

SYLLABUS
THE SUPPRESSED STORY OF CONTINUITY IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY
From Greek to Arabic and from Arabic to Latin

INSTRUCTOR: Lilian Abou-Tabickh

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This third-year course takes the Mediterranean Sea, bounded by Asia, Africa, and Europe, in its broader sense to show the flow of ideas across the region. Specifically, the course uses the civilization of Islam to show how Muslim rulers, scholars, and administrators acquired Greek, Persian, and Indian political, scientific, and philosophical texts beginning in the eighth century, translated into Arabic, discussed, commented on, adopted, and adapted. Similarly, from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, Arabic scientific and philosophical works by Greek, Arab, and Muslim authors were translated into Latin and studied in Western Europe. This course then brings to light the often-unspoken history of intellectual continuity and the acquisition, translation, modification, and transmission of scientific and philosophical texts across linguistic, religious, and social boundaries. The course uses primary sources in translation as well as secondary sources, podcasts, and documentary films. The class consists of lectures, active learning techniques, and individual and group presentations.

LEARNING GOALS

This course will provide

- a critical examination of terms used to construct mainstream conceptual narrative, the ways scholars challenge its geographical paradigm and historical categories, and examples of their conceptions and explanations of an intertwined and interregional intellectual history
- an understanding of the context and theoretical and practical reasons behind the translation of texts to Arabic and from Arabic to Latin
- an overview and a critical examination of the various narratives proposed to explain those processes of acquisition and translation

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of the course, students have

- acquired knowledge of facts about the acquisition and translation of texts
- also acquired clarity about common misconceptions in this subject area of intellectual history and conceptual coherence supported by material evidence
- achieved an understanding of key terms and historical categories
- articulated different conceptual narratives and identified the notions underpinning their construction

- acquired an understanding of the historical context and the theoretical and practical reasons behind the translation movement and an ability to evaluate the different scholarly interpretations of the flow of ideas
- identified and judged the evidence authors use to support their arguments
- improved their ability to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, and actions, and apply what they have learned in new situations
- improved their ability to think analytically and critically and demonstrate creative and independent thinking
- improved their interpersonal skills and ability to work productively with others

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSESSMENT

Class participation (25%): The course requires active engagement with the texts and that you come prepared to class and ready to engage with the discussion and other activities.

Weekly responses (20%): Submit ten responses to the week's readings. The responses should be one-page single-spaced that includes: the topic and summary of the author's argument including the reasons and evidence. Show connections between the readings of the same week and/or, to previous weeks. Then, state what you learned from them, and end with a question that arises out of the readings. Everyone is expected to read those responses before coming to class to engage with class responses. Grading is on a scale from 1 to 10.

Response presentation (10%): Students are required to present one of their responses in class and relate to their fellow students' responses. Length of the presentation and discussion is 15 minutes. Sign-up on WEEK 1.

Research paper proposal (5%): Hand in half-a-page single-spaced outline of your plan for the final paper. Use assigned readings for the paper. Due WEEK 11.

Final paper (25%): Write 6-8 pages, double-spaced, on a theme raised in the course. Topic suggestions and due date TBA.

Group presentation (15%): Class is divided into small groups (3-4 students) and each group is required to prepare a presentation of networks, contact, exchange, translation, and transmission of texts in image, video, or by creating an interactive website. Presentations should be 10 to 15 mins. Topic proposal and plan of presentation is half-a-page single-spaced. Due WEEK 6. Presentations on WEEK 14.

You could use programs such as, Inforgram, Gephi, Scalar, PowerPoint Animation, Google Maps, or any other of your choice.

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory

Absence from class is permitted two times per semester

Illness: Email me before class if you're ill or could not attend class

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

The Background Knowledge Probe – Misconception Check:

Agree/Disagree with a list of statements using Mentimeter Interactive Software

Introduction – Why this course?

Overview of the syllabus

Picture Prompt: The School of Athens

Video & virtual tour of the Vatican Museums – Rafael's Rooms

Documentary movie clips:

When the Moors Ruled in Europe – Bettany Hughes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oafKyRDagsY>

UNIT 1 - WEEK 2: AN INTERREGIONAL APPROACH TO INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Hodgson, Marshall. *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*. Edited, with an introduction and conclusion by Edmund Burke, III. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

- Ch. 1: The Interrelations of Societies in History, pp. 3-28

Amin, Samir. *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion, and Democracy. A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism*. Second edition. Translated by Russell Moore and James Membrez. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009. (Originally published 1988)

- Part 3: The Culture of Capitalism, Ch. 1: Introduction, pp. 152-156, Ch. 3: The Construction of Eurocentric Culture, pp. 166-188

Assignments due: Weekly response 1

Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 3: THE MEDITERRANEAN: “THE SPACE THAT MAKES THE WHOLE WORLD COHERENT”

Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. “The Persistence of Philology: Language and Connectivity in the Mediterranean.” In *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, edited by Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Karla Mallette, 3-22. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. (esp. pp. 3-12)

Lyons, Jonathan. *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009.

- Ch. 4: Mapping the World, pp. 78-99

Assignments due: Weekly response 2
 Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 4: INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS

Attar, Samar. "Suppressed or Falsified History? The Untold Story of Arab-Islamic Rationalist Philosophy." In *The Role of the Arabic-Islamic World in the Rise of the West*, edited by Nayif Al-Rodhan, pp. 116-143. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. "Beyond the Usual Suspects: On Intellectual Networks in the Early Modern World." *Global Intellectual History* 2, no. 1 (2017): 30-48.

