



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

Course Programme Title

Islamic Philosophy (Online)

PHIL 11204



Course Guide 2020-21

Welcome and Introduction

Islamic philosophy is the missing link between ancient Greek thought and the European (medieval and early modern) philosophical tradition. It offers independent solutions to many philosophical problems which remain crucial for contemporary readers. Starting with a historical overview of the most important figures and schools, this course covers central topics of Islamic philosophy, such as (the selection of topics may vary from year to year):

- faith and reason
- philosophy and political authority
- free will and determinism (incl. the problem of evil)
- scientific knowledge and empiricism
- materialism (atomism) and sortal essentialism
- self-awareness, personal identity, and the immateriality of soul
- proofs for God's existence

Primary sources will be read in English translation.

People

Course Organiser:

Name: Fedor Benevich

Email: Fedor.Benevich@ed.ac.uk

Office hours: Thursday 10-12am.

Course Secretary:

Name: Becky Verdon

Email: Rebecca.Verdon@ed.ac.uk

Course Librarian:

Name: Ishbel Leggat

Email: Ishbel.Leggat@ed.ac.uk



Office hours:

Signup via [doodle](#) at least 8hrs in advance. You will receive an invitation for an MS Team online meeting. Alternatively, please email **Fedor Benevich** to make an appointment if you need to discuss material covered in the course or essay topics.

Course aims and objectives

This course will provide a systematic introduction to key issues and debates in Islamic philosophy by focusing on the medieval period and showing its relevance for contemporary philosophical discussions. It will explore the mechanisms of the critical appropriation of the Western (Greek) philosophical heritage in the Islamic intellectual tradition and the relationship between philosophy and religion in Islam.

Intended learning objectives

On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the central issues of Islamic philosophy
- analyse materials independently and critically engage with other interpretations
- provide systematic exposition and argumentation for their views
- demonstrate understanding of a non-Western intellectual tradition
- demonstrate the ability to actively engage in critical analysis through synchronous and asynchronous seminars

Learning, teaching and assessment

Syllabus

Schedule of lectures, seminars, tutorials and assessments

Week	Topic	Activity
<p>Week 1 14 January</p>	<p>Islamic Philosophy: Definition of Subject and Methods in Islamic Philosophy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)



<p>Week 2 21 January</p>	<p>History of Islamic Philosophy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 3 28 January</p>	<p>Knowledge, Political Authority and Prophecy (<i>falsafa</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 4 04 February</p>	<p>Philosophy and Religion (<i>kalām</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 5 11 February</p>	<p>Morality and Value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)



<p>Week 6 25 February</p>	<p>Scepticism about Causation and Occasionalism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 7 04 March</p>	<p>Eternity of the World</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 8 11 March</p>	<p>Proofs for God's Existence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 9 18 March</p>	<p>Free Will and Determinism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)



<p>Week 10 25 March</p>	<p>Personal Identity and The Immateriality of the Soul</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)
<p>Week 11 01 April</p>	<p>Revision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watching pre-recorded lecture materials (uploaded one week in advance) - Online Tutorial 9:00-9:50 am (UK time) - completing reading assignment (see below) - solving the quiz (uploaded simultaneously with the lecture) - asynchronous discussion on the Discussion Board (Learn)

Topics and reading

For general reading for this course, please consult the following:

1. Adamson, Peter (ed.). *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006.
2. Adamson, Peter. *Philosophy in the Islamic World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016.
3. Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009.
4. Gutas, Dimitri. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*. London: Routledge 1998.
5. El-Rouayheb, Khaled and Schmidtke, Sabine (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017. **[OHIP]**
6. Shihadeh, Ayman. *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*. Leiden-Boston: Brill 2006.
7. Wolfson, Henry. *The Philosophy of the Kalām*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1976.
8. Nagel, Tilman. *The History of Islamic Theology*. Markus Wiener Publishers: Princeton 2000.
9. Schmidtke, Sabine (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016. **[OHIT]**

Students are advised to listen to [Peter Adamson's podcast](#) on Islamic Philosophy.



More specific weekly topics and reading resources:

The reading assignment of the course includes Primary and Secondary Readings.

- Students **must prepare all Primary Readings** listed for each lecture.
- Students must prepare **at least one among the Recommended Readings** listed for each lecture.
- Students are advised to prepare their reading assignments **after having watched the pre-recorded lecture materials but before the tutorials**. All reading assignments will be made available in electronic format on Learn (“**Course-Materials**” / “**Resource-List**”).
- Week 5, 8, and 9 include unedited materials from the running DFG-funded project “Heirs of Avicenna” (Principle Investigator: Peter Adamson, LMU Munich). You can find further instructions regarding the access and usage of these materials on Learn (“**Course-Materials: Heirs of Avicenna**”)

Week 1. **Islamic Philosophy: Definition of Subject and Methods in Islamic Philosophy**

