowledge, how is such knowledge acquired, and what must the human mind and the world be like, and what kind of divine governance is required, in order for such knowledge to be possible? We will build up to a reading of selected discussions from al-Ghazâlî's The Incoherence of the Philosophers and Averroes' (Ibn Rushd's) reply, The Incoherence of the Incoherence. The course is appropriate for students from Philosophy, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, or Religious Studies; graduate students can take the course under an appropriate graduate number. Prerequisite: Philosophy 354 (Plato) or Philosophy 355 (Aristotle) at McGill or the equivalent elsewhere.