



## CLASSICAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY (TH 684)

Yahya M. Michot

This course explores the evolution and main debates of Islamic philosophy (*falsafa*) from the great translation movement of ancient Greek texts under the 'Abbâsid dynasty (8th-9th centuries) until the golden age of inter-disciplinary intellectual, scientific and spiritual debates under the Mamlûks of Egypt and the Mongols of Iran (13th-14th centuries). Besides the major *falâsifa* known to the medieval Latins (Kindî, Fârâbî, Avicenna, Ghazâlî, Averroes...), attention will also be given to several other thinkers, generally less famous in the West, but nevertheless important: the Ikhwân al-Şafâ', Miskawayh, Ibn ʤufayl, Râzî, ʤûsî, Qûnawî... A selection of representative texts will be read in English translation and commented on. A basic knowledge of Greek philosophy, Islam and the history of Muslim societies (7th-14th. centuries) would be useful for this course.

**Class will meet:** Tuesdays 4:30-6:50 p.m., beginning January 26.

### Course Objectives

- 1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on classical Islamic philosophy.
- 2) They are expected to gain an acquaintance with the thought and writings of the most important *falâsifa*.
- 3) They should be able to benefit from the methodological approach adopted in these classes and apply them for their own studies and/or research projects.

### Course Requirements

- 1) It is strongly recommended that the student arrive at the first class already having a general knowledge about the religion of Islam, as well as about the history and geography of Muslim peoples. They should also be able to find their way around in the major reference tools for Islamic Studies (*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Index Islamicus...*).
- 2) Weekly readings, class participation (including presentations of assigned readings), regular attendance. If you are unable to attend class, please contact the Professor.
- 3) A final research paper and a *viva voce*, as described *infra*.

### The final grade will be based upon the following:

- 1) Active class participation & presentations ([THE ASSIGNED READINGS ARE ESSENTIAL](#)). (30%).
- 2) A final research paper of a least 15 pages\* on an aspect of classical Islamic philosophy (8th–14th c.). The topic should be chosen by the end of class VI in consultation with the Professor. This paper will be due by the end of class XII (45%).
- 4) A final *viva voce* exam discussing the course, with an emphasis on the final research paper submitted (25%).

\* All written work is to conform to the seminary writing guidelines, which can be found online at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf>. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for work in the course.

## General references

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, INDEX ISLAMICUS...

ENDRESS, Gerhard, *Islam: An Historical Introduction*. Translated by Carole HILLENBRAND (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002 – 2d ed.), viii & 301 p., ISBN 0-7486-1620-9. (DS35 .6.E5313 2004)

ADAMSON, Peter & TAYLOR, Richard C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xviii & 448 p., 0-521-52069-X. (B741 .C36 2005)

NASR, Seyyed Hossein & LEAMAN, Oliver (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols. (London - New York: Routledge, 1997), xx & 1211 p., ISBN 0-415-15667-5. (B741 .H58 2001)

GUTAS, Dimitri, *The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century. An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy*, in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29/1, 2002, p. 5-25.

STANFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY. On: <http://plato.stanford.edu/about.html>.

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY ONLINE. On: [www.muslimphilosophy.com/](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/).

## Class Schedule

### I. January 26. *The « House of Wisdom »* (bayt al-ḥikma)

Topics: Pre-Islamic background. Translation Movement. Arab historians of *falsafa*.

General references:

ROSENTHAL, Franz, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*. Translated from the German by E. & J. MARMORSTEIN (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), xx & 298 p., ISBN 0-7100-7864-1. (DS36.82 .G7 R6713)

NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, Part I/1: *Religious, intellectual and cultural context*, p. 21-118.

Reading Assignment:

GUTAS, D., *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society* (London - New York: Routledge, 1998). — Pages 11-60. (DS36.82 .G7 G88 1998)

### II. February 2. *Al-Kindī*

Topics: « *Faylasûf al-'Arab* ». Abû Ma'shar. Mu'tazila.

General references:

ADAMSON, Peter, *Al-Kindī and the reception of Greek philosophy*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 32-51.

—, *Abû Ma'sar, al-Kindī and the Philosophical Defense of Astrology*, in *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales*, 69/2, 2002, p. 245-270.

Reading Assignment:

IVRY, Alfred L., *Al-Kindī's metaphysics*. A Translation of Ya'qûb ibn Ishâq al-Kindī's Treatise "ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY" (*Fî al-Falsafah al-Ulâ*), with Introduction and Commentary (Albany: State University of New York Press, « Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science », 1974), x & 207 p., ISBN 0-87395-092-5. — Pages 55-114. (PDF: [www.muslimphilosophy.com/kindi/index.html](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/kindi/index.html))

### III. February 9. *Abû Bakr al-Râzî, the « Heretic »*

Topics: *Liber Continens*. A'lâm al-nubuwwa. Five eternal substances. Three Impostors.

