Phil. 5322, Islamic Background to Aquinas, Fall 2016, Preliminary Syllabus

UST Course No., MW 9:10-10:25, Sullivan 100

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Objectives of Course:
(1) To learn about medieval Islamic philosophy by concentrating on the thought of Avicenna.
(2) To understand Avicennian metaphysics by concentrating on the Metaphysics of the Shifa’.
(3) To understand Avicenna’s thought historically, through comparison with Aristotle and Aquinas, Scriptum in libros Sententiarum.
(4) To develop the philosophical and scholarly skills to be able to do 1-3 at a high level of proficiency.

Requirements:
- Final Examination [50%]. During Exam Week.
- Term paper (20-5 pp.) [50%]. Due date: End of Exam Week.
- Instructor reserves the right to emend course grade up or down (maximum change: 5%) based on:
  - Class presentations (required).
  - Class participation (required).

R.E. Houser, Graduate Courses, Grading Scale
Tests and Papers: A+ = 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 83-87; B- = 90-92
Course averages: 92.5-100 = A; 90.0-92.4 = A-; 88.0-89.9 = B+; 82.5-87.9 = B; 80.0-82.4 = B-

Books:

Aquinas:
- Scriptum in libros Sententiarum, using translations provided by the instructor. Divided into books, distinctions, questions, articles. (= Aq, Sent)
- Summa theologiae, using Older English Dominican translation. Divided into parts, questions, articles.
  (= Aq, ST)

Avicenna:
  (= Av, Met)

Syllabus:

22 Aug: Introduction
   Structure of Course
   Requirements


Avicenna outlines the history of metaphysics as introduction to his argument against Platonic forms. Aquinas uses Avicenna (as well as Aristotle) in outlining the history of metaphysics.

**Study Questions:**
- Who is the “some” (aliqui) who ends Aquinas’s history of metaphysics?
- Does Aquinas draw on Aristotle for his history? On Avicenna?
- What are the basic steps in Aquinas’s history, in ST 1.44.2?

**Read:**
- Avicenna, Met, 7.2 (= Bk. 7, c. 2)
- Aquinas, ST 1.44.1-2.
- Aquinas, On Power, 3.1 and 5 (= q. 3, art. 1 and 5)
- Aquinas, On Separate Substances, c. 9.

**Secondary:**

**Part I: Philosophical “Sciences”**

29 Aug: **Lec. 2, Aristotle’s conception of demonstrative “science”**

A. Plato’s divided line
B. Components of an Aristotelian science
   1. subject, principles (axioms, suppositions, definitions), conclusions
   2. demonstration of conclusions
   3. finding middle terms
   4. knowing principles

**Study Questions:**
- For Plato, what are you thinking about and how does your thinking proceed, at each level of the divided line?
- For Aristotle, how are you thinking when you demonstrate conclusions? when you come to know principles?

**Read:**
- Plato, divided line: Republic 6 (404d-511e), 7 (533d-534b).
- Aristotle, Prior Analytics, 1.1.
- Posterior Analytics, 1.1-2, 10, 13.
- 2.1-2, 8-10, 11, 19.

31 Aug: **Lec. 3, Subjects, principles, and a few conclusions of the Aristotelian sciences**

A. Components of Aristotle’s sciences, some examples:
   - Ethics, politics, physics, the soul, metaphysics
B. Mathematics: Euclid

**Study Question:**
- For each of these “sciences,” describe the “subject” studied as precisely as you can.
- What are the principles guiding demonstrations in each science?
- Can you identify one demonstration in the readings assigned for each science?

**Read:**
- Aristotle, Physics, 1.1, 6-7.
- 2.1-3.
- On the Soul, 1.1.
- Metaphysics, 1.1-3.
- 4.1-2.
6.1.
Nic. Ethics, 1.1-3, 7.
Politics, 1.1-2.
Euclid, Elements bk. 1, principles.
Theorem 32.

5 Sep: Labor Day

7 Sep: Lec. 4: Avicenna and Aquinas on the Range of the Theoretical Sciences
A. Range of the theoretical sciences in Avicenna, “Introduction” to the Book of Healing.
B. Range of the theoretical sciences in Aquinas, Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius, q. 5, art. 1
Study Questions:
Name the sciences each philosopher uncovers.
Name one important feature of that science.
How does each philosopher reason in uncovering the theoretical sciences.
Read:
Aquinas, Commentary on De trinitate of Boethius, q. 5, art. 1. Maurer trans., Division and Methods of the Sciences.

