PHIL281 – Philosophy in the Islamic World
Winter 2022
Instructor: Dr. Nabeel Hamid
Email: nabeel.hamid@concordia.ca
Office hours: W 12:00-1:00 in M-110, and by appointment via Zoom
Class Schedule: MW 10:15-11:30, in H 509

Calendar description: An introduction to philosophy in classical and modern Islamic contexts. Authors may include al-Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, ibn Tufayl, al-Ghazālī, and ibn Rushd (classical); Muhammad Iqbal, Rokeya Sakhawat Hosein, Amina Wadud, Kecia Ali, and Abdol Karim Sorosh (modern). Topics may include: cosmology; the nature of God; causation; skepticism and certainty; authority and democracy; gender and sexuality; and environmental ethics.

Course description
This course is an introduction to philosophy written in the Islamic world in both the classical and modern contexts. We begin with the religious and political context of the early Islamic world which gave rise to some of the lasting theological and philosophical concerns of the Islamic tradition. We then study some of the key thinkers of the classical period of Islamic philosophy, including al-Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī. The second half of the course combines classical and modern texts, focusing in particular on topics relating to the environment, gender, and sexuality. Representative topics covered in the course include: whether the world is eternal or finite; the relation between the soul and the body; the distinction between essence and existence; whether philosophy (or science) and religion are in harmony or conflict; environmental ethics; gender and sexuality.

Learning Objectives
1. To understand the broad contours of the Islamic intellectual tradition.
2. To practice the skills of close reading and analysis of philosophical texts.
3. To learn how to situate philosophical ideas in historical context.

Required texts
The following texts are available at the Concordia bookstore. Additional readings will be posted on Moodle.

Assignments and Expectations

1. Attendance and participation
   - Attendance in class is strongly encouraged but not mandatory.
   - Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Each week I will present the assigned readings on the assumption that you have read the texts carefully. This means that lectures will go beyond the readings by, for example, situating them in historical context, bringing them in dialogue with other texts, or drawing out their philosophical implications. Attending lectures is not a substitute for reading the texts. Nor is reading the texts a substitute for attending lectures.
   - Participation in class is encouraged and appreciated. But there is no penalty for choosing not to contribute to discussion, or for contributing occasionally. Even if you do not contribute, you are expected to listen actively and attentively.

2. Readings
   - Careful, regular reading of the texts is your most important task in this course. You should expect to spend 3-5 hours per week on the assigned readings. Having a good understanding of the texts should be your prime motivation for taking this course. Reading is essential for understanding the lectures and for contributing meaningfully to discussion.
   - You are expected to have the texts on hand during class.

3. Four reading responses (max. 250 words): 5% each (= 20%)
   - Responses should be posted to Moodle. To count, responses must be posted by Tuesday night of the week in which the readings are to be discussed in class.
   - You should respond to topics in the readings that interest you the most. You should tackle specific passages or arguments from the text. Do not give big-picture, general impressions of a whole text. Good strategies include: reconstructing an argument; examining a premise; explaining a difficult passage; clarifying a question; raising a question.
   - Responding to a classmate's post also counts toward your four responses. You are strongly encouraged to do so and have conversations with your classmates around the week’s readings.
   - You should not think of these as structured essays. They are supposed to be open-ended responses to what you have read. You should take no more than thirty minutes, four times during the term, to write a paragraph about what you have just finished reading for the week.

4. Two exams: 40% each
   - The exams will consist of four short essay questions. The questions will be chosen from a set of study questions distributed one week before the exam.
   - Mid-term, take-home exam: available from Feb 25, 9:00 am EST; due Feb 25, 8:59 pm EST.
   - Final exam: during exam period; date TBA
   - You may write your exams in either English or French.
Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution

1. The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2. In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As. ‘INC’ will be provided as a course grade only in medical and compassionate circumstances.

