

Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism (Rel. 261/Phil. 261): Fall 2010

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Office Hours: Tuesday 11am-12pm, Wednesday 4pm-5pm and by appointment.

Lectures: MW 2:35pm- 3:45pm, Main St. Campus, Comenius Hall, 218

Course Description:

This course is intended to be an introduction to the major issues, figures, and texts of Islamic philosophy, theology, and mysticism. All discussions will take place at two different levels: First, we outline the larger religious, historical, and intellectual context in which each philosopher or theologian, or mystic perceived and addressed his/her own central questions. Second, we closely examine the logical structure of some major arguments they presented to support their claims, and will critically evaluate the soundness of their arguments.

In this course we discuss three major topics: (i) Islamic Philosophy or *falsafih*; (2) Islamic Theology or *kalām*; and (iii) Islamic Mysticism or *irfan*. To cover major issues in each topic, the course is divided into five major parts, as follows:

(I) In the First part, we focus on Ibn Sina/Avicenna's theology and cosmology. More specifically, we examine his arguments for the existence of God as the Necessary Existent, and the eternity of the world. However, to fully understand his major arguments on these issues,

(1) We discuss his philosophy in the larger context of Greek philosophy, and trace back the discussion more specifically to Aristotle and some of his followers, and explore Ibn Sina's unique contribution to metaphysical debates;

(2) We discuss Ibn Sina's philosophy in the context of some great Muslim philosophers prior to him, such as Farabi;

And,

(3) We closely examine some of the fundamental philosophical concepts Ibn Sina employed to formulate his arguments, such as his logical concepts, Modal Ontology, and his conception of Causality.

(II) In the Second part, we focus on Ghazali's critiques to Ibn Sina's theology and cosmology. Ghazali is considered as one of the most important representatives of *Kalām* (Islamic theology). We mainly examine Ghazali's criticism of Ibn Sina's views on God's knowledge, and causality. To fully understand Ghazali's contribution to Muslim's intellectual heritage, we need to discuss the theological context that shaped Ghazali's theological view- more specifically, the debate between two major schools of *Kalām*, i.e., Mu'tazilite and Ash'arites. We briefly examine the main tents of both schools.

(III) In the Third part, we discuss two major topics:

(1) First, we focus on Ibn Rushd/Averroes' refutation of Ghazali's critique to philosophers' conception on causality.

(2) Second, we discuss Ibn Rushd's view on the relation between philosophy and Islam (or more specifically, *Shari'a*).

(IV) In the Fourth part, we explore what might be called as "Theological Ethics". We examine Mu'tazili and Ash'ari's views on ethical theory. The Mu'tazilah formulated the rationalist Islamic ethical system with basic deontological presuppositions, and the Ash'arites formulated a rigorous 'voluntarist' system of morality.

(V) In the Fifth part, we discuss three major topics:

(1) First, the place of mystical knowledge within the framework of Islamic knowledge. Here we focus on Ghazali's spiritual autobiography, *The Rescuer From Error*.

Then we discuss two major approaches in Islamic Mysticism:

(2) More Practical approach. Here we discuss some parts of Rumi's master piece, *Masnavi*.

And

(3) More Metaphysical approach. Here we discuss some parts of Ibn al-'Arabi's master piece, *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*.

Since this is an advance course, we will have close reading of texts to familiarize ourselves with the language and nomenclature of Islamic thought. The selections will be in English; hence no pre-knowledge of Arabic or Persian is required. You must come to class well prepared and with your readings.

Course Objectives:

- To develop a substantial understanding of major philosophical, theological, and mystical issues within the intellectual tradition of Islam.
- To develop skills of textual analysis through close reading and the comparison of texts.
- To exercise scholarly fairness, sympathy, and tolerance toward different cultures and world views, and expand our intellectual horizon.
- To develop expository writing skills.
- To have a first hand experience of inter-connectedness of Intellectual dimensions of Islam with Greek Philosophy and other religions, specially, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism.

Required Texts:

Since there is no one single text that covers all the reading materials necessary for this course, I required you to buy only two texts: one contains original texts, and the second one contains an introduction to the topics. However, more additional sources are required. To cover topics are not included in the readers, I will post the required additional texts on Blackboard. Please make sure you have access to Blackboard, and the shell designed for this course as soon as possible. The following are the required texts for this course:

- *Classical Arabic Philosophy (An Anthology)*, Translated with Introduction by Jon McGinnis and David Reisman, Hackett Publishing Company, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-871-1.
- *Islamic Philosophy (An Introduction)*, Oliver Leaman, Polity Press, First edition, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-7456-4599-5.

These books are available at Moravian College Book Store.

For further research on Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism you may find the following site helpful:

<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/>

Note: You will find that you get the most out of the course if you read each assignment before lecture and then re-read the assignment after the lecture.

Lecture attendance:

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lectures regularly. We will cover substantial amounts of material in the lectures not necessarily included anywhere in the readings. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by, e.g., borrowing your friend's lecture notes. You have two class sessions you can miss with no question asked. Beyond those two class sessions, any further missed classes without a really good excuse (involving a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc.) will cost you 2% of your final grade.

