

NELC 4505 - Spring 2024
Introduction to the Islamic Intellectual Tradition
Dr. Joseph E. Lowry
TR 1:45-3:14

Description

This course surveys the traditions of rational thought in premodern Islamic intellectual culture, using English translations of classic works. We will read works that can be described as philosophical, including not only the Arabic and Islamic products of the Hellenistic mode of thought but works from other religious sciences whose methodology and aims are broadly philosophical. The course examines the influence of these different disciplines upon each other, and the process of the Islamic ‘aspecting’ of the Greek intellectual legacy. The readings thus include not only the works of Hellenized philosophers (*falāsifa*) of Islam, but also those of theologians (*mutakallimūn*), jurists (*fiqh*-writers), grammarians (*naḥw/lughah*-writers), historians (*muʿarrikhūn*) and litterateurs (*adab*-writers). No prerequisites; Arabic not required.

Requirements

Because most classes will consist of discussions of assigned readings, it is imperative that students prepare all assignments prior to class. In order to stimulate in-class discussion, students will respond in writing to one or two short questions that address aspects of selected readings. These responses are designed to help focus students’ reading and induce reflection on the assigned texts in preparation for in-class discussion. In addition to thorough preparation of the assigned readings and timely submission of responses to study questions, students will be required to write a substantial research paper (approx. 15-20 pages), and will report on their research in an oral presentation. There will also be a final exam.

Required Texts

The following books are required and available through the Penn Bookstore (from which they have been ordered for this class) and online retailers (including in some cases in digital formats):

- Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, F. Rosenthal tr., N.J. Dawood, ed. (Princeton)
- Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, L. Goodman tr. (Chicago)
- *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, tr. L. Goodman (Oxford)

Additional readings will be posted to the course Canvas site and/or distributed in class.

Grades

Grades will be based on a combination of attendance, preparation for and participation in class (20%), written responses to study questions (20%), oral presentations (20%), the research paper (20%), and the final exam (20%).