

Humanities Elective: Introduction to Islamic Thought

Fall 2014

MWF, 8:30-9:50

e Classroom

Instructor: Adam Kotsko, a.kotsko@shimer.edu

Course Introduction

This course investigates key figures and themes in pre-modern Islamic thought. We will begin with a study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and of the Qur'an, both of which are foundational for Islamic thought and practice, and examine the origins of the split between the Sunni and Shi'ite branches of Islam. The second half of the course will focus on representative medieval Islamic thinkers, including theologians, philosophers, mystics, and political theorists.

Course Goals

After completing this course, students will be able to

- relate the key events in the Prophet Muhammad's life
- give an account of the content, themes, and literary style of the Qur'an
- explain the basic reasons behind the Sunni-Shi'ite split in Islam
- describe the distinctive contribution and perspective of important medieval Islamic thinkers, including al-Ghazali, ibn Sina, and ibn Khaldun
- draw productive comparisons between Islamic intellectual traditions and their Jewish, Greek, Christian, and modern European and American counterparts
- make use of contemporary scholarly literature on Islamic thought

Required Readings

Ali, Ahmed, *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation* (Princeton)

Al-Arabi, *On the Mysteries of Bearing Witness to the Oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad*, trans. Bewley, ed. Bakhtiar (Kazi)

An-Nawani's Forty Hadith, trans. Ibrahim and Johnson-Davies (Kazi)

Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources, ed. McGinnis and Reisman (Hackett)

The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali, trans. Watt (Kazi)

ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Rosenthal, abridged ed. (Princeton)

A Shi'ite Anthology, ed. Tabataba'i, trans. Chittick (SUNY)

al-Suhrawardi, *The Shape of Light*, trans. al-Halveti (Fons Vitae)

ibn Tufayl, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale*, trans. Goodman (U Chicago)

Wadud, Amina, *Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford)

In addition to the required textbooks, students will receive a course packet with passages from ibn Ishaq's *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume (Oxford), selected by Prof. James Pavlin. The readings will be marked on the schedule as follows: (**).

Course Requirements

Grading: Students will be graded based on their class participation (50%) and their written work (2 papers at 25% each).

Class participation: Come to class prepared. This means that you've not only read the assigned text but that you've marked important passages, jotted down questions, and prepared some notes from which to initiate a discussion. Keep in mind that a fruitful discussion must go beyond individual achievements to develop into a cohesive group activity. Students will be graded not only on the quantity and content of their remarks in class, but also on their contribution to the overall learning environment in the classroom.

This course will follow the standard Shimer attendance policy—more than three absences will put you in danger of failing the course, and each absence will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

Written work: Students will be required to complete two pages of 1500-2000 words (approximately 6-8 double-spaced pages using standard fonts and margins). One paper will cover the Qur'an and be due at approximately the middle of the semester; the other will cover the material from the second half of the course and be due at the end of the semester. Due dates are listed on the class schedule.

All written work must be submitted via e-mail by the deadline stated in the class schedule below. Papers submitted by the deadline may be rewritten for a higher grade. If you submit a printed copy on time, your paper will count as being on time, but you must submit an e-mail copy as soon as possible—the professor will not grade or respond to any printed work. All papers should be submitted in ***a format compatible with Microsoft Word or Libre Office*** (.doc, .docx, .rtf., or .odt); please **do not** submit papers in Pages or PDF format.

At least one of the class papers must make use of contemporary scholarly literature, properly cited in either MLA or University of Chicago format. You may compare different scholars, assess the views presented in one or more articles, or use scholarly authority to support your own interpretation of a text—but in any case, the scholarly literature must be integrated into your argument, not simply summarized.

Sample topics will be provided well in advance of the deadlines. Students are welcome to select their own topics as well. In any case, students are strongly urged to discuss their paper topics with the professor early and often.

Tentative Course Schedule and Readings

Readings from the packet are marked as follows: (**). Selections from the Qur'an are marked with a "Q," followed by the number of the surah (or chapter). Selections from *Classical Arab Philosophy* are marked "CAP."

