Department of Religions & Theology

MODULE DESCRIPTION

Semester B:

Classical Islamic Religious Thought in Dialogue with Philosophical, Jewish and Christian Sources: BCRE20 (HE2344)

ECTS: 5

Contact hours: 22 Lecture hours

Lecturer(s): Prof. Damien Janos (ext. 1297)

Module description:

Classical Islamic Religious Thought emerged as a result of complex interactions with the Ancient Greek, Christian, Jewish, and Iranian traditions in a period when the Levant and Mesopotamia were constituted by highly cosmopolitan societies. These interactions were sometimes polemical and based on controversy, but they also resulted in intensive collaboration and cultural cross-pollination. This module will explore the religious and philosophical exchanges between these various groups during the classical Islamic period (roughly from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries C.E.) by focusing on key theological issues, such as conceptions of God’s nature and His attributes, inter-religious discussions of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and the place of logic and Aristotelian philosophy in the theological method. We will also study the translation movement from Greek and Syriac to Arabic and the development of Qur’anic exegesis (tafsīr) and theology (kalām), which decisively shaped Islamic thought during this period and determined the nature of the religious dialogue between Muslims, Christians, Jews, and alleged heretics and pagans. Finally, in addition to these issues, we will also examine the establishment of the medieval Islamic university (madrasa) and the role it played in the religious and intellectual life of its time.

Indicative readings:


Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- identify some of the main theological issues that marked the dialogue between Islam and the other religions it came in contact with
- demonstrate a solid grasp of the various religious groups that shaped the development of Islamic religious thought during this period
- understand the place of logic and philosophy in the development of Islamic religious thought
- gain historical insight into religious polemics in Islam, especially between Muslims and Christians
- compare different Islamic perspectives on other religions (Qur’anic, theological, philosophical, polemical)

**Methods of Assessment:** 3000 word essay, deadline Fri. April 7, 2017.