General reference:

GOODMAN, Lenn E., *Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyâ' al-Râzî*, in NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 198-215.

BRION, Fabienne, *Philosophie et révélation : traduction annotée de six extraits du Kitâb A'lâm al-Nubuwwa d'Abû Hâtîm al-Râzî*, in *Bulletin de Philosophie médiévale*, 28 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Secrétariat de la SIEPM, 1986), p. 134-162.

—, *Le temps, l'espace et la genèse du monde selon Abû Bakr al-Râzî. Présentation et traduction des chapitres I, 3-4 du Kitâb a'lâm al-nubuwwa d'Abû Hâtîm al-Râzî*, in *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 87 (Louvain-la-Neuve, May 1989) p. 139-164.

Reading Assignments:

GOODMAN, LENN E., *Râzî vs Râzî – Philosophy in the Majlis*, in H. LAZARUS-YAFEH (ed.), *The Majlis* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1999), p. 84-107. — Pages 84-107. (Photocopy)

AND

RÂZÎ, *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*. Translated from the Arabic by Arthur J. ARBERRY (London: John Murray, 1950). — Pages 18-49. (BJ1291.R3413.1950)

#### IV. February 16. *Ikhwân al-Şafâ'*: *Gnosis and Humanism in the fourth/tenth century*

Topics: The *Rasâ'il*. The Ismâ'îlî philosophers.

General references:

DE CALLATAÏ, G., *Ikhwân al-Şafâ'*. *A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

MICHOT, Y., *Misled and Misleading... Yet Central in their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwân al-Şafâ'*, in *The Ikhwân al-Şafâ' and their Rasâ'il. An Introduction*. Edited by N. El-Bizri. Foreword by F. Daftary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, « Epistles of the Brethren of Purity », 2008), p. 139-179. — Revised version, with important editorial corrections, on [www.muslimphilosophy.com](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com).

Reading Assignment:

VAN REIJN, Eric, *The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren (Rasâ'il Ikhwan al-Safa')*. An annotated translation of Epistles 43 to 47 (London: Minerva Press, 1995), x & 137 p., ISBN 1-85863-418-0. — Pages 50-94. Epistle 46: On faith and the faithful. (Photocopy)

#### V. February 23. *Abû Naşr al-Fârâbî's alternative society*

Topics: The « *Second Master* ». The Baghdâdî Peripatetician literati.

General references:

KRAEMER, Joel L., *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*. Followed by: *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: a Preliminary Study*. Second revised edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), xxx & 329, 135-164 p., ISBN 90-04-09736-8.

NETTON, Ian R., *Al-Fârâbî and His School* (London - New York: Routledge, « Arabic thought and Culture », 1992), XIII & 128 p., ISBN 0-415-03595-3. (B745.K53 N48 1992)

REISMAN, David, *Al-Fârâbî and the philosophical curriculum*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 52-71.

BLACK, Deborah L., *al-Fârâbî*, in NASR & S. H., LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 178-197.

Reading Assignment:

FÂRÂBÎ, Abû Naşr (al-), *Al-Fârâbî on the Perfect State, Abû Naşr al-Fârâbî's Mabâdî' arâ' ahl al-madînat al-fâdila*. A revised text with introduction, translation, and commentary by Richard WALZER, Postscript by ENDRESS Gerhard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 571 p., ISBN 0-19-824505-X. — Pages 197-259 (Chapters 13-15). (Photocopy)

#### VI. March 2. *Ibn Sînâ. I: Milieu, Life, Works*

Topics: From Bukhârâ to Hamadhân. *Qânûn, Şifâ', Ishârât, Mubâhathât*, etc.

General references:

GUTAS, D., *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, « Islamic Philosophy and Theology. Texts and Studies, IV », 1988).

—, *Avicenna's madhhab. With an Appendix on the Question of his Date of Birth*, in *Atti del XIII Congresso dell'Unione Européenne d'Arabistas et d'Islamistas* (Venezia 29 settembre - 4 ottobre 1986), *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5-6 (Venise: Armenia, 1987-1988), p. 323-336.

MICHOT, Y., *IBN SÎNÂ. Lettre au vizir Abû Sa'd. Editio princeps* d'après le manuscrit de Bursa, traduction de l'arabe, introduction, notes et lexique (Paris: Albouraq, « Sagesses Musulmanes, 4 », 1421/2000), xii, 130\*, 61, 4 & 186 p. ISBN 2-84161-150-7.

—, *La réponse d'Avicenne à Bahmanyâr et al-Kirmânî*. Présentation, traduction critique et lexique arabe-français de la *Mubâhatha III*, in *Le Muséon*, CX (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1997), p. 143-221.

Reading Assignments:

GOHLMAN, W. E., *The Life of Ibn Sina. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation*, « Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science », State University of New York Press, Albany, 1974. — Pages 16-88. (B751.A5 S5 1974)

OR

GUTAS, D., *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*. — Pages 23-30 (Text 3) & 43-54 (Texts 8-9), 56-72 (Texts 11-13). (Photocopy)

#### VII. March 9. *Ibn Sînâ. II: « al-Shaykh al-Ra'îs »*

Topics: Metaphysics, psychology, prophetology, eschatology. An “Oriental philosophy” ?

General references:

GOODMAN, Lenn Evan, *Avicenna* (London - New York: Routledge, Arabic thought and Culture, 1992), XIII & 240 p., ISBN 0-415-07409-6. (B751.Z7 G66 1992)

NASR, S. H., *Ibn Sînâ's “Oriental philosophy”*, in NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, p.

247-251.

GUTAS, Dimitri, *Avicenna's Eastern ("Oriental") Philosophy: Nature, Contents, Transmission*, in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 159-180.

#### Reading Assignments:

INATI, Shams, *Ibn Sînâ and Mysticism. Remarks and Admonitions: part Four* (London & New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996), ISBN 0-7103-0482-X. — [Pages 69-108](#). (PDF: [www.muslimphilosophy.com/sinal/index.html](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/sinal/index.html))

AND

CORBIN, Henry, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, Translated from the French by Willard R. TRASK (Princeton, Princeton University Press, « Bollingen series, LXVI », 1988), xiii & 423 p., ISBN 0-691-01893-6. — [Pages 137-150: Translation of the Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqzân](#). (Photocopy)

### VIII. March 16. *Autodestructions* (Tahâfut), from Abû Ḥâmid al-Ghazâlî to Ibn Rushd

Topics: Opposing Avicenna. Reconciling reason and Islam.

#### General references:

MARMURA, Michael E., *al-Ghazâlî*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 137-154.

JANSSENS, Jules, *Al-Gazzâlî and His Use of Avicennian Texts*, in *Problems in Arabic Philosophy*, redigit Mikols MAROTH (Piliscsaba: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, « Acta et studia, II », 2003), ISBN 963-86359-24, p. 37-49.

URVOY, Dominique, *Ibn Rushd*, in NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 330-345.

GHAZÂLÎ, Abû Ḥâmid (al-), *The Incoherence of the Philosophers - Tahâfut al-Falâsifa*, A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by Michael E. MARMURA (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, « Islamic Translation Series », 2000), xxxi & 261 p., ISBN 0-8425-2466-5. (B753.G33 T3313 1997)

#### Reading Assignments:

MONTGOMERY WATT, W., *The faith and practice of al-Ghazâlî* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1952). — [Pages 19-85: Deliverance from error](#). (PDF: [www.ghazali.org/site/oeuvre-s.htm](http://www.ghazali.org/site/oeuvre-s.htm) : Watt's Translation)

OR

HOURLANI, George F., *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*. A translation, with introduction and notes, of Ibn Rushd's *Kitâb faṣl al-maqâl*, with its appendix (*Damîma*) and an extract from *Kitâb al-kashf 'an manâhij al-adilla* (London: Luzac & Co., « E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series. New Series, XXI », 1976), [xii] & 128 p., ISBN 0-7189-022-X. — [Faṣl al-maqâl \(# 1 to 197\)](#) ([www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/fasl.htm](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/fasl.htm))

### IX. March 23. « Oriental Wisdom » East & West, from Yahyâ l-Suhrawardî to Ibn Ṭufayl

Topics: Re-inventing Avicenna.

#### General references:

PUIG MONTADA, Josef, *Philosophy in Andalusia, Ibn Bâjja and Ibn Ṭufayl*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 155-179.

WALBRIDGE, J., *Suhrawardî and Illuminationism*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 201-223.

ZIAI, Hossein, *The Illuminationist Tradition*, in NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 465-499.

GUTAS, Dimitri, *Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sînâ's Eastern Philosophy*, in *Oriens* 34 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 222-241.

#### Reading Assignments:

IBN ṬUFAYL, Abû Ja'far, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzân*. A philosophical tale translated with introduction and notes by Lenn Evan GOODMAN (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), ix & 246 p. — [Pages 95-166](#). (B753 .I53 R53 1972)

OR

SUHRAWARDÎ, Shihâb al-Dîn Yahyâ, *The Philosophy of Illumination - Ḥikmat al-Ishrâq*. A New Critical Edition of the Text of *Ḥikmat al-ishrâq* with English Translation, Notes, Commentary, and Introduction by John WALBRIDGE & Hossein ZIAI. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, « Islamic Translation Series », 1999), xliii, 163\* & 219p., ISBN 0-8425-2457-6. — [Pages 115-163: Discourses III-V](#). (Photocopy)

### X. April 6. *Philosophizing* (tafalsuf) after the Falâsifa

Topics: Philosophizing Sufis, theologians and scientists. The primacy of logic.

#### General references:

GUTAS, D., *The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000 - ca. 1350*, in J. JANSSENS & D. DE SMET (eds.), *Avicenna and his Heritage. Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven - Louvain-la-Neuve, Sept. 8-11, 1999* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, « Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. De Wulf-Mansion Centre. Series 1, XXVIII », 2002), p. 81-97.

MICHOT, Y., *La pandémie avicennienne au VIe/XIIe siècle. Présentation, editio princeps et traduction de l'introduction du Livre de l'advenue du monde (Kitâb ḥudûth al-'âlam) d'Ibn Ghaylân al-Balkhî*, in *Arabica*, XL/3 (Paris, Nov. 1993), p. 287-344.

SHIHADDEH, A., *From al-Ghazâlî to al-Râzî: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology*, in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 15 (Cambridge, 2005), p. 141-179.

CHITTICK, William C., *Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the al-Tûsî, al-Qunawî Correspondence*, in *Religious Studies*, 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 87-104.

RESCHER, N., *The Development of Arabic Logic* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964).

#### Reading Assignment:

TUSÎ, Naṣîr al-Dîn (al-), *Contemplation and Action. The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar*. A New Edition and English Translation of *Sayr wa Sulûk* by S. J. BADAḲHCHANI (London: I. B. Tauris - The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1998), xiii, 86 & 22 p., ISBN 1-85043-908-7. — [Pages 23-54](#). (Photocopy)

OR

MICHOT, Y., *Al-Nukat wa-l-Fawâ'id: An Important Summa of Avicennian Falsafa*, in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: Sources and Reception*, ed. by Peter ADAMSON (London: The Warburg Institute - Turin: Nino Aragno Editore, « Warburg Institute Colloquia, 11 », 2007) — [Pages 90-124](#). (PDF: [www.muslimphilosophy.com/#people](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/#people))

### XI. April 13. *Beyond the boundaries of Islam, from Maimonides to George Bush*

Topics: the influence of *falsafa* in Judaism and the West from the Middle Ages to the modern period.

#### General references:

HARVEY, Steven, *Islamic philosophy and Jewish philosophy*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 349-369.

BURNETT, Charles, *Arabic into Latin: the reception of Arabic philosophy into Western Europe*, in ADAMSON, P. & TAYLOR, R. C. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, p. 370-404.

WILSON, Catherine, *Modern Western philosophy*, in NASR, S. H. & LEAMAN, O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, vol. II, p. 1013-1029.

TAKAHASHI, Hidemi, *The Reception of Ibn Sînâ in Syriac: The Case of Gregory Barhebraeus*, in David C. REISMAN (ed.), *Before and After Avicenna*. Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group (Leiden - Boston: Brill, « Islamic Philosophy and Science. Texts and Studies, LII », 2003), xix & 302 p., ISBN 90-04-12978-2.

#### Reading Assignment:

MICHOT, Y., *Avicenna's Almahad in 17th Century England: Sandys, Pococke, Digby, Baron, Cudworth et alii...*, in *Uluslararası İbn Sînâ Sempozyumu Bildiriler, 22-24 Mayıs 2008, İstanbul – International Ibn Sina Symposium Papers, May 22-24, 2008, Istanbul*, eds. Mehmet MAZAK & Nevzat ÖZKAYA, 2 vols. (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A. Ş. Yayınları, 2009), vol. II, p. 299-336. — [Pages 299-318](#). (PDF: [www.muslimphilosophy.com](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com))

### XII. April 20. « *Poisoned by Falsafa* »: *Ibn Taymiyya*

Topics: Refutation of Greek logic. Commentaries on Thâbit, IS, etc. Opposition to the rationalism of Ghazâlî & Râzî. Influence of IS (theodicy). Subki's accusations.

#### General references:

MICHEL, Thomas F., *Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of Falsafa*, in *Hamdard Islamicus*, VI/1 (Karachi, 1983), p. 3-14.

HOOVER, Jon, *Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian*, in *Theological Review*, 27 (2006), p. 34-46.

#### Reading Assignment:

MICHOT, Y., *A Mamlûk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risâla Adḥawiyya: Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar' al-Ta'aruf of Ibn Taymiyya*, with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices, in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14:2-3 (Oxford, 2003), Part I, pp. 149-203; Part II, pp. 309-363. — [Part I, pages 150-194](#). (PDF: [www.muslimphilosophy.com](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com))