Monday	August 25	ibn Khaldun, <i>The Muqaddimah</i> , pp. 91-122
Wednesday	August 27	ibn Ishaq, <i>Life of Muhammad</i> , "Day One" (**)
Friday	August 31	ibn Ishaq, <i>Life of Muhammad</i> , "Day Two" (**)
Monday	September 1	Labor Day—NO CLASS
Wednesday	September 3	ibn Ishaq, <i>Life of Muhammad</i> , "Day Three" (**)
Friday	September 5	<i>An-Nawani's Forty Hadith</i> (full text)

Monday	September 8	Meccan revelations: Q1, 53, 74, 81-97, 112-14
Wednesday	September 10	Meccan revelations: Q10-12, 19, 21
Friday	September 12	Medinan revelations: Q2
Monday	September 15	Medinan revelations: Q8, 60, 47, 48
Wednesday	September 17	Medinan revelations: Q4, 65, 22, 62
Friday	September 19	Medinan revelations: Q3, 24, 110
Monday	September 22	Wadud, <i>Qur'an and Woman</i> , pp. ix-28
Wednesday	September 24	Wadud, <i>Qur'an and Woman</i> , pp. 29-61
Friday	September 26	Wadud, <i>Qur'an and Woman</i> , pp. 62-105
Monday	September 29	ibn Khaldun, <i>The Muqaddimah</i> , pp. 154-188
Wednesday	October 1	<i>A Shi'ite Anthology</i> , pp. 15-40 (and notes)
Friday	October 3	<i>A Shi'ite Anthology</i> , pp. 40-51, 67-82 (and notes)
Monday	October 6	<i>A Shi'ite Anthology</i> , pp. 91-124 (and notes)
Wednesday	October 8	al-Kindi (CAP, pp. 1-35)
Friday	October 10	al-Razi (CAP, pp. 36-53)
		First paper due via e-mail by class time
Monday	October 13	Dean's Break—NO CLASS
Wednesday	October 15	ibn Sina (CAP, pp. 146-175)
Friday	October 17	ibn Sina (CAP, pp. 175-209)
Monday	October 20	ibn Sina (CAP, pp. 209-237)
Wednesday	October 22	al-Arabi, <i>On the Mysteries...</i> , pp. 1-38
Friday	October 24	al-Arabi, <i>On the Mysteries...</i> , pp. 39-72
Monday	October 27	al-Ghazali, <i>Deliverance from Error</i> (in <i>Faith and Practice</i> , pp. 9-44)
Wednesday	October 29	al-Ghazali, <i>Deliverance from Error</i> (in <i>Faith and Practice</i> , pp. 44-66)
Friday	October 31	al-Ghazali, <i>Deliverance from Error</i> (in <i>Faith and Practice</i> , pp. 67-92)
Monday	November 3	al-Ghazali, selections from <i>Incoherence of the Philosophers</i> ; ibn Rushd, selections from <i>Incoherence of the Incoherence</i> (CAP, pp. 241-254, 295-308)
Wednesday	November 5	ibn Rushd, <i>Decisive Treatise</i> (CAP, pp. 309-330)
Friday	November 7	ibn Rushd, commentaries on Aristotle (CAP, pp. 330-335-366)
Monday	November 10	ibn Tufayl, <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> , pp. 95-130
Wednesday	November 12	ibn Tufayl, <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> , pp. 130-166
Friday	November 14	al-Suhrawardi, selection from <i>Philosophy of</i>

Illumination (CAP, pp. 367-379); *The Shape of Light*, pp. 39-47

Monday	November 17	al-Suhrawardi, <i>The Shape of Light</i> , pp. 51-75
Wednesday	November 19	al-Suhrawardi, <i>The Shape of Light</i> , pp. 79-104
Friday	November 21	ibn Khaldun, <i>The Muqaddimah</i> , pp. 11-48
Monday	November 24	ibn Khaldun, <i>The Muqaddimah</i> , pp. 123-142, 238-242
Tuesday	November 25	ibn Khaldun, <i>The Muqaddimah</i> , pp. 398-411

N.B.—All classes meet on Monday schedule
All written work due by The Absolute Deadline