12 Sep: Lec. 5: Avicenna and Aquinas on the subject and principles of physical science
Study Questions:
How does Avicenna describe the subject of physical science?
What are the principles of physical science Avicenna presents?
How does Aquinas describe the subject of physical science?
What are the principles of physical science Aquinas presents?
Read:
Avicenna, Physics of the Healing, Bk. 1, On the Causes and Principles of Natural Things
Bk. 1, c. 1-3, 5-6, 9-10.
Aquinas, Commentary on De trinitate of Boethius, q. 5, art. 2-3. Maurer trans., Division and Methods of the Sciences.

14 Sep: Lec. 6: Avicenna, the Scientific Structure of Metaphysics: its Subject, End, Principles, and Objects of Enquiry
Study Questions:
What does Avicenna mean by the “end” of a science?
How does Avicenna describe the “subject” and “end” of metaphysics.
Draw up a list of the principles of metaphysics, according to Avicenna. Identify whether each principle you list is an axiom, definition, or supposition.
From the table of contents of Avicenna’s Met., and from Met. 1.4, draw up a list of the topics covered in metaphysics, its “objects of inquiry.”
Read:
Avicenna, Met 1.1-8. Difficult material; you will need to read it twice. Concentrate on c. 2, 5, and 7, sec. 13-14. We will return to parts of Bk. 1 later in the semester; but you must read the whole now.

19 Sep: Lec. 7: Aquinas: The Subject, Principles, and End of Metaphysics, considered in itself.
Study Questions:
Does Aquinas think metaphysics has an “end”? If so, what is it?
How does Aquinas describe the “subject” of metaphysics?
Does Aquinas describe the “principles” of metaphysics? If so, what are they?
Read:
Aquinas, Commentary on De trinitate of Boethius, q. 5, art. 4. Maurer trans., Division and Methods of the Sciences.
Part II: “Sacred doctrine” and Philosophy in Scriptum Super librum Sententiarum.

21 Sep:  **Lec. 8: Sacred doctrine (sacra doctrina) understood as a “science,” in Scriptum 1, prologue**
Features of sacred doctrine (or theology conceived as a science):
1) its end; 2) unity; 3) practical or speculative; 4) science; 5) wisdom; 6) subject.

**Study questions:**
What is the “end” of sacred doctrine?  
Is sacred doctrine one discipline, or many?  
Is it practical or speculative?  
Is it a science?  
Is it wisdom?

**Read:**
Aquinas, I Sent, Prologue, Q. 1, Art. 1 (excerpt), Art. 2 (excerpt), Art. 3, Quaestiuncula 1: Utrum sit practica? 2: Utrum sit scientia? 3: Utrum sit sapientia?  
Aquinas, I Sent, prologue, q. 1, art. 4. Utrum deus sit subjectum istius scientiae?

**Parallels:**
ST, 1.1.1-8  
SCG 1.1-9  
Super librum Boetii de trinitate (tr. Maurer, Faith, Reason, and Theology), q. 2, art. 3-4.

26 Sep:  **Lec. 9: A Caution for Philosophers and Theologians comparing God and Creatures**

**Study questions:**
How is it possible to assert a plurality of attributes to God, who is one?  
What does Aquinas mean by ratio, translated here as “reasoned aspect”?  
Why does Aquinas say “on this point hangs almost all our understanding of what is said in Book 1”?

**Read:**
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 2, q. 1, art. 1 (excerpt); Art. 2: Utrum in Deo sint plura attributa?  
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 2, q. 1, art. 3: Utrum pluralitas rationum, quibus attributa different, sit tantum in intellectu, vel etiam in Deo?

28 Sep:  **Lec. 10: What are the primary philosophical principles used in theology (= sacred doctrine)?**  
**From Aquinas earliest treatment of the divine essence, Scriptum 1, d. 8, q. 1, art. 1.**

**Study Questions:**
Does theology include purely rational arguments, as well as arguments based on faith?  
Can such rational arguments be demonstrations?  
If so, what are the philosophical principles such rational arguments use?  
Compare the principles Aquinas presents in this Reading with those of Avicenna.

