



## *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

### *Syllabus*

## *The Origins of Language in Islamicate Thought - 16515*

*Last update 28-04-2015*

*HU Credits:* 4

*Degree/Cycle:* 1st degree (Bachelor)

*Responsible Department:* □Arabic Language and Lit

*Academic year:* 2

*Semester:* 2nd Semester

*Teaching Languages:* Hebrew

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Goldstein

*Coordinator Email:* [mi.goldstein@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:mi.goldstein@mail.huji.ac.il)

*Coordinator Office Hours:* Mon 11-12

*Teaching Staff:*

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Dr. Miriam Goldstein

Course/Module description:

The translation movement of the 'Abbasid period flooded the Arabic-speaking world with new ideas, not least among them fundamental concepts of Greek philosophy. The question of the beginning of human language was one of them, and this question occupied thinkers of all religions and from a variety of fields. We will examine the writings of Muslim and Jewish thinkers on this issue, along with relevant secondary material on the topic.

Course/Module aims:

1. Expose the student to basic concepts and terms of the philosophy of language
2. Expose the student to the historical, cultural and religious background of this question in the Islamicate sphere.
3. Gain familiarity with central texts on the subject in Arabic, composed by Muslims and Jews.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Gain familiarity with basic concepts and terms relating to the philosophy of language
2. Develop the ability to analyze texts on the topic of the development of language
3. Compare and contrast between thinkers and discussions on the topic.
4. Via this topic in particular, to gain a general appreciation for the contribution of classical thought to Jewish and Muslim discussions of this subject.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lecture + readings

Course/Module Content:

The "chosen language"  
The beginnings of language: conventional or revealed  
Selected exegeses of Quran 2:30  
Selected exegeses of Genesis 2:19

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Required Reading:

We will read sections from works of the following authors:

Ibn Jinni

Abu al-Faraj Harun

Saadya Gaon

Al-Suyuti

Yefet

Additional Reading Material:

Allan, Keith. *The Western Classical Tradition in Linguistics*. London; Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2007.

Ignac Goldziher. *On the History of Grammar among the Arabs: An Essay in Literary History* / Ignaz Goldziher; Translated and Edited by Kinga Dévényi and Tamás Iványi. [Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science. Series III, Studies in the History of the Language Sciences; v. 73]. Amsterdam: JBenjamins, 1994.

Gutas, Dimitri. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th C.)*. Taylor & Francis Group, 1998.

Weiss, Bernard George. "Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language." *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 124, no. 1 (1974): 33-41.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 80 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 20 %

Project work 0 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information: