

Syllabus

Professor: Nuha Alshaar

922137 - Introdução à Filosofia Islâmica: 1 semestre 2025/2026

Course Description

This course examines the rich traditions of *falsafa* (philosophy) in Muslim societies. We begin by examining the meaning, the origin, and the development of Islamic philosophy. This includes early socio-political controversies, the emergence of philosophical theology (*kalām*), Greek philosophy translated into Arabic and (*falsafa*) or Islamic philosophy. Islamic *falsafa* is often regarded as the fusion of Islamic beliefs with the Hellenistic culture that flourished in the medieval period. It emerged from the engagement of Arab and Muslim scholars with Greek philosophy, as they sought to interpret and integrate its ideas within the framework of their own cultural, religious, and social realities. This process was facilitated by the translation of Greek texts into Arabic that started in the ninth century, which we will explore in this course.

You will read articles about various philosophical traditions in Islam and their representatives and extracts from main philosophical texts to understand the core concepts, ideas, and issues that preoccupied the representative figures of Islamic philosophy from al-Kindi to Ibn Rushd and beyond. The issues that lend themselves to contemporary theological, scientific, and ethical concerns will be given foremost attention.

During the course, we will discuss important contributions made by philosophers operating in the Islamic East as well as the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) to key questions, including, free will and reason versus revelation, political thoughts and the attainment of happiness, the relationship between body and mind, the purification of the soul and virtue ethics, friendship, Justice, and animal rights.

Upon Completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the main issues in Islamic philosophy.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the concepts, figures and texts of Islamic philosophy.
- Read and comprehend some key texts in the history of Islamic philosophy.
- Write or present a well-researched paper or a presentation on a philosophical topic.

Reading for this course

- All readings required for this course will be emailed to students.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to *falsafa* in Islamic Context

Week 2: Introduction to *falsafa* in Islamic Context/ The Mu'tazilites and Early Kalām (Islamic Dialectical Theology).

Week 3: Introduction to *falsafa* in Islamic Context/ The Translation Movement

Week 4 Early Philosophical Ethical Discussions/ The issue of reason versus revelation/free will. Excerpts from al-Kindi 1. On Dispelling Sorrows,

Week 5: Political Islamic: al-Fārābī and the Perfect State in the Islamic Context

Week 6: Reading Week- no classes.

Week 7: Virtue Ethics and the Purification of the Soul/ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (The Brethren of Purity) on animal rights; Reading from their Epistle "on the Classification of Animals".

Week 8: Friendship and Justice in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi and Ahmad b. Miskawayhi's writings.

Week 9: Ibn Rushd / Ibn Tufayl's Hay b. Yaqzan

Week 10: The Main Philosophical Themes of the Ismā'īlīs

Week 11: Avicenna on the Role of the Prophet and Law in the City

Week 12: Contemporary Islamic thought/ Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938): The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.

Week 13: Student -presentations/ essay presentation and Revision

Week 14: Student -presentations/ essay presentation and Revision

Formative Assessment:

Provide students with feedback throughout their learning as well as facilitate peer-reviews.

Summative Assessment:

The assessment for this course consists of two parts:

- 1- Students can choose to do an individual or group presentations on a topic related to this course. To be decided in consultation with the instructor. Or they can choose to write an individual essay.

Each student will have to present for 10 minutes, so if the presentation is a group of two this will be 20 minutes presentation. If a student decides to write an essay the essay **should not exceed** 2000 words.

Essays/ written presentations to be submitted by 10 December at the latest.

This assignment will constitute 50 % of the final grade.

- 2- Written short essay questions. Students will be given two questions by the end of week four. They will have two weeks to answer these questions and submit their answers via email to the instructor by Monday 27 October.

This assignment will constitute 25 % of the final grade.

- 3- Participation and attendance are mandatory, and they constitute 25 % of the total grade.

Secondary sources

Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford, 2016).

Peter Adamson, *The Cambridge Companion of Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Peter Adamson, *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī*, ed. by P. Adamson and P. Pormann, (Oxford: OUP, 2021).

Akasoy, A., and Giglioni, G. (eds.), *Renaissance Averroism and its Aftermath: Arabic Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2013.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled and Schmidtke, Sabine (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (online).

Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Stanford University Press, 2013.

Miskawayh, *The Refinement Character*, trans. C. Zurayk, (Beirut: AUB, 1968).

R. Lerner and M. Mahdi (eds.), *Medieval Political Philosophy a Source Book* (Cornell Univ. Press, NY, 1984).

Reinhart, Kevin, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*, New York: Suny Press, 1995.

Hans Daiber, *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, (Brill: Leiden, 2021), vol. 1.

Plato's Republic in the Islamic Context: New Perspectives on Averroes' Commentary, ed. by A. Orwin, (Boydell & Brewer online, 2020).

Interpreting Maimonides, ed. by C. Manekin and D. Davies, (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).

Averroes, On Plato's Republic, trans. R. Lerner, (Ithaca: CUP, 1974).

Avicenna. Al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt, ed. and trans. M. E. Marmura, (Utah: BYU, 2005).

Majid Fakhry, Ethical Theories in Islam, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.

Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology, ed. by S. Schmidtke, (Oxford: OUP, 2016).