Course Description

This course is an introduction to some of the key figures, seminal texts, and main themes of Islamic philosophy in the classical period. Developing in the late ninth century A.D. and evolving without interruption for almost half a millennium into the fourteenth century, this body of thought was instrumental in the revival of the philosophical tradition in Europe. Philosophers in the Islamic world were strongly influenced by Greek philosophical works and adapted some of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and other ideas to their Islamic brand of monotheism. But they also developed an original philosophical culture of their own.

The philosophical writings to be examined express various viewpoints and tackle a range of philosophical questions. Among the questions to be discussed are the following: What is the nature of the good life? What is the relation between virtue and happiness? What is the best form of government? Can we know anything at all? Is knowledge gained through rational thought or through mystical apprehension? What is the relation between reason and faith? Can religious truths be demonstrated through reason? How is the soul related to the body? What is the nature of prophecy? Can miracles occur? What are the limits, if any, of God’s power? The authors to be read include: al-Razi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajjah, and Ibn Rushd.

Course Requirements

In-Class Exam (30%): This exam will be scheduled relatively early in the semester (see reading schedule) and will consist of short-answer questions. Sample questions and further information will be distributed at least one week in advance. It will take place in class. If you miss the exam due to a real medical emergency, you should contact me by email in advance to say so and then produce proper documentation within a week of missing the exam (e.g. a medical report). In such cases, a makeup exam will be administered (but note that make-up exams tend to allow students less choice than the actual exam).

Take-Home Essay (30%): Around halfway into the semester you will be asked to write a short essay on one of a set of questions that will be distributed two weeks before the essay is due. There will be a firm deadline for turning in the take-home essay; late submissions will be penalized according to a fixed penalty schedule.

Final Exam (40%): The final exam will contain some short-answer questions and some essay questions. Please make sure that you do not make travel plans during the examination period until the date for the final exam has been set by the university. The same policy applies for a makeup exam as for the quiz (see above).

Moodle: All registered students will be automatically added to the course’s MOODLE site:
1. Go to http://moodle.yorku.ca
2. Enter your Passport York id in the username field
3. Enter your Passport York password in the password field.
Important announcements concerning the course and course policies will be posted on Moodle, so you are responsible for checking the Moodle site on a regular basis. The first three readings for this course will be posted on Moodle and must be downloaded and printed out from that site; they are not available in any other form. I will also post all Powerpoint lectures on Moodle.

**Required Textbooks**

There are two required textbooks for this class, and it is necessary that you have a copy of each of these texts in order to do the required reading for the course. Some readings, which are not in either textbook, will be posted on Moodle.

1. [M] = Moodle

**Reading Schedule**

**January**

7: Introduction to the Course


14: [No new reading]


28: [No new reading]


**February**

4: IN-CLASS EXAM


11: READING WEEK

13: READING WEEK
18: HOLIDAY


March


5: [No new reading]


12: Ibn Tufayl, “Hayy bin Yaqzan” (trans Atiyeh) [L&M]

17: [No new reading]


24: [No new reading]

26: Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and al-Ghazali (Algazel), “The Incoherence of the Incoherence: 17th Discussion” (trans Khalidi) [K]

31: [No new reading]

April

2: [No new reading]