Avicenna
Spring 2019

Instructor: Lidia Gocheva

Meeting times and location: Th 4-6:30pm  Friedman Hall 003
Office hours: TBD

Course description:

The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the life, works, ideas and legacy of one of the most influential thinkers of classical Islamic philosophy, Avicenna (d. 1037). We begin with Avicenna’s life and works, then look into some major themes in his logic, natural philosophy, epistemology and metaphysics. Towards the end of the course, we will consider Avicenna’s controversial views on God’s knowledge of the particulars, the nature of his Pointers and Reminders and the commentary tradition it inspires, as well as Avicenna’s heritage in Islamic thought and beyond. Throughout the course, we will read selections from his opus magnum, The Cure, in English translation. While all assigned texts are in English, interested students will have the option to attend a section devoted to reading primary sources in Arabic.

Prerequisites:

None. No prior knowledge of Islam or Islamic philosophy is assumed. All assigned readings are in English.

Grading:

Attendance and participation: 15%
Presentation: 10%
Weekly reading responses: 15%
Two 6-page papers: 30% each
Schedule of classes:

**Week 1 (Jan 24) Introduction**


**Week 2 (Jan 31) Life and Milieu**

Avicenna’s Autobiography

**Week 3 (Feb 7) Logic**

Selections from The Cure, “Book of Demonstration”

**Week 4 (Feb 14) Physics**

Selections from The Cure, “Physics”

**Week 5 (Feb 21) Self-Awareness**

Selections from The Cure
Week 6 (Feb 28) Cosmology


Selections from The Cure

Week 7 (March 7) The Necessary and the Possible

Selections from The Cure

March 7 First Paper Due

Week 8 (March 14) Essence and Existence

Selections from The Cure

Week 9 (March 21) From the Necessary Existent to God

Selections from The Cure

March 23-31 Spring recess

Week 10 (April 4) Controversies: God’s Knowledge of the Particulars

Selections from The Cure and Ghazali’s The Incoherence of the Philosophers
Week 11 (April 11) Pointers and Reminders


Selections from Pointers and Reminders

Week 12 (April 18) Heritage I


Week 13 (April 25) Heritage II


April 26 – May 7 Reading period

May 8 Second Paper Due