Numerical Equivalents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84%</td>
<td>3.7 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89%</td>
<td>4.0 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>4.3 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
<td>2.7 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
<td>3.0 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>3.3 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
<td>1.7 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
<td>2.0 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>2.3 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52%</td>
<td>0.7 GP</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>53-56%</td>
<td>1.0 GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59%</td>
<td>1.3 GP</td>
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Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.
Academic Integrity

Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement” (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism.

In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Pronouns

All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. I respect this right and will do my best to satisfy any of these requests. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to me. If I mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise me as soon as possible.

Sexual Violence

Concordia’s Policy Regarding Sexual Violence defines sexual violence as “any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, degrading sexual imagery, distribution of sexual images or video of a community member without their consent, and cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and/or presentation.” The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.
- Concordia’s Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the Policy for further details.
- Other resources include the Centre for Gender Advocacy and the CSU Advocacy Centre.
- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia’s Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines, which “strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student.”

**Accessibility**

I am available to discuss appropriate accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Please see me as soon as possible if you require any accommodations. You should register with the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities in order to benefit from their services.

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

**Schedule of readings**

**Jan 10**  
Introduction

- No reading

**Jan 12**  
Early history


**Jan 17**  
Islam as seen by early observers

- John of Damascus, selections from *On heresy; Disputation of a Saracen and a Christian; Refutation against the Saracens* (Moodle)

**Jan 19**  
Early Islamic creeds

- Watt, selections from *Islamic Creeds*: ibn-Hanbal; al-Ash’ari; Abu Hanifa; later Hanafi creed (Moodle)
- Handout: Qur’anic verses (Moodle)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 24</td>
<td>Mutazilism and the reception of Greek philosophy</td>
<td>Abd al-Jabbar, <em>The Five Fundamentals</em> (Moodle)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Logic</td>
<td>Al-Farabi, “Eisagoge” (CAP: <em>Classical Arabic Philosophy</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Al-Farabi, “On Demonstration” (CAP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>Cosmology</td>
<td>Al-Farabi, “On the Principles of Existing Things” (CAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Ibn-Sina, selections on Psychology from <em>The Cure</em>, “The Soul” (CAP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>Criticism of <em>falsafa</em></td>
<td>Al-Ghazali, “Introduction” to <em>Incoherence of the Philosophers</em> (Moodle)</td>
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<td>Al-Ghazali, selections from <em>Deliverance from Error</em> (Moodle)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>On the eternity of the world</td>
<td>Al-Ghazali, <em>Incoherence of the Philosophers</em>, “First Discussion” (CAP)</td>
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--- take-home exam: Feb 25, from 9:00 am EST to 8:59 pm EST ---
--- mid-term break ---

Mar 7  Humanity and the natural world
       - ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn-Yaqzan*

Mar 9  Humanity and the natural world
       - ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn-Yaqzan*

Mar 14 The Quranic view of animals
       - Ikhwan as-Safa, *The Case of the Animals versus Man*, “Prologue”
       - Sarra Tlili, *Animals in the Qur’an*, ch. 4: “Depiction of Non-human Animals in the Qur’an” (Moodle)

Mar 16 Animal ethics
       - Ikhwan as-Safa, *The Case of the Animals versus Man*

Mar 21 Animal ethics
       - Ikhwan as-Safa, *The Case of the Animals versus Man*

Mar 23 Islam and ecology
       - Syed Noman-ul-Haq, “Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction” (Moodle)

Mar 28 Women in Islamic history
       - Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, chs. 3 and 4 (Moodle)

Mar 30 Women in Islamic history
       - Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, chs. 5 and 6 (Moodle)

Apr 4  Gender and sexuality
       - Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman*, Introduction, ch. 2 (Moodle)
Apr 6    Gender and sexuality
         - Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam*, Introduction, chs. 5 and 9 (Moodle)

Apr 11   Philosophy and religion
         - ibn-Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise* (CAP)

Apr 13   Wrap-up

--- final exam, date TBA ---