

Attention!

This is a representative syllabus. The syllabus for the course you are enrolled in will likely be different.

Please refer to your instructor's syllabus for more information on specific requirements for a given semester.

ARABIC 8891

Seminar in Arabic Studies



Orient Institute (Chicago), no. 17618 (9th-century)
oldest known fragment of the Arabian Nights

Instructor
Office
Hours
Email

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is designed as a seminar on the history and emergence of the Arabo-Islamic tradition and the role modern scholar approaches—such as history, philology, and religious studies—to its study, curation, and interpretation. The focus of course falls, in particular, on acquainting student the major literary and intellectual trends of this corpus as well as contemporary scholarly methods, sources, and tools utilized in the research thereof. Reading knowledge of Arabic is required.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course assignments fall into following categories: primary texts in Arabic, secondary readings, and assignments to be completed in between class session. Students will be evaluated on two criteria: 1) preparedness for and effort displayed in class work and 2) the completion of work assigned in a thorough and timely manner.

COURSE SCHEDULE

SESSION 1 (Aug 29) – **Why (Arabic) Philology?**

- Sheldon Pollock, “Philology and Freedom,” *Philological Encounters* (2016) 1: 2-30.
- Grammars and Lexica
- ‘Before computers, there were Germans’: tools of the trade

Assignment: Three types of transliteration, grammar puzzles

LABOUR DAY (Sep 5) – **No SESSION**

SESSION 2 (Sep 12) – **From the Oral to the Written**

- Michael Cook, “The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam,” *Arabica* 44 (1997): 437-530.
OR
- Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, tr. Uwe Vaeglpohl and ed. James E. Montgomery (London: Routledge, 2006), **111-141**.
- *Prepare:* Selections from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463AH/1071 CE), *Taqyīd al-‘ilm*, ed. Yūsūf al-‘Ishsh (Damascus: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah, 1949)

SESSION 3 (Sep 19) – **The Re-Birth of the Book**

- Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Saqi, 2010), **13-54**.
OR
- Jonathan Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), **90-123**.
- *Prepare:* Reports on the collection of the Qur’an from ‘Umar ibn Shabbah al-Numayrī (d. ca. 262/875), *Tārīkh al-Madīnah al-munawwarah*, 4 vols., ed. F.M. Shaltūt (Riyadh: Dār al-Iṣfahānī, 1979), 3: 990-98.

SESSION 4 (Sep 26) – **The Context of Learning**

- Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship*, *Analecta Orientalia* 24 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1947)
- Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1-82.
- *Read and prepare:* Ibn Saḥnūn’s (d. 870) *Kitāb Ādāb al-mu‘allimīn*, tr. Michael Fishbein from: B.J. Cook, ed., *Classical Foundations of Islamic Education Thought* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2010).

SESSION 5 (Oct 3) – The Transmission of Knowledge

- G.H.A. Juynboll, “Early Islamic society as reflected in its use of *isnāds*,” *Le Muséon* 57 (1994): 151-194.
- Wadād al-Qāḍī, “Biographical Dictionaries as the Scholars’ Alternative History of the Muslim Community,” in *Organizing Knowledge: Encyclopaedic Activities in the Pre-Eighteenth Century Muslim World*, ed. Gerhard Endress (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23-75.
- *Prepare*: Selections from the *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* of Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845) and the *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341)

Assignment: Locate and correctly identify authorities (*ruwāt*) in the *isnād* of a *ḥadīth*; find 3 biographical entries for an important historical figure.

SESSION 6 (Oct 10) – Sīrah and Ḥadīth

- Andreas Görke, “The Relationship between *maghāzī* and *ḥadīth* in early Islamic scholarship,” *BSOAS* 74 (2011): 171-85.
- Jonathan Brown, *Ḥadīth: Muḥammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), chs. 2-3.
- A letter attributed to ‘Urwa ibn al-Zubayr from al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M.J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901), 1: 1634-36.