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Course requirements:

- (1) A regular final exam, scheduled for **Tue. December 14, at 1:30pm**. You will receive a Study Guide for the Final Exam two weeks prior to the exam to know what kind of questions you should expect on the Final Exam. Make up final exam will be administered only under the most extraordinary of circumstances, and only in light of appropriate supporting documents.
- (2) Each one of you will have a short class presentation on a topic of your choice to be approved by me. You will have the option of developing your presentation topic into your final paper. You need to discuss the topic and the date of your presentation with me not later than September 29th.
- (3) One paper (1500-2000 words). On October 20, I will suggest you some paper topics. However, you have three options available: Either (i) you write your paper on one of topics suggested by me, or (ii) you have the option of developing your presentation topic into your final paper, or (iii) you may have a topic of your choice to be approved by me. Paper should be typed, double spaced, and spell-checked. You are responsible to submit a hard copy of your paper. In some exceptional cases, you may be allowed to submit your paper through email. If so, you must receive a confirmation email from me, otherwise, you must assume that I have not received your paper. If the paper is turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). It is always helpful to discuss the draft of your paper with your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback. You need to submit the first draft of your papers to me by November 3rd. You will get back your drafts with my comments on November 10th. Your paper due is November 24th.
- (4) You will be required to write weekly short paragraphs (not more than one page) consist of your critical evaluation of the material to be discussed in the class. In the paragraphs, you should concentrate on a specific concept, theme or question. You are required to complete 10 assignments of this sort by the end of the semester, that is, you have the option of choosing 10 out of roughly

15 assignments I am to assign throughout the semester. Every week, by the end of our Wednesday class, the assignments should be submitted.

Important note: *By the end of the semester, all four above-mentioned requirements must be completed in order to pass the course. In other words, if you miss at least one of the above requirements, we will fail the course automatically.*

Grading:

Final Exam: 30% - Paper: 30% - Class Presentation: 10% - Weekly Paragraphs: 30%.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Islam: Sources and Doctrines

Week One: August 30, September 1, General Remark on Islam and Islamic Philosophy

Islamic Philosophy, Chs.1& 2.

Part I: Ibn Sina's Metaphysics:

Weeks Two, Three, Four: (1) September 8, 13, 15, 20, 22.

(1) Theology: (a) The existence of Necessary Existent; (b) God's lack of knowledge of particulars.

(2) Cosmology: (a) Arguments for eternity of the World; (b) Causality

Readings:

- *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, pp. 209-223;
- *Islamic Philosophy*, pp. 58-64 & Ch. 5;
- *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Majid Fakhry, pp.132-166, (will be available on Blackboard);
- *Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect (Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect)*, Herbert A. Davidson, pp. 74-94 (will be available on Blackboard).

Part II: Ghazali's Attack on *Falasifa*:

Weeks Five, Six, Seven: September 27, 29, October 4, 6, 13.

(1) Theology: God's Knowledge of the Particulars

(2) Cosmology: Causality.

Readings:

- *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, pp. 241-254;
- *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Ghazali, [Thirteenth] Discussion, pp. 134-143, and [Seventeenth] Discussion, pp. 166-178 (will be available on Blackboard);
- *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Majid Fakhry, pp. 223-239. (will be available on Blackboard).

Part III: Ibn Rushd:

Weeks Eight and Nine: October 18, 20, 25, 27.

(1) Ibn Rushd's refutation of Ghazali's view on causality.

(2) Ibn Rushd on relation between philosophy and religion

Readings:

- *Classical Arabic Philosophy*, 309-330;
- *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Ibn Rushd (will be available on Blackboard);
- *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Majid Fakhry, pp. 280-302.

Part IV: Theological Ethics

Weeks Ten and Eleven: November 1, 3, 8, 10.

(1) Ethical Rationalism: Mu'tazili view

(2) Ethical Voluntarism: Ash'ari view

Reading:

- *Islamic Philosophy*, Ch. 6 ("Ethics"), pp.106-117.
- *Ethical Theories in Islam*, Majid Fakhry, Part Two, Chs. One and Two, pp. 31-58.

Part V: Islamic Mysticism:

Weeks Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, Fifteen : November 15, 17, 22, 29, December 1, 6.

(1) Ghazali's Spiritual Journey

(2) Rumi's theory of *Suluk*

(3) Ibn al- 'Arabi's Ontology: The Doctrine of *Wahdat al-wujud*.

Readings:

- *The Rescuer from Error*, Ghazali, (will be available on Blackboard)
- *Masnawi*, Rumi, Book One, verses 1-324 (will be available on Blackboard).
- *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, William Chittick, Part 3, Ch. 5, pp.77-94 (will be available on Blackboard).
- "An analysis of *wahdat al-wujud*", in *Creation and the Timeless Oder of Things (Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy)*, by Toshihiko Izutsu, Ch. 3, pp. 66-97 (will be available on Blackboard).
- *Islamic Philosophy*, Ch.4, "Mysticism", pp. 71-85.
- *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Majid Fakhri, Ch. Eight, "The Rise and Development of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)", pp. 241-266 (will be available on Blackboard).

Review Session: December 8 (The Last Day of Classes)

Reminding you of some important dates:

Note (1): By September 29th, everyone should already inform me of the title and the date of her/his presentation.

Note (2): On October 20, I will suggest you the paper topics. However, you have three options available: Either (i) you write your paper on one of topics suggested by me, or (ii) you have the option of developing your presentation topic into your final paper, or (iii) you may have a topic of your choice to be approved by me.

Note (3): You need to submit the first draft of your paper by November 3rd. You will get back your drafts with my comments on November 10th.

Note (4): Your paper due is November 24th.

Note (5): On December 1st, you will receive the Study Guide for the Final Exam.

Note (6): On December 8th, the last day of our classes, the review session for the final exam will be held.

Note (7) **The Final Exam will be held on Tuesday, December 14th, at 1:30pm, Comenius Hall, 218.**

Important Note:

- Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510).
- The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392. The Writing Center tutors will make arrangements with the student who needs tutoring services to meet in an accessible location, such as the library or a study/conference room in PPHAC.