

PL170

Falsafa:

Introduction to Arabic Philosophy

Seminar Leader

Sinem D Kılıç

“The more one is able to leave one’s cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance.”

Email

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—Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Course Description

Course Times

Thursdays, 10 am–1 pm

Throughout the history of Western philosophy, the importance of Arabic philosophy has long been underestimated. For G. W. F. Hegel, for example, Arabic philosophy had “no content of any interest” whatsoever, and was therefore “not philosophy, but mere manner.” Although this position is no longer likely to find many academic adherents today, most institutions still do not offer any courses dedicated to Arabic philosophy and therefore continue to leave this pivotal part of our West-Eastern intellectual history unaddressed.

Office Hours

By appointment only

In this course on Arabic philosophy, we will mainly focus on the period between the 9th and the 12th century, when Muslim, Christian, and Jewish philosophers composed their works in the Arabic language and transferred philosophical questions from the ancient Greek tradition into their *falsafa* (Arabic for ‘philosophy’).

We will read representative texts of major thinkers like al-Kindī, ar-Rāzī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), al-Ghazālī, Ibn Bāğğā (Avempace), Ibn Ṭufāil, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Gabirol and Maimonides, but also modern intellectuals like Abdallah Laroui and Fatema Mernissi. By providing an overview of the multifaceted tradition of Arabic philosophy, this course aims to shed light on the rich heritage of *falsafa* as a vital component of intellectual tradition within the Islamic world.

Course Readings

All required readings will be available in a Course Reader (print version), which will be distributed in the library. All additional readings will be available via Google Classroom.

* Recommended Books:

(1) Peter Adamson (2015) *Philosophy in the Islamic World. A Very Short Introduction*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press (ISBN 978-0-19-968367-3)

(2) Jon McGinnis / David C. Reisman (ed) (2007) *Classical Arabic Philosophy. An Anthology of Sources*, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company (ISBN 978-0-87220-871-1)

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, one absence from a once-per-week course should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. More than one absence (that is an absence from a once-per-week session of 180 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Required Texts

Generally, there will be some compulsory and some recommended readings for each session. These are mainly selected contributions by different authors. All students are responsible for preparing all the required readings in advance of each week (with the exception of the first session). In addition to the printed course reader, a digital reader will be provided at the beginning of the semester via Google Classroom. However, all texts should be physically printed at best, and be available for reference during our course time. The recommended readings, also uploaded to our Google Classroom, are not mandatory, but highly encouraged.

Assessment

Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means

- (1) having completed the assigned reading,
- (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading, and
- (3) being ready to initiate and to contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

Class Presentations

Every student is expected to present on one text as per a sign-up sheet online.

Each presentation of about 15 minutes will examine key passages of their choice, ideally using either PowerPoint or a handout for the class. You are encouraged to write your midterm or final paper on the text that you present on. In this manner, your essay can expand on the insights and questions that arose from your class contribution and the discussion that follows your readings.

Writing Assignments

There will be two principal assignments over the course of the term: **a midterm essay of 2000 words** due at 23:59 on **Oct 22**, and **a final essay of 3000 words** due at 23:59 on

Dec 10 for graduating students and 23:59 on **Dec 22** for everyone else. All essays are to be **submitted electronically via Google Classroom**.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to 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. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 25%

Presentation: 20%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 25%

Final essay (3000 words): 30%

Course Schedule

Falsafa: Introduction to Arabic Philosophy

SESSION / DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
1 / Sept 7, 2023	INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ḌARABIC PHILOSOPHY?	
2 / Sept 14, 2023	FALSAFA: ORIGINS & BACKGROUNDS Abū Qurra (c. 740–829)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 120 “The Straight Path” & 122 “Founded in Translation” (1) Dimitri Gutas (1998), Introduction & Part I.1 , in: <i>Greek Thought, Arabic Culture</i> ch. 1 (pp. 1– 27) (2) Theodor Abū Qurra, <i>On Natural Theology</i>
3 / Sept 21, 2023	THE “FATHER OF ARAB PHILOSOPHY”: al-Kindī (c. 801–873)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 123 “Philosopher of the Arabs: al-Kindī” (1) al-Kindī, <i>On the Intellect</i> (in: <i>Philosophical Works of al- Kindī</i> , ed. by Peter Adamson and Peter E. Pormann, Karachi: Oxford University Press 2012, pp. 93–98) (2) <i>Ibd.</i> , <i>On the Quiddity of Sleep and Dreams</i> (in: <i>Philosophical Works of al- Kindī</i> , pp. 122–133) (3) <i>Ibd.</i> , <i>On Dispelling Sorrows</i> (in: <i>Philosophical Works of al-Kindī</i> , pp. 245–266)