SESSION 7 (Oct 17) – Bureaucrats and Secretaries

- J. Derek Latham, “The beginnings of Arabic prose literature. The epistolary genre,” in *Arabic Literature to the End of Umayyad Period (Cambridge History of Arabic Literature)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 154–79.
- Wadād al-Qāḍī, “The impact of the Qur’ān on the epistolography of ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd,” in *Approaches to the Qur’ān*, eds. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (Routledge: London, 1993), 285–313.
- *Prepare*: Excerpts from the *Kitāb al-Wuzārā’ wa-l-kuttāb* by al-Jayshiyārī (d. 331/942) and *Kitāb al-Ādāb al-kabīr* of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 137/755 or 139/756)

SESSION 8 (Oct 24) – Translation of Knowledge

- Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic translation Movement in Baghdad and early ‘Abbāsīd society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1-107.
- Jorge Luis Borges, “Averroës’s Search,” *Labryinths*
- *Prepare*: excerpts from *Prepare*: excerpts from Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fu’ād Sayyid (London: Furqan, 20142), 2: 138-39, 141-42 on the introduction of Greek knowledge.

Assignment: Comparative analysis of Arabic and Latin translation movements from M. Trizio, D. Gutas, Ch. Burnett, J. Demetracopoulos, and M. Zonta, "Medieval Translations," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 2 vols., ed. Robert Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 792-832.

SESSION 9 (Oct 31) – Mapping Knowledge

- Daniel G. König, *Arabic-Islamic Views of the Latin West: Tracing the Emergence of Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27-113.
OR
- Adam Silverstein, "The Medieval Islamic Worldview: Arabic Geography in Its Historical Context," in *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. Kurt Raaflaub (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 273-90.
- *Prepare:* a description of Samarrā' from Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī's (d. after 295/908) *Kitāb al-Buldān*, in M.J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum* (Leiden: Brill, 1927²), 7: 255-68.

Assignment: Find 3 different entries on two geographic locations, one located outside the Islamic world and the other inside the Islamic world.

SESSION 10 (Nov 7) – Tārīkh

- R. Stephen Humphries, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991²), 1-68
OR
- Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159-189.
- *Prepare:* excerpts from the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* of al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), the *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and the *Tārīkh* of al-Ya'qūbī (d. after 295/908) on 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's reaction to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's election as caliph.

SESSION 11 (Nov 14) - Fiqh and Uṣūl al-Fiqh

- Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries CE* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1-67.
OR
- Ahmad El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91-145.
- *Prepare:* al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149), *Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik*, 8 vols., ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ṣaḥrāwī *et al.* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islamiyyah, 1983²), 2: 70-73 on the origins of the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795)

SESSION 12 (Nov 21) – Kalām and Falsafa

- Dimitri Gutas, “The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000 – ca. 1350,” in *Avicenna and His Heritage*, ed. J. Janssens and D. De Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 81-97.
- Sabine Schmidtke, “The Mu‘tazilite Movement (III): The Scholastic Phase,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. S. Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) **OR** Frank Griffel, “Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy: al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* and Ibn al-Malāḥimī’s *Tuḥfat al-Mutakallimīn fī l-Radd ‘alā l-Falāsifa*,” in *ibid*.
- *Prepare*: Two debates between Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/936) and his teacher Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/916) from Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī’s (d. 771/) *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah al-kubrā*, 10 vols, eds. M.M. al-Ṭanāḥī and ‘A.-F. M. al-Ḥulw (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 3: 356-58.

SESSION 13 (Nov 28) – Workshop on Finding, Reading, and Using Arabic Manuscripts

Assignment: Use Fuat Sezgin’s *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* and/or Carl Brockelmann’s *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* to locate information on manuscripts.

SESSION 14 (Dec 5) – Christian Arabic and Judeo-Arabic

- Alexander Treiger, “The Arabic [Christian] Tradition,” in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. A. Casiday (London: Routledge, 2012), 89-104.
- Joshua Blau, *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic: A Study of the Origins of Middle Arabic* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1981), chs. 1-3.
- *Prepare*: excerpts from the Christian Arabic *Baḥīrā Apocalypse* and Saadia Gaon’s translation of the Pentateuch