

**PL212 Religion and Philosophy in the Arab-Islamic Philosophical Tradition:
Averroes as an Example and a Point of Reference**

Seminar Leader: Prof. Abed Azzam

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Office Hours: TBD

Seminar times: Mondays 3:45 pm to 7:00 pm.

Course Description:

Securing the harmony between philosophy and religion constitutes a major issue in the history of philosophy, especially within the Abrahamic philosophical tradition, and continues today to play a role in relation to the modern project of secularization. In this course we shall concentrate on the problem of the harmony between philosophy and religion within the medieval Arabic-Islamic philosophical tradition. The course shall explore historical developments from of al-Mu‘tazila until Ibn-Rushd, to concentrate in the end on a close reading of Ibn Rushd’s treatise *Fasl al-Maqal* (Book of the Decisive Treatise). This reading will allow us to proceed with a critical evaluation of the modern use and abuse of the tradition of this influential book within the rationalist modern project of the secularization of the Arab-Islamic transition.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Syllabi should note that, instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Also please to consult the BCB Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Class Participation (20%): Participation will be evaluated at the end of each session. Students will be assessed based on the general enthusiasm, frequency and quality of the questions they raise. Regular attendance and completion of all reading assignments is also required. Recurrent absences will substantially decrease the final grade. (up to two unexcused absences are allowed).

Class Presentations (30%): Each student will be expected to make one 20 minute (Power Point) presentation about a particular week’s readings of their own choice. Presentations should address the author, central question and arguments of the work and three critically

engaging questions and concluding thoughts posed to the class to spark discussion. Students can sign up to present on the week of their choice in the first week of classes.

Final essay (50%): The final paper for the class consists of a 3000 word essay that addresses a particular theme or concept related to the readings. Students will agree on their paper topics with the instructor and after first submitting an abstract and proposed bibliography. Late assignments will be penalized per day. Written assignments should include a creative title followed by your name, date, and course number. Pages should be double-spaced with 12-pt. font and one-inch margins. Paper due **Monday, 11.05.2020.**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers (and Diary Entries)

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Schedule

Week One: 27. January

Introduction

- F. Donner, Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam, 1—38 (PDF)
- M. Cook, The Koran, a Very Short Introduction, 3-61 (PDF)
- The Sunni-Shi`i Divide (PDF)

Week Two: 03. February

‘Ilm al-Kalām: Al-Mu‘tazila—I

- Al-Mu‘tazila: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ei2/mu-tazila.htm>
- J. van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, trans. J.M. Todd (Cambridge MA: 2006).
- W. Madelung, The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran. *Orientalia Hispanica* vol.1, ed. J.M. Barral, (Leiden: 1974), 504-25.

Week Three: 10. February

‘Ilm al-Kalām: Al-Ash‘ariyya

- Ash‘arism: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/14.htm>
- R.M. Frank, “Bodies and Atoms: the Ash‘arite Analysis,” in *Medieval Islamic Thought*, ed. M.E. Marmura (Toronto: 1984), 39-53.
- -----, *Early Islamic Theology: The Mu‘tazilites and al-Ash‘arī* (Aldershot: 2007) (Pages TBD)

Week Four: 17. February

Introducing (Greek) Philosophy in the Islamic World

- P. Adamson & R.C. Taylor, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Ch. 1-2 (PDF)
- P. Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World: A Very Short Introduction* (PDF)

Week Five: 24. February

Al-Farabi

- General Introduction: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-farabi/>
- M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Ch.4 (PDF)
- Al-Farabi, *The Political Writings*, Tr. C.E. Butterworth (PDF)

Week Six: 02. March

Ibn Sina

- General Introduction: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-sina/>
- Lizzini, O. “*Wujūd-Mawjūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna: a Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy*,” *Quaestio* 3 (2003), 11-38.
- P. Adamson, P. “On Knowledge of Particulars,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 105 (2005), 273-294.

Week Seven: 09. March

Deliverance from Error—Al-Ghazali I

- General Introduction: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-ghazali/>
- *Deliverance from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dal_1)*
- (a) Arabic Source: <https://www.ghazali.org/books/munqidh-dki.pdf>
- (b) English Translation (PDF)
- *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)* (Pages TBD)

Week Eight: 16. March

Deliverance from Error—Al-Ghazali II

- *Deliverance from Error*
- *The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifah)* (Pages TBD)

Week Nine: 23. March

Book of the Decisive Treatise—Ibn Rushd I

- Fakhry, Majid. *Averroes: His Life, Work and Influence*, Ch. 1.
- *Book of the Decisive Treatise (Fasl al-Maqal)*
- (a) Arabic Source: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/books/taf-taf.pdf>
- (b) English Translation: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/fasl.htm>
- *Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut)* (Pages TBD)
- (a) Arabic Source: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/books/taf-taf.pdf>
- (b) English Translation: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/tt/index.html>

Week Ten: 30. March

Book of the Decisive Treatise— Ibn Rushd II

- *Book of the Decisive Treatise (Fasl al-Maqal)*
- *Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut)* (Pages TBD)

Week Eleven: 06. April

No Class: Spring Break (06. April—13 April)

Week Twelve: 13. April

No Class—Federal Holiday

Week Thirteen: 20. April

Book of the Decisive Treatise— Ibn Rushd III

- *Book of the Decisive Treatise (Fasl al-Maqal)*
- *Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut)* (Pages TBD)

Week Fourteen: 27. April

Modern Reception of Ibn Rushd—I

- Renan, Ernst. “Islam and Science” (PDF)
- -----, *Averroes et l'Averroïsme: Essai Historique* (Pages TBD)
- Anton, Farah. *Ibn Rushd and his Philosophy* (Arabic) (Pages TBD)

Week Fifteen: 04. May

Modern Reception of Ibn Rushd—II

- Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid. *Critique of Religious Discourse* (Pages TBD)
- Abu-Rabi', Ibrahim M. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (Pages TBD)
- Kassab, Elizabeth Suzanne. *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (Pages TBD)