GOV 382M: Classics of Political Theory in Islam
Unique #38130
MW 2-3:30 in Bat 1.104

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After four weeks of historical background, this course will focus chiefly on close textual analysis of a few capital texts, in translation, of political philosophers (falasafa) in Islam, beginning with Farabi and continuing with Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) as well as the later historian-theorist Ibn Khaldun—with some attention to the great critic of the falasafa, Al-Ghazali.

The principal aims of the course are to make some progress in understanding the falasafa in regard to:
1) their theoretical concepts of political life (e. g., the regime[s], including especially democracy, prophecy and law, the virtues (especially justice), jihad, the relation between the philosopher and civil-religious society, etc.), seen as appropriating and modifying the concepts of Platonic and Aristotelian political philosophy;
2) how the applications and re-conceptions by the falasafa of Platonic and Aristotelian thought put the latter in a new light; and, especially,
3) what is the new, strategic, rhetorical and theoretical, adaptation of classical political rationalism to Muslim monotheism.

Some familiarity with Plato’s Republic and Laws, and Aristotle’s Ethics and Politics, will be presupposed.

Approximate schedule of classes and texts to be covered:

Weeks 1-4 or 5
Background
Fazlur Rahman, Islam. 2d. ed. (U. of Chicago), chaps 1-2
Recommended:
Asma Afsaruddin, The First Muslims (Oneworld), chaps. 1-4 (pp. 1-58)
Bernard Lewis, The Middle East: A Brief History. (Simon and Schuster), chaps. 3-4 (pp. 51-85)
F. Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur’an (U. of Chicago), chaps. 3-6, 8
Bernard Lewis, The Political Language of Islam (U. of Chicago)
Emergence of law or fiqh, shari’a (Rahman, Islam, chaps 4 and 6; Bernard Weiss, The Spirit of Islamic Law [U. of Georgia], chaps. 1 and 6) Recommended: the rest of Weiss.

Emergence of Hadith (Rahman, Islam, pp. 63-67).

Jihād in particular (excerpts from Shaybani’s Siyar [Johns Hopkins U.]; handout of brief reading from Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah; Rudolph Peters, Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader [Markus Wiener].
Recommended:
David Cook, Understanding Jihad (U. of California)
Marius Canard, "La guerre sainte dans le monde islamique et dans le monde chrétien," in Byzance et les musulmans du proche orient (Brill)

Kalam; Great Debate Between Mutazilites and Asharites (Rahman, Islam, chap. 5).
Recommended:
Richard C. Martin and Mark R. Woodward, Defenders of Reason in Islam (Oneworld)
M. Abdul Hye, "Ash’arism," in History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. Shairf, chap. 11, online at:
http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/index.html

Weeks 5 or 6ff.
The Falasafa (we will make our way through the following works, in approx. the following order).
Recommended for history of transmission of Greeks: Dimitri Gutas, Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Greco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (Routledge)

Ibn Tufayl, Hayy the son of Yaqzan, "Introduction" (in Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook, 2nd ed. Parens and Macfarland, Cornell U. P.)

____, Enumeration of the Sciences, chap. 5 (in Med. Pol. Phil Sourcebook and also in Butterworth trans., Alfarabi The Political Writings, Cornell U. P.)

____, The Political Regime (partially available in Medieval Pol. Phil. Sourcebook)
Aphorisms of the Statesman (in Alfarabi The Political Writings, Cornell)
Attainment of Happiness and Philosophy of Plato (from The Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, Cornell U. P.)


Averroes (Ibn Rushd), The Decisive Treatise (Brigham Young U.; also excerpts in Med. Pol Phil. Sourcebook)
Averroes on Plato’s Republic, trans. Lerner (Cornell U.)

Algazel (Al-Ghazali), excerpts from The Deliverer From Error (Med. Pol. Phil. Sourcebook)
Path to Sufism (Fons Vitae)

Ibn Khaldun, excerpts from Muqaddimah ("Introduction" to World History), available online at:
http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah

Formal Requirements and Basis of Grading:
—10-15 page interpretative paper on some portion of, or theme or problem in, the texts treated—perhaps in comparison with other texts and other major political theorists. Some suggested topics will be distributed. Due at end of term in May (50%).
—class participation (8%).
—6 one-two page papers (500 words max.) interpreting an upcoming portion of the readings that has not yet been discussed, to be handed in by the start of class. If you wish, you may address study questions that will be handed out from time to time. You may choose which weeks to write (7% each, or total 42%).

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259,
http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssp/