

# PHIL 208 A01 (22564) – Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

Spring 2023, University of Victoria

Department of Philosophy

Course website: <https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/229830>

## Instructor & Contact Information

Dr. Clifford Roberts ([cliffordroberts@uvic.ca](mailto:cliffordroberts@uvic.ca))

Office hours: TW 9:15-10:15am (or by appt.)

Office: CLE B318

Meeting Times: TWF 12:30-1:20pm

Meeting Place: COR B129

## Course Description

This course introduces students to the tradition of philosophical reflection in the Islamic world from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, the so-called “Golden Age” of philosophy, mathematics and science in the Muslim world. Influenced by both Islamic theology and Greek philosophy, Muslim thinkers developed original and important insights that influenced scientists and philosophers not only in the Islamic world but in Latin Christendom as well, insights that continue to exert influence today. The course presents some of the philosophical views of thinkers like Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn-Sīnā (*Avicenna*), Al-Ghāzālī (*Algazel*), and Ibn-Rushd (*Averroes*). The aim is to equip students with sufficient philosophical background to interpret these thinkers in a rigorous, precise and persuasive manner without anachronism or superficiality.

## Course Texts

**Required:** [CAP] *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, edited by Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Hackett 2007).

## Further Resources

1. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

This is an online encyclopedia of philosophy covering thinkers, concepts, claims, and arguments, all of which are written by respected experts. A number of entries cover thinkers discussed in the course, some are entries *on* the thinker (e.g., there is an entry on Al-Kindī), others cover topics immediately relevant to them (e.g., there is an entry on “Arabic and Islamic Metaphysics”).

*Warning:* these entries are often quite dense and sometimes technical, which makes them both difficult to understand and easy to misunderstand. Please use them with care and caution.

2. *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps*: <https://historyofphilosophy.net/>

This is a podcast with hundreds of episodes aiming to cover the entire history of philosophy throughout the world (not just the West or even just the West and East). There is an entire set of episodes devoted to the “Islamic World,” which covers the thinkers studied in this course. Unlike the *Stanford Encyclopedia*, these episodes are much easier to understand and follow, but also much more limited in

depth, detail and scope. Nevertheless, as an introduction to the various thinkers, this podcast is peerless.

### Course Assignments

(1) **Take-Home Tests**

**Value:** 1<sup>st</sup> = 30%, 2<sup>nd</sup> = 35% (total value = 65%)

**Assignment:** Students will have 24-hours to answer questions covering course material.

**Due dates:** *see course schedule.*

(2) **Essay**

**Value:** 30%

**Assignment:** Students will be provided a selection of essay topics, of which they must pick one to address in an essay of at least 1000 words; topics will be given 2 weeks before the due date.

**Due date:** *see course schedule.*

(3) **Participation**

**Value:** 5%

**Assignment:** Students will be awarded a grade on the basis of their participation in the class; this includes, but is not limited to, attending lectures.

### Course Grading

Grades	GPV	Percentage	Description
A+	9	90-100	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
A	8	85-89	
A-	7	80-84	
B+	6	77-79	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
B	5	73-76	
B-	4	70-72	
C+	3	65-69	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
C	2	60-64	
D	1	50-59	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

F	0	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
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Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department. For additional information regarding grades, please see the September 2021 issue of the academic calendar (online here: [Grading](#)). All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that the student submits, whether individual or group work. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust, and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research, and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

#### *The responsibility of the institution*

Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

#### *The responsibility of the student*

Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If the student is unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing sources, the instructor should be consulted. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student's transcript, or a suspension.

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the University's policy on academic integrity. For the policy, see the current edition of the academic calendar (online here: [University of Victoria Statement on Academic Integrity](#)).

### **Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website**

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (link above). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

### **Policy on Late or Missed Assignments**

A penalty of **6%** per day will be levied on any assignment submitted after the due date, unless the student can provide official documentation of the reason for the delay (e.g., a physician's note). The previous policies do not apply to students with documented disabilities; all attempt will be made to accommodate such students including, but not restricted to, providing make-up assignments and tests.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability or chronic health condition, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with an advisor at the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL). For more information about CAL, see:

<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>

### **Counseling Services**

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with the university's **Counseling Services** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>) which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

### **Important Dates**

Please consult the university calendar's **Academic Year Important Dates** for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, and so on: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>

### **Academic Advising**

For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your CAPP report, please visit **Undergraduate Advising** (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/advising/>) or make an appointment with an adviser.

### **Territory Acknowledgment**

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the **Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement**: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/indigenous/>.

## Course Schedule

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<u>Week 1</u> : Jan 9-13	<u>Historical &amp; Philosophical Background</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. xvii-xxxi
<u>Week 2</u> : Jan 16-20	<u>Al-Kindī</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 1-23
<u>Week 3</u> : Jan 23-27	<u>Ar-Rāzī</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 36-53
<u>Weeks 4-5</u> : Jan 30-Feb 10	<u>Al-Fārābī</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 54-104 <i>*Take-Home Test #1: Feb 12<sup>th</sup>*</i>
<u>Week 6</u> : Feb 13-17	<u>Ibn-Sīnā</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 175-209
<b><i>Week 7: Feb 20-24</i></b>	<b><i>Reading Break</i></b>
<u>Week 8</u> : Feb 27-Mar 3	<u>Ibn-Sīnā</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 209-223
<u>Week 9</u> : Mar 6-10	<u>Al-Ghāzālī</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 238-265 <i>*Take-Home Test #2: March 12<sup>th</sup>*</i>
<u>Week 10</u> : Mar 13-17	<u>Ibn-Bājjā &amp; Ibn-Tufayl</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 266-293
<u>Weeks 11-12</u> : March 20-31	<u>Ibn-Rushd</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 294-308, 330-366
<u>Week 13</u> : April 2-6	<u>As-Suhrawardī</u> Reading: [CAP] pp. 367-379 <i>*Essay: April 10<sup>th</sup>*</i>