*[there are no primary readings for Week 1 but you must read at least **two** papers by D. Gutas]*

Secondary Readings:

Dimitri Gutas, “Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century”

Dimitri Gutas, “Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age”

Dimitri Gutas, “Avicenna and After: The Development of Paraphilosophy”

Week 2. **History of Islamic Philosophy**

[there are no primary readings for Week 2 but you must read the recommended chapter by P. Adamson]

Secondary Readings:

Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World: Very Short Introduction*, “A historical whirlwind tour”

Week 3. **Knowledge, Political Authority and Prophecy (*falsafa*):**

Primary Readings:

al-Fārābī, *Book of Religion* (tr. Butterworth)

Avicenna, *Healing, Metaphysics X.2 and X.5* (tr. Marmura)

Secondary Readings:

James Morris, “The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna’s Political Philosophy”

Catarina Belo, “Averroes (d. 1198), The Decisive Treatise” [OHIP]

Week 4. **Philosophy and Religion (*kalām*)**

Primary Readings:

al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error*, §§4-60 (tr. McCarthy)

al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, “Author’s Introduction”

al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, “Conclusion”



al-Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief, Fourth Treatise*, Introduction to the 2nd chapter
“Showing that it is obligatory to believe in matters reported in the revelation and deemed possible by reason”

[*this looks like a lot, but these chapters are actually very short*]

Secondary Readings:

Frank Griffel, “Incoherence of the Philosophers” [OHIP]

Frank Griffel, *Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, ch. 3-4

Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, “Part II.5: The Condemnation of Imitation”, pp. 173–200.

Week 5. Morality and Value

Primary Readings:

Heirs of Avicenna: *Good and Evil*

Secondary Readings:

Ayman Shihadeh, “Theories of Ethical Value in Kalām” [OHIT]

Ayman Shihadeh, “Avicenna’s Theodicy and Rāzī’s Anti-Theodicy”

Carlos Steele, “Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Evil”

Week 6. Scepticism about Causation and Occasionalism

Primary Readings:

al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers, Discussion XVII, On Causality and Miracles*

Secondary Readings:

Ulrich Rudolph, *Occasionalism* [OHIT]

Frank Griffel, *Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, ch. 5-7

Week 7. Eternity of the World

Primary Readings:

al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of Philosophers, 1st Discussion*

Secondary Readings:

Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, ch. I-IV

Andreas Lammer, “Eternity and Origination in the Works of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī and Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī”

Week 8. Proofs for God’s Existence

Primary Readings:

Heirs of Avicenna: *Proofs for God’s Existence*

Secondary Readings:



Toby Mayer, "Ibn Sīnā's *Burhān al-Ṣiddiqīn*"

Herbert Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, ch. V-IX

Week 9. Free Will and Determinism

Primary Readings:

Heirs of Avicenna: *Free Will and Determinism*

Secondary Readings:

Ayman Shihadeh, *Theological Ethics of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, ch. 1: *Rāzī's Theory of Action*

Catarina Belo, *Chance and Determinism in Avicenna and Averroes*.

Week 10. Personal Identity and The Immateriality of the Soul

Primary Readings:

Avicenna, *Cure*, *On Soul I.1*, "The Flying Man Argument" (translation from Adamson and Benevich 2018)

Avicenna, *Salvation, Concerning the Soul*, ch. XII-XV

Secondary Readings:

Therese-Anne Druart, "The Soul and Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes"

P. Adamson and F. Benevich, "The Thought Experimental Method: Avicenna's Flying Man Argument"

Ayman Shihadeh, "Classical Ash'arite Anthropology"

Week 11. Revision

Resources

Reading list materials are available via the course LEARN site. Please ensure you have completed the library induction tutorial. Should you have any problems accessing any of the materials for the course please contact the course librarian, [Ishbel Leggat](#).

Assessment

Essay plan 15%,

- Submit by Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 12 noon

Final essay 85%

- 3000 words
- Submit by Tuesday 20th April 2021 at 12 noon



Formative Essays: Students have the opportunity to submit a formative essay (midway through semester 1 and 2) on Turnitin via Learn. The essay cannot be draft of summative essay but it can be on the same topic.

- Submit by Thursday 4th March 2021 at 12 noon

Tutorials

Students must have watched **all pre-recorded lecture materials** (uploaded one week in advance) and completed **all readings assignments** (see above) by the time of tutorials. Tutorials will take place online via MS Teams. Students will receive a separate invitation to the “Islamic Philosophy” MS Teams group.

How to submit assessments

All essays and essay plans must be submitted online via Turnitin. For further information, see the Learn page of the course (“**Assessment**”)

The list of topics for essays and recommended sources as well as detailed requirements and advice for successful essays will be made available on Learn (“**Assessment**”).

Marking and feedback

To access assignment feedback, click on the submission box link after grades have been released.

- All grades are provisional until these have been confirmed by the exam board.
- [University's Common Marking Scheme](#)
- [Assessment regulations](#)