Assignments due: Weekly response 3
 Response presentation and class discussion

UNIT 2 - WEEK 5: THE TRANSLATION OF WORKS FROM GREEK, SYRIAC, PAHLAVI, AND SANSKRIT LANGUAGES TO ARABIC 1

PODCAST: Peter Adamson. *Founded in Translation: From Greek to Syriac and Arabic*
<https://historyofphilosophy.net/translation-movement> (Optional)

Lyons, Jonathan. *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization*.

- Ch. 3: The House of Wisdom, pp. 55-77

Ibn Khaldun, 'Abd Al-Rahman. *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History* (2nd ed., with corrections and augmented bibliography). Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

- Ch. 6/18: The Various Kinds of Intellectual Sciences, pp. 111-118
- Ch. 6/19-26, pp. 118-155 (Optional)

Bsoul, Labeeb Ahmad. *Translation Movement and Acculturation in the Medieval Islamic World*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

- Ch. 3: Translation Centres, pp. 49-73

Assignments due: Weekly response 4
 Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 6: THE TRANSLATION OF WORKS FROM GREEK, SYRIAC, PAHLAVI, AND SANSKRIT LANGUAGES TO ARABIC 2

Arjomand, Said Amir. "Perso-Indian Statecraft, Greek Political Science and the Muslim Idea of Government." *International Sociology* 16, no.3 (2001): 455-473

Syros, Vasileios. "Forgotten Commentators Society: Aristotle Political Ideas in Arabic, Syriac, Byzantine, and Jewish Garb." In *Well Begun is Only Half Done: Tracing Aristotle's Political Ideas in Medieval Arabic, Syriac, Byzantine, and Jewish Sources*, edited by Vasileios Syros, 1-16. Tempe, Ariz.: ACMRS Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011.

Assignments due: Weekly response 5
 Response presentation and class discussion
 Group presentation proposal

WEEK 7: THE TRANSLATION OF WORKS FROM GREEK, SYRIAC, PAHLAVI, AND SANSKRIT LANGUAGES TO ARABIC 3

Gutas, Dimitri. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Greco-Arabic Translation Movement in Bagdad and Early Abbasid Society* (2nd-4th/8th-10th Century). London; New York: Routledge, 1998.

- Introduction: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement as a Social and Historical Phenomenon, pp. 1-8
- Ch. 1: The Background of the Translation Movement: Material, Human, and Cultural Resources, pp. 11-27
- Ch. 5: Translation in the Service of Applied and Theoretical Knowledge, pp. 107-120
- Ch. 6: Patrons, Translators, Translations, pp. 121-150 (Optional)

Assignments due: Weekly response 6
 Response presentation and class discussion

UNIT 3 - WEEKS 8 & 9: THE TRANSLATION MOVEMENT: CHALLENGES TO THE TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE

Saliba, George. *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.

- Ch. 1: The Islamic Scientific Tradition: Question of Beginnings 1, pp. 14-40
- Ch. 2: The Islamic Scientific Tradition: Question of Beginnings 2, pp. 40-86

Ibn Al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (The Catalogue). Translated and edited by Bayard Dodge, 571-586. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970. (Optional)

Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah*.

- Ch. 3/32, subsection “The Ministry of Financial Operations and Taxation,” pp. 19-26.

Assignments due: Weekly response 7 & 8
 Response presentation and class discussion

UNIT 4 – WEEK 10: THE TRANSLATION OF ARABIC SOURCES TO LATIN 1

Lyons, Jonathan. *The House of Wisdom*

- Prologue, pp. 1-6

Bsoul, Labeeb Ahmad. *Translation Movement*

- Ch. 7: The Toledo School of Translation, pp. 141-180

Assignments due: Weekly response 9
 Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 11: THE TRANSLATION OF ARABIC SOURCES TO LATIN 2

Al-Idrisi, Al-Sharif. *Nuzhat Al-Mushtaq* (The Book of Roger).

Picture Prompt: Statue of Al-Idrisi holding up his map of the world.

Daiber, Hans. *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Cultures: A Historical and Bibliographical Survey*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012.

- Ch. 7: Islamic Roots of Knowledge in Europe, pp. 191-213

Movie: When the Moors Ruled in Europe – Bettany Huges

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oafKyRDagsY>

Assignments due: Weekly response 10
 Response presentation and class discussion
 Final paper proposal

WEEK 12: THE TRANSLATION OF ARABIC SOURCES TO LATIN 3

Siraisi, Nancy G. *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

- Part 1, Ch. 1: Text, Commentary, and Pedagogy in Renaissance Medicine, pp. 3-18

Movie: Science & Islam – Jim Al-Khalili

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-lHyUYaAIU&t=14s&ab_channel=BanijayScience

- Episode 1
- Episodes 2 and 3 (Optional)

What are the issues academics in the documentary agree or disagree on? Do you disagree with any of them? On what matters do you disagree with them?

Assignments due: Weekly response 11
 Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 13: CONTINUITY IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Burnett, Charles. “Arabic into Latin: The Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, edited by Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, 370-404. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Assignments due: Weekly response 12
 Response presentation and class discussion

WEEK 14: CONCLUSION

Presentations & concluding remarks.