**Read:**
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 8, q. 1, Art. 1: Utrum esse proprie dicatur de Deo?  
Avicenna, Met 1.5-7 (again). Pay close attention to what Avicenna’s principles are (both “definitions” and “suppositions”) and to how Avicenna argues for them.

3 Oct:  **Lec. 11: What are the primary attributes of things that are useful in metaphysics and theology for developing philosophical knowledge of God and creatures? From Aquinas’ earliest treatment of the divine essence, Scriptum 1, d. 8, q. 1, art. 3.**

**Study Questions:**
Compare Aquinas’s description of the four transcendental with Avicenna’s.  
Which features of creatures are more useful to use in theology, on Aquinas’s understanding: categorical (ten categories and their subdivisions) or transcendental?
Read:  
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 1, Art. 3: Utrum hoc nomen ‘qui est’ sit primum inter nomina divina?  
Avicenna, Met 1.5, 8; 3.1-2; 4.1. sec. 1-11.  
Parallel:  
Aquinas, On Truth, 1.1.

5 Oct:  
Lec. 12 Ontological simplicity of God and complexity of creatures. From Aquinas’ earliest treatment of the divine essence, Scriptum 1, d. 8, q. 4, art 1, and q. 5, art. 1.  
Study Questions:  
What are the notions Aquinas uses to argue that God is ontologically simple?  
What are the notions he uses to argue creatures are ontologically composite?  
Does Aquinas depend upon Avicenna?  
Are Aquinas’s arguments demonstrative or dialectical?  
Read:  
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, art. 1: Utrum Deus sit omnino simplex?  
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 5, art. 1: Utrum aliqua creatura sit simplex?  
Avicenna, Met 1.6-7, 8.4.  
Parallel:  
Aquinas, ST 1.3.1-4.

10 Oct:  
Fall Break

12 Oct:  
Lec 13 Substance and Accident in God  
Study Questions:  
Does Aquinas agree with Aristotle that God is a substance?  
Is it legitimate to use the language of substance to describe God?  
Is it legitimate to use the language of accidents to describe God?  
Read:  
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, art. 2: Utrum Deus sit in praedicamento substantiae?  
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, art. 3: Utrum alia praedicamenta de Deo dicantur.  
Avicenna, Met 1.7, sec. 13-4; 3.8, sec. 1-3; 8.5.  
Parallel:  
Aquinas, ST 1.3.5-8.

Part III: Ontology: Avicenna and Aquinas

17 Oct:  
Lec 14 A New Definition of Substance  
Study Question:  
Do the principles of quiddity and existence (esse) affect the definition of substance?  
Read:  
Aristotle, Categories 2, 5; Met 4.2; Met. 5.7-8.  
Avicenna, Met 2.1-4; 3.8.  
Aquinas, Sent Reading 9, esp. ad 2m.  
Aquinas, Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 12 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 1 ad 2.  
Aquinas, Super Sent., lib. 2 d. 3 q. 1 a. 5c and 6c.  
Aquinas: De Ente, 1, 5

19 Oct:  
Lec 15 Introduction to the Accidents: Transcendental unity and quantitative unity  
Study Questions:  
Why does Avicenna begin his treatment of the 9 predicamental accidents with a consideration of “one” in
What is the difference between “the one that is convertible with being” and the “one that is the principle of number”?
Are the counting numbers ‘category neutral’? Or are they properly confined to the category of quantity and extended beyond quantity only analogously?

Read:
Avicenna Met 3.1-6, 7.1.
Aquinas Reading 14: Divine unity: I Sent, d. 24, q. 1, art. 1 (4 pp.): Utrum Deus possit dici unus? Latin
Aquinas Reading 15: Number in God: I Sent, d. 24, q. 1, art. 2 (2 pp.): Utrum in Deo sit aliquis numerus.
Aquinas, De potentia, 9.7 esp. ad 15m.

24 Oct: Lec 16 Logical composites and Ontological composites: universals and particulars

Study Questions:
Is Avicenna, Met 5, an interpretation of Aristotle, Met 5.8 and Met 7?
How do the metaphysical principles of essence and existence provide the ontological foundation for our knowledge which employs the predicables: genus, species, difference, property, accident?
How are the five predicables related to our knowledge of substances and accidents.

Read:
Aristotle, Met. 5.8 and Bk 7, esp. 1-4, 12-13, 17.
Avicenna, Met 5, esp. 1-3.
Aquinas, De ente 2-3.
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, art. 2: Utrum Deus sit in praedicamento substantiae?
Aquinas, I sent. D. 17. 1. 5 ad4m.
Aquinas, 3 Sent. d. 11 q. 1 a. 2
Aquinas, 3 sent d. 5. 1.2.ad2m

26 Oct: Lec 17 A New Conception of Causality
Theme: replacing the Greek notion of agent cause as bestowing essence with theist notion of agent cause bestowing existence.

Read:
1. Plato on causality: reduction to form and end: Phaedo,
3. Avicenna’s new presentation of the causes in Met 6.1-5.
   Focus on efficient cause: cc. 1-3.
   Consequences for the other causes c. 4-5
4. Aquinas
   Aquinas,1 sent d.5 2.2c  Av probat: even if world is eternal it is still ex nihilo
   Aquinas,1 sent d. 9 2.2.2  Av distinguishes 2 agents: cause of becoming, principle of existing.
   Aquinas,1 sent d. 37.1.1c.  Av dist: agens divinum = causa esse and agens naturale = causa motus
   Aquinas, 2 sent d. 1. 1.4.ad4m.  opinio avicennae: agens naturale non est nisi praeparans materiam ad receptionem formam.  This view reduced to platonism.

Part IV: Theology: Avicenna and Aquinas


Study Questions:
What does “God’s existence is self-evident (per se notum)” mean?
How many possible ways of knowing God exists does Avicenna distinguish, in the reading assigned?
For Bonaventure, how many ways are there to know God exists?
In Sent, how many possible ways of know God exists does Aquinas distinguish?
In the Scriptum super Sententiarum, why did Aquinas not devote another article of proving God exists, as he did later in SCG and ST, depend upon the reading assigned in Avicenna (Met 1.1, sec. 9-18)?

**Read:**
- Aquinas, I Sent, d. 3, q. 1, art. 2: Utrum deum esse sit per se notum?

**Parallel:**
- Aquinas, ST 1.2.1; SCG 1.12.

2 Nov:  **Lec 19 Avicenna’s Arguments for God’s Existence**

**Study Questions:**
- What is Aristotle’s main conclusion in Met. 2.2?
- What are the steps in Avicenna’s “program” for proving God exists (Met. 8.1.sec.1-3)?
- How many arguments does Avicenna present in Met. 8.1-3? Where does each begin, and end?
- Compare Avicenna’s arguments in Met. 8.1-3 and Najat.

**Read:**
- Aristotle, Met. 2.2, 12.6-7.
- Avicenna, Met 8.1-3.
- Avicenna, Najat.

7 Nov:  **Lec 20 Aquinas’s Arguments for God’s Existence**

**Study Questions:**
- Why are there five “ways”?
- What is the distinctive character of his proof in each “way”?
- Compare Aquinas’s five ways with the arguments of Avicenna.

**Read:**
- Aquinas, I Sent, d. 3, q. 1, art. 2: Utrum deum esse sit per se notum?
- Aquinas, ST 1.2.3.

**Parallel:**
- Aquinas, SCG 1.13, 15.

9 Nov:  **Lec 21 Avicenna on the Nature of God: necesse esse**

**Study Questions:**
- Write out a list of Aristotle’s main theses about the nature of a god. What are the main conceptual principles Aristotle uses in describing the nature of a god? What is Aristotle’s definition of a god?
- Write out a list of Avicenna’s main theses about the nature of God. What are the main conceptual principles Avicenna uses in describing the nature of God? What is Avicenna’s definition of God?

**Read:**
- Aristotle, Met. 12. 7-10.
- Avicenna: Met 8.3-5.

14 Nov:  **Lec 22 Aquinas on the Nature of God: ipsum esse subsistens**

**Study Questions:**
1. Start with Aquinas’s *Sent Readings* 7 and 9: Write out a list of Aquinas’s main theses about the nature of God found there. Then set out the main conceptual principles he uses. What is Aquinas’s definition of God? Compare Aquinas with Aristotle and Avicenna.

