

Kara Richardson kricha03@syr.edu (I check e-mail on work days only.)
Office hours: Tues. 12:30-1:30 in HL 524 and by appointment
Zoom meeting room: <https://syracuseuniversity.zoom.us/j/2362673481>

Welcome to PHI 308 Classical Islamic Philosophy!

Course description:

This course will introduce students to philosophy in the classical period of Islamic thought (9th-12th centuries). Authors will include al-Kindi, al-Razi, al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), al-Ghazali and Ibn Tufayl. Topics will include causation, God, human nature, voluntary action and freedom, knowledge and skepticism, animal ethics, the ideal state, and the relationship between philosophy and religion.

Learning outcomes:

- Ability to analyze and develop arguments
- Ability to write clear and engaging prose
- Ability to describe some of the major themes and debates in the classical period of Islamic philosophy
- Ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of rival philosophical views
- Ability to engage in constructive philosophical debate

N.B. All course materials, including the readings, can be found on the course Blackboard site.

Evaluation:

1. Reading questions, attendance, and participation in class (11%)
 - Do the assigned readings and the questions related to the readings before coming to class on Tuesday. Bring your answers to the reading questions to class. If you miss a class meeting, you should send me your answers to the reading questions by e-mail.
 - Our class meetings will help you refine your understanding of key concepts and arguments from the readings, weigh the strengths and weaknesses of those arguments and formulate your own assessments. They will also help you learn to listen to what others think, and to express what you think, about the topics covered in the course. I encourage you to make the most of our time together in class.
2. Discussion board posts (11 X 2% = 22%)

During scheduled class time on Thursdays (2:00-3:20), write and post a response to an assigned question (see schedule).

Your response should:

- reflect course readings and class discussion for that week
- include a quotation from the assigned readings for that week
- incorporate an idea raised in class discussion that week

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- be about 200 -250 words long, excluding quotations
 - be polished, i.e., free from grammatical and spelling errors
 - be posted by Thursday evening at 9pm
3. In-class argument analyses (2 X 15% = 30%)
 - Analyze 1-2 arguments found in passages from the assigned readings. The passages will be given to you in class. For each argument, you will do three things: identify its premises; identify and discuss one or two problematic features of the argument; evaluate the argument as a whole.
 4. First essay (12%) 600 words (Details TBA)
 5. Second essay (25%) 1000 words (Details TBA)

Grading Table

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94-100	90-93	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	60-69	0-59

Students with disabilities/special needs

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit [Center for Disability Resources](#). Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityresources@syr.edu for more detailed information. The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

Academic integrity

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting

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academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, “Academic Integrity,” and “Expectations and Policy.” Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty’s intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors’ course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask your instructor.

Schedule (subject to change):

	Homework (complete prior to class on Tuesday)	Discussion board prompt (post by Thursday at 9pm)
1 08/27 08/29	Introduction	Introduce yourself to the class on the discussion board. Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 123 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/intro-islamic-world Watch PBS documentary <i>Islam: Empire of Faith</i> available for free on YouTube (optional)
2 09/03 09/05	Al-Kindi (801-866) Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 123 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/al-kindi Read al-Kindi, <i>On Divine Unity and the Finitude of the World’s Body</i>	State and defend an objection to al-Kindi’s proof for God’s existence.

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	Reading questions: How does al-Kindi prove that the body of the universe is finite (§3-7)? How does he prove that the body of the universe is temporally created (§8-13)? How does he prove that the Creator is One (§13)?	
3 09/10 09/12	Al-Razi (864-927/32) Read al-Razi, <i>The Philosopher's Way of Life</i> (excerpt) Reading questions: What are the basic principles of the philosophical way of life (§10-12)? How should we treat non-human animals (§13-15) What is self-harm (§16-19)?	State and defend an objection to al-Razi's account of the ethical treatment of animals. Respond to a classmate's objection on Razi's behalf.
4 09/17 09/19	Al-Farabi Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 129 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/al-farabi and episode 130 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/al-farabi-political Read al-Farabi, <i>The Political Regime</i> on Blackboard Reading questions: TBA	TBA
5 09/24 09/26	Avicenna on the possible, the necessary and the existence of God Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 138 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/avicenna-life-works and episode 140 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/avicenna-god Read Avicenna, <i>The Metaphysics of the Salvation</i> II.1-5, II.12-13, II.18-19 Reading questions: How does Avicenna define the necessarily existent through itself and the necessarily existent through another (II.1)? How does he prove that an existent possible through itself is necessary through another (II.3)? How does he prove the existence of something necessary through itself (II.12)? How does God know things (II.18-19)?	State and defend an objection to Avicenna's proof for the existence of God.
6 10/01 10/03	In-class argument analysis	Aristotle on causation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulhrQ_QmKDI
7	Avicenna on causation and natural necessity	Discussion board post:

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10/08 10/10	Read Aristotle, Physics II.3. Avicenna, Physics of the <i>Healing</i>, I.5.1-3, 1.11.1-3, I.13.6 Reading questions: What are Aristotle's four types of principles or causes? What is a nature? What is the role of the final cause? What are the conditions in which fire causes burning in wood? What is the difference between what always occurs and what occurs for the most part?	Suppose you put a lit match in contact with some wood in your fireplace. Would the wood necessarily burn?
8 10/15 10/17	Fall break	Aristotle on the soul https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u-pcNKYZIQ&list=PLcQoNt0Ye8lcsEYJc-PxwnDhFxHZb-p8Q&index=7
9 10/22 10/24	Avicenna on the soul Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 141 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/avicenna-soul Read Avicenna's Flying Man Read Aristotle, De Anima 2.1 Read Avicenna, <i>The Psychology of the Salvation</i> ch. 1-7, 11-12, 16 Reading questions for the Flying Man: What are the conditions of the flying man thought experiment? What does the experiment show? Reading questions for the Psychology: What are the internal senses? (ch. 3) What are the differences between practical and theoretical intellect (ch. 4) What are the degrees of the theoretical intellect? (ch. 5) How does the rational soul acquire knowledge? (ch. 6-7, 11, 16)?	What did Avicenna's Flying Man thought experiment reveal to you about your mind and your body? What did Avicenna's theory of estimation teach you about human knowledge?
10 10/29 10/31	Avicenna on voluntary movement and necessity Reading:	Develop an example to illustrate the route between cognition and action (1) as described by Aristotle and (2) as described by Avicenna. What

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	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> III.9-10; Avicenna, <i>Psychology of the Healing</i>, IV.1 (excerpt) Reading questions: Compare Aristotle's and Avicenna's answers to the following questions: What is the role of desire in causing voluntary movement? What is the role of the perceptual faculties (e.g., imagination, reason, thought, judgment)? What is the role of resolve, according to Avicenna? What is the role of the motive power, according to Avicenna? How are Aristotle and Avicenna answering these questions? What empirical evidence supports their claims? Which of their claims goes beyond what is given by empirical evidence?	did Avicenna's theory of resolve teach you about the causes of human action?
11 11/05 11/07	Ghazali on Skepticism and Mystical Knowledge Listening: Adamson podcast, episode 143 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/al-ghazali Reading: al-Ghazali, <i>The Deliverance from Error</i> (excerpt) Reading questions: What is knowledge (p. 20) Why did Ghazali become a skeptic (pp. 21-23)? What's wrong with philosophy (pp. 27-41)? What is fruitional experience (<i>dhawq</i>) (p. 52)?	Develop an example to illustrate Ghazali's account of fruitional experience. Would such an experience yield knowledge?
12 11/12 11/14	Ghazali and Islamic Occasionalism Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 144 https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/al-ghazali-incoherence Reading: al-Ghazali, <i>The Incoherence of the Philosophers</i>, Discussion 17, pp. 166-177 Reading questions: TBA	
13 11/19 11/21	al-Ghazali (and Avicenna) on Choice between Equivalents Reading: al-Ghazali, <i>The Incoherence of the Philosophers</i>, Discussion 1 (excerpt) Reading questions: Describe the two dates thought experiment. What evidence does it provide for the claim that we can choose A over B or vice versa for no reason?	Develop an example to Illustrate the route between cognition and choice between equivalents (1) as described by Ghazali and (2) as described by Avicenna. Who is right?

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14	Ibn Tufayl's <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> : a wild child finds truth and meaning	
12/03	Listen to the Adamson podcast, episode 148	
12/05	https://www.historyofphilosophy.net/ibn-tufayl Read Ibn Tufayl, <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> (excerpt)	
	Reading questions: What does the conclusion of <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> tell us about the relationship between philosophy and religion?	
15	In-class argument analysis	
12/10		