SESSION / DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
4 / Sept 28, 2023	TAKE FIVE: ar-Rāzī [Lat. Rhazes] (c. 1149–1209)	(🎵 🎵) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 126 “High Five: Al-Rāzī” (1) ar-Rāzī, <i>The Philosopher’s Way of Life</i> (in: <i>Classical Arabic Philosophy. An Anthology of Sources</i> , ed. by Jon McGinnis und David C. Reisman, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing 2007, pp. 36–44) (2) <i>Ibd.</i> , <i>On the Five Eternals</i> (in: <i>Classical Arabic Philosophy</i> , pp. 44–49) (3) <i>Ibd.</i> , <i>Doubts against Galen</i> (in: <i>Classical Arabic Philosophy</i> , pp. 49–53)
5 / Oct 5, 2023	THE “SECOND MASTER”: al-Fārābī [Lat. Alfarabius / Avenassar] (c. 872–950/951)	(🎵 🎵) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 129 “The Second Master: al-Fārābī”, 130 “State of Mind: al-Fārābī on Religion and Politics” & 131 “Deborah Black on al-Fārābī’s Epistemology” (1) al-Fārābī, <i>On the Perfect State</i> (ch. 14–17)
6 / Oct 12, 2023	LOVE & FRIENDSHIP: Ibn Miskawayh (c. 932–1030) & at-Tūsī (1201–1274)	(🎵 🎵) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 134 “Balancing Acts: Arabic Ethical Literature” (1) ibn Miskawayh, “Love and Friendship” (in: <i>The Refinement of Character</i> V, pp. 123–154) (2) at-Tūsī, »On Love, Connector of Societies« & »On Friendship and Friends« (<i>The Nasirean Ethics</i> , pp. 195–211; 242–252)

SESSION / DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
7 / Oct 19, 2023	SUFISM & POETRY: Rābi‘a of Basra (c. 716–801), Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240) & Rūmī (1207–1273)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 178 “Eyes Wide Shut: Rūmī and Philosophical Sufism” (1) Rābi‘a of Basra, <i>Selected Poems</i> (2) ibn ‘Arabī, <i>Selected Poems</i> (2) Rūmī, <i>Selected Poems</i>
Sunday, Oct 22, 2023	<i>Midterm papers due</i>	
Oct 23 – Oct 29, 2023	FALL BREAK	
8 / Nov 2, 2023	“I FLOAT, THEREFORE I AM”: ibn Sīnā [Lat. Avicenna] (c. 980–1037)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 138–141 (1) ibn Sīnā, <i>The Soul I.1 & I.5</i> (in: <i>Classical Arabic Philosophy</i> , pp. 175–186)
9 / Nov 9, 2023	THE “AUTHORITY ON ISLAM”: al-Ghazālī [Lat. Algazelus] (c. 1055/56–1111)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 143–145 (1) al-Ghazālī, <i>The Rescuer from Error</i> (excerpt)
10 / Nov 16, 2023	ISLAND PHILOSOPHY: ibn Bāḡḡa [lat. Avempace] (c. 1095–1138) & ibn Ṭufāil [Lat. Abubacer] (c. 1106–1185)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 148 “Fantasy Island: Ibn Bāḡḡa and Ibn Ṭufāil” (1) ibn Bāḡḡa, <i>Rule of the Solitary</i> (Introduction) (2) ibn Ṭufāil, <i>Hayy ibn Yaqzān: A Philosophical Tale</i>
11 / Nov 23, 2023	“THE COMMENTATOR”: Ibn Rušd [Lat. Averroes] (1126–1198)	(🎧) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 149, 151 & 152 (1) ibn Rušd, <i>Decisive Treatise</i> (selected passages)

SESSION / DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
12 / Nov 30, 2023	JEWISH PHILOSOPHY: ibn Gabirol [lat. Avicbron / Avicbrol] (c. 1021/22–1070) ☞ Maimonides (c. 1135/8–1204)	(🎵🎵) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episodes 155 ☞ 159–163 (1) ibn Gabirol, <i>The Fountain of Life</i> (ch. 1) (2) Maimonides, <i>The Guide of the Perplexed II</i> (Introduction ☞ ch. 13–14)
13 / Dec 7, 2023	ARABIC PHILOSOPHY TODAY I: Abdallah Laroui (* 1933)	(1) Abdallah Laroui, <i>The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual</i> (excerpt)
14 / Dec 14, 2023	ARABIC PHILOSOPHY TODAY II: Women ☞ Islam: Fatema Mernissi (1940–2015)	(🎵🎵) <i>History of Philosophy</i> Podcast Episode 192 “The Stronger Sex: Women Scholars and Islam” ☞ 195 “Anke von Kügelgen on Contemporary Islamic Thought” (1) Fatema Mernissi, <i>Beyond the Veil</i> (excerpt)
15 / Dec 18 – Dec 22, 2023	COMPLETION WEEK  (No Class) <i>Final papers due on Sunday, Dec 10 for graduating students ☞ Friday, Dec 22 for everyone else</i>	

ESSAY DEADLINES

Midterm Paper (2000 words) by **Oct 22, 2023, 23:59 CEST**

Final Paper (3000 words) by **Dec 10, 23:59** for graduating students ☞ **Dec 22, 2023, 23:59 CET** for other students