2. *Summa theologiae*: Read Aquinas’s treatment of the nature of God, considered in himself, in ST 1.3-11. Set out his main theses about the nature of God. Then compare his main theses with those of Aristotle and Avicenna. Look at both the order in which Aquinas presents his theses, and their content. What are your conclusions?
3. Finally, look at the additional texts from Aquinas’s Scriptum super Sent. Do they help in your comparison of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Aquinas?

Read:
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 8, q. 4, art. 1: Utrum Deus sit omnino simplex?
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, art. 2: Utrum Deus sit in praedicamento substantiae?
Aquinas, ST 1.3-11.
Aquinas, 1sent d 2.1.3c Av says: Deus est esse subsistens
Aquinas, 1 sent d3. 1.2.4.Av says: dei quidditas est ipsum suum esse
Aquinas, 2 sent d. 1. 1.1c Three ways to prove the first principle of the universe must be one: Aristotelian, Avicennian, Platonic.

Aquinas, Aquinas, 2 sent d. 3. 1.6c God’s quiddity is nothing other than his esse, ergo God is not in genus of substance.
Aquinas, 3 sent. D. 11. 1.2.ad2m. esse is not a genus, nor is it part of the meaning of any genus.
Aquinas, 1 sent d2. 1.3.c Av and Maimonides say: Names predicated of God negatively

16 Nov: Lec 23 Divine unity
Study Questions:
Understanding the problem: Nowadays we think the concepts of numbers are ontologically neutral and can be applied to anything: sections of a line; cows, angels, God. Would Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Aquinas agree?
What are the objects studied in mathematics? For Plato; for Aristotle; for Avicenna; for Aquinas?
For Aquinas, what exactly is the problem in using “one” and numerical terms of God? What is his solution to this problem?

Read:
Aquinas, ST 1.11.1-4
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 24, q. 1, art. 1 (4 pp.): Utrum Deus possit dici unus? Latin
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 24, q. 1, art. 2 (2 pp.): Utrum in Deo sit aliquis numerus. Done.
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 24, q. 1, art. 3 (6 pp.):Utrum unitas et numerus ponant aliquid in divinis, vel removeant?

Latin
Aquinas, I Sent., d. 25, q. 1, art. 4 (3 pp.): Utrum tres personae possint dici tres res?

21 Nov: Lec 24 Divine truth
Study Questions:
Does truth have two features: subjective (truth in the mind) and objective (truth as an aspect of reality)? For Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Aquinas?
If truth has two features, which is primary: for Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Aquinas?

Read:
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 19, q. 5, art. 1 (6 pp.): Utrum veritas sit essentia rei? Done.
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 19, q. 5, art. 2 (4 pp.): Utrum omnia sint vera veritate increata?

28 Nov: Lec 25 Divine knowledge
Study Questions:
Given the ontological simplicity of God, does God have knowledge? How? According to Avicenna?

Aquinas?

Read:
Aquinas, I Sententiis, d. 35, q. 1, Art. 1: Does knowledge apply to God?
Aquinas, I Sent, d. 36, q. 1, art. 1 (5 pp.): Utrum Deus cognoscat singularia?

30 Nov: Lec. 26 Divine ideas
Study Questions:
Does God have ideas? How many? How can one justify saying God has many ideas? For Avicenna? For Aquinas?

Read:
Aquinas, 1 Sent, d. 36, q. 2, art. 1 Art. 1: What is meant by the term idea?
Aquinas, 1 Sent d. 36 q. 2 art. 2, Art. 2: Are there many ideas?
5 Dec.  **Lec 27 Creation**

**Study Questions:**
For Avicenna: Is the world eternal? And created? Created in what sense?
For Aquinas: Is the world eternal? Created? Created in what sense? Is creation known through faith alone, or also rationally.

**Read:**
Aquinas, Selections from Carroll and Baldner volume.
Aquinas, II Sent, d. 1, q. 1, art. 1 (7 pp.): Utrum sint plura prima principia?
Aquinas, II Sent, d. 1, q. 1, art. 2 (4 pp.): Utrum aliquid possit exire ab eo per creationem.
Aquinas, II Sent, d. 1, q. 1, art. 5 (14 pp.): Utrum mundus sit aeternus?

Final Examination During Exam Period