

# The Crescent and the Cross: Christian and Muslim Medieval Philosophy

## Gov 2275 Spring 2019

Professor: Michael Hawley  
Office Hours: Tu 4:20-5:30 PM, Wed 1:30-3:30, or by apt.

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### Course Overview

The Middle Ages are sometimes imagined as “The Dark Ages,” an era of cultural and intellectual stagnation. In fact, however, this epoch witnessed perhaps the greatest period of philosophical exchange between the Christian and Islamic worlds as both made monumental attempts to synthesize or reconcile pagan Greek learning with monotheistic religion. Studying the great authors of this period presents us with an opportunity to engage in genuine comparative political theory. We will explore how Muslim and Christian thinkers responded differently to the tension between faith and reason, and between philosophy and religious authority. We will explore how they attempted to elaborate coherent accounts of virtue, the good life, and the just society, while drawing both from holy texts and Greek philosophers.

### Course Aims:

The primary aims of this class are those that go into determining your grade for the course. Most basically, you will gain an understanding of the questions and problems that animated Medieval political thought in the Christian and Islamic Worlds. You will hone your skills at reading difficult texts carefully and evaluating arguments. You will also improve your abilities in constructing your own written arguments, demonstrating your analytical skills, and expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively.

But there is another kind of aim for this course, one that will not be reflected in your grade. The thinkers we read in this class wrote not merely for their own contemporaries but for all time. These texts are therefore addressed to you, personally. They make claims to truth about fundamental questions: Is unaided human reason alone sufficient to guide our actions, or do we require revelation? Can divine law supersede human wisdom? What are God’s politics? Do the demands of religious faith contradict or support the requirements of a healthy politics? How can thinkers express heretical ideas under conditions of persecution and oppression? What, in the end, is the purpose of political life? These questions matter to each of us, both as individuals and as members of a political community—and these authors give us an opportunity to gain a better grasp of the potential answers.

### Course Books:

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Bowdoin’s textbook partner or online. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions and translations. It truly is important to get the same editions and translations; it

helps keep all of us on the same page (literally) as we discuss the readings and when it comes time to write papers. All other texts will be posted on the Blackboard site.

*Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Joshua Parens and Joseph Macfarland, Editors  
*City of God Against the Pagans*, Augustine, R.W. Dyson, Editor (Cambridge Edition)

### Course requirements:

You will be required to write three papers (~8 pages, double-spaced) on assigned topics. These are not research papers. The only texts you will need to write them will be what we read for this course. I will discuss the expectations and requirements for these papers at greater length in class. Additionally, there is a participation component to your grade—which is composed both of in-class contributions as well as posts on the discussion forum on Blackboard. For the latter, you are required to post 10 reading responses (roughly 150 words each) over the course of the semester. This averages out to roughly one such response for every three class meetings, but you may distribute them however you like throughout the semester. These responses must not exceed 200 words. In them, you should raise a question, pose an objection, or make an argument about some aspect of the next day’s reading. You are encouraged also to respond to posts by your fellow students. In order to count, you need to post by midnight of the day before class is to meet—I will read them before class and may incorporate some of them into our discussion.

With all of your work, be sure to follow Bowdoin standards of conduct regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate dean.

Course grade will be determined as follows:

Three Papers:	(3 x 25%)	75%
In-Class Participation		10%
Forum Participation		15%

### Reading assignments:

Jan. 22	Introduction
Jan. 24	Plato’s <i>Euthyphro</i> , selection from Plato’s <i>Apology of Socrates</i> (on Blackboard)
Jan. 29	Selections from Plato’s <i>Republic</i> , <i>Symposium</i> , and <i>Timaeus</i> , Aristotle’s <i>Ethics</i> (on Blackboard)
Jan. 31	Selections from Aristotle’s <i>Physics</i> and <i>Politics</i> (on Blackboard), Genesis: 1-4, 9, 11-13, 18-19, 22 (on Blackboard)

- Feb. 5 Exodus 3, 19-23 (On Blackboard)
- Feb. 7 Selection from Aristotle's *Ethics* (On Blackboard), Gospel of Matthew: 5, 15-16, 22; Gospel of John: 1 (verses 1-18), 14; Paul to the Romans: 3, 5, 7-8, 10, 13; Letter of James: 2 (On Blackboard)
- Feb. 12 Genesis 17-18, 21, Selections from Quran and Hadith (On Blackboard)
- Feb. 14 Augustine, *City of God*: preface, 1.1-1.3, 1.8-1.9, 1.21-1.22, 1.29, 1.35, 2.6-2.9, 2.14, 2.19-2.21, Letter to Marcellinus (On Blackboard)
- Feb. 19 *City of God*: 4.3-4.4, 4.15, 4.27, 5.13-5.15, 5.20-5.22, 6.5-6.7, 8.3-8.13
- Feb. 21 Selection of Plato's *Republic* (online) *City of God*: 10.1, 11.1, 14.1-14.17, 14.25, 14.28, 15.2, 15.4-15.6
- Feb. 26 *City of God*: 19.1-19.17
- Feb. 28 *City of God*: 19.18-19.28, 22.29-22.30
- Mar. 5 Selection from Plato's *Phaedrus* (on Blackboard), Alfarabi: *On Plato's Laws, Enumeration of the Sciences, Book of Religion* (pp. 72-73, 20-35 in *Sourcebook*)
- Mar. 7 Selection from Plato's *Republic* (on Blackboard), Alfarabi: *Political Regime*
- Mar. 8 **Paper 1 Due**

#### SPRING BREAK

- Mar. 26 Alfarabi: *Attainment of Happiness* (read all)
- Mar. 28 Selection from Aristotle's *Ethics* (on Blackboard), Alfarabi, *Attainment of Happiness* (continued)
- Apr. 2 Selection from Plato's *Republic* (on Blackboard), Avicenna: *Healing*, Ibn Bajja, *Governance of the Solitary*
- Apr. 4 Class Cancelled
- Apr. 9 Selection from Alghazali's *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (on Blackboard), Alghazali: *Deliverer from Error* (in *Sourcebook*), selection from Plato's *Apology*

- Apr. 11      Selections from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, selections of Averroes' *Short Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric* and *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics* (all on Blackboard)
- Apr. 16      Averroes: *Decisive Treatise* (read all)
- Apr. 18      Averroes: *Decisive Treatise* (continued), Epistle Dedicatory and Notes to *Decisive Treatise* (on Blackboard)
- Apr. 23      Bonaventure: *Theology as Mistress Among the Sciences* (on Blackboard), Boethius, *On the Supreme Good* (in *Sourcebook*)
- Apr. 25      Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-I, Q: 1-2, I-II, Q: 90-92 (on Blackboard)
- Apr. 30      Aquinas, *Summa* I-II, Q: 94-96, Q 100 (articles 1-3, 12) (on Blackboard)
- Apr. 29      Paper 2 Due**
- Apr. 30      Aquinas, *Summa* II-II, Q; 40, 64, 42, 104, 10, 11 (articles 5-6) (on Blackboard)
- May 7      Final Discussion (Possibly Marsilius, *Defender of the Peace*)
- May 17      **Final Paper Due**