

## Islamic Philosophy (PHIL 10197)

**Course Organiser:** Fedor Benevich

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**Office Hours:** Thursday 10-12am, signup via [doodle](#) at least 8hrs in advance.

**Course Secretary:** Ann-Marie Cowe

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### Course Description:

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.

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.

### Learning Outcomes:

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

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the central issues of Islamic philosophy
2. Analyse materials independently and critically engage with other interpretations
3. Provide systematic exposition and argumentation for their views
4. Demonstrate understanding of a non-Western intellectual tradition

### Topics and Readings:

#### **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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

**Delivery:**

The taught segment of the course includes two elements:

Lectures: Due to the public health situation and the quarantine restrictions, lectures will be delivered completely online in Year 2020/2021 [Semester 2] in form of pre-recorded lecture materials. Lectures will become available to students **one week in advance of tutorials**. This means that if, for instance, the first tutorial group takes place in Week 1 on Wednesday, the 13<sup>th</sup>

of January, Week-1 Lecture will become available on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January. Subsequently, Week-2 lecture will become available on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, since the Week-2 tutorial takes place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January. **You must successfully pass correspondent Quizzes (see: Assessment) in order to access the lectures subsequent to the Week-1 lecture.**

Tutorials: There will be a choice between on-campus and online tutorials. All students will be allocated a tutorial group which fits in with their timetable. The tutorial will appear on your Office 365 calendar before week 1, when tutorials begin. If you find that you are unable to attend the tutorials for the date and time you have been given, [this](#) is where you may request to change it. **All tutorials are compulsory and attendance is monitored.** If for whatever reason, you are unable to attend a particular tutorial session, please can you notify both your Tutor AND the Teaching Office in advance of your tutorial session. When emailing, please ensure that you put the name of the course you are on plus the tutorial session you were due to attend.

### **Readings:**

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**”)

### **Assessment:**

This course will be assessed on the basis of:

#### 1. Mid-Term Essay

- 40% of final grade
- Word limit: 1500words
- Due date: Thursday 25th February, by 12pm (mid-day, UK time)

#### 2. Final Essay

- 55% of final grade
- Word limit: 2500 words
- Due date: Thursday 15th of April by 12pm (mid-day, UK time)

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**”).

#### 3. Participation: Quizzes

- 5% of final grade

- Students must solve **all quizzes (x10) with 100 points each** in order to pass the participation assignment. Quizzes will be made available simultaneously with correspondent lectures and will be based on lecture materials. Students cannot access the subsequent lectures unless they have passed the preceding quizzes successfully. Students have unlimited attempts to pass the quizzes.

### **Further General Reading:**

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.