In this course we will explore leading medieval thinkers from the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Their thoughts and disagreements may help us with our thoughts and disagreements concerning the following questions: What is the proper relation between religion and politics? What is the proper relation between religious and political institutions? We will give particular attention to Thomas Aquinas, an important proponent of the doctrine of natural law as the proper basis of human law. The objectives of the course are (1) to develop the skills of close reading and of writing, (2) to analyze the arguments made by the thinkers, and (3) to learn how those arguments help us, the inheritors of their thinking, to understand our own political life.

Readings:

The following books have been ordered for purchase and are also available at the library on two-hour reserve:

Excerpts from the Koran and the Bible are required. Among the places where you may find the Koran is [http://www.wright-house.com/religions/islam/Quran.html](http://www.wright-house.com/religions/islam/Quran.html). Among the places where you may find the Bible is [http://biblestudytools.com/nas/](http://biblestudytools.com/nas/). If you do not own a copy of the Koran or the Bible that you can bring to class on the relevant days, I encourage you to print the excerpts from the websites and bring them.

Schedule of Readings:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>M Aug 28</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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**I. Islamic Political Thought**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W Aug 30</th>
<th>Koran, Sura 2 (“The Cow”)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Sep 4</td>
<td>No class (Labor Day recess)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W Sep 6</td>
<td>Koran, Sura 4 (“Women”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Sep 11</td>
<td>Introductory material and Alfarabi, The Enumeration of the Sciences (pp. 1-23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W Sep 13</td>
<td>Alfarabi, The Book of Religion and The Political Regime (pp. 24-55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Sep 18</td>
<td>Alfarabi, The Attainment of Happiness and Plato’s Laws (pp. 56-73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W Sep 20</td>
<td>Avicenna, On the Divisions of the Rational Sciences and Healing: Metaphysics 10 (pp. 74-88)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Sep 25</td>
<td>Alghazali, The Deliverer from Error, and Ibn Bajja, The Governance of the Solitary (pp. 89-104); paper #1 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>W Sep 27</td>
<td>Ibn Tufayl, Hayy the Son of Yaqzan (pp. 105-22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Oct 2</td>
<td>Averroes, The Decisive Treatise (pp. 123-40); paper #2 due</td>
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II. Jewish Political Thought

W Oct 11 Introduction and Saadya Gaon, The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs (pp. 147-61)
M Oct 16 Judah Halevi, The Book of Refutation and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion, or, the Kuzari, and Maimonides, Logic (pp. 162-82)
W Oct 18 Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed (pp. 183-202)
M Oct 23 Maimonides, Eight Chapters and Letter on Astrology (pp. 203-7)
W Oct 25 Isaac Polgar, The Support of Religion, and Abravanel, Commentary on the Bible (pp. 208-30)
M Oct 30 Midterm examination

III. Christian Political Thought

W Nov 1  New Testament: Gospel of Matthew 5:1—7:29; Gospel of John (entire)
W Nov 8  Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 76-95)
M Nov 13 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 95-113)
W Nov 15 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 114-37)
M Nov 20 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 137-57)
W Nov 22 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 52-56)
M Nov 27 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 158-67)
W Nov 29 Aquinas, Summa theologiae (excerpts) (Political Writings, pp. 168-92)
M Dec 4  Aquinas, De regimine principum (Political Writings, pp. 5-24)
W Dec 6  Aquinas, De regimine principum (Political Writings, pp. 24-45)

Final examination: W Dec 13, 10:10-12:10

Format:

Sessions will combine lecture and discussion. It is imperative, therefore, that you come to class having done the assigned reading for that day. A superior method of preparation is to read the material twice: first fairly quickly in order to grasp the direction of the argument, then slowly and thoroughly, taking notes as you go. Often I will refer to page numbers in the readings, so it is important that we all have the same editions of them and that you bring your book to class.

Use of a computer or other electronic device during class is prohibited, except with prior permission; unauthorized use will be considered the equivalent of an absence for that class. Unauthorized recording of the class is also prohibited. Our focus should be on the readings and on our fellow human beings trying to learn from the readings; computers tend to be a distraction. Electronic books are permitted, but you should let me know that you are using one, and the electronic book must be the same edition as the print edition.

Assignments:

Written assignments include:

- three papers of 2 to 4 pages each (1,000 words maximum per paper) on topics assigned from the readings on Islamic political thought. They will be due at the beginning of class on the specified dates. Each paper will count 10% of your final grade.
- a midterm examination, which will cover Jewish political thought. It will consist mainly or entirely of essay questions and will count 35% of your final grade.
a final examination, which will cover Christian political thought. It will consist mainly or entirely of essay questions and will count 35% of your final grade.

The papers will be due at the beginning of class on the specified dates. Extensions for submitting papers will be granted only in an emergency (e.g., personal illness, preferably with a note from a doctor, or serious illness in one's family). The grade on a paper will be reduced by one increment (e.g., from B+ to B) for each business day it is late without an approved extension.

The examinations will consist mainly or entirely of essay questions. No alternative arrangements for examinations are likely to be made except in an emergency.

You must complete all written assignments to be eligible to pass the course. A record of significant contributions to discussion in class will increase the grade on one of the assignments by one increment. Your grade may be reduced if you have more than two unexcused absences; lateness normally counts as an absence.

Other Information:

The university requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair-use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violation of copyright and fair-use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for violation of fair-use laws. Violation of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under university policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair-use policies, the university encourages you to see http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright.

Any academic misconduct will make a student liable to failure of the course. One example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: using the words or ideas of another, from any source (including the Internet), without proper citation. The academic misconduct policy for students may be reviewed at https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct.

By UNLV policy for the sake of students’ privacy, faculty should send e-mail to students only via students’ Rebelmail accounts. Please use that account to send me e-mail. If you use another account, I will use my discretion in deciding whether to respond.

Free assistance with writing is available at the Writing Center (CDC 3-301; telephone 702-895-3908). Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority.

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you should contact the Disability Resource Center (SSC A143; telephone 702-895-0866) for coordination of services. If you are registered with the center, bring your academic accommodation plan to me so that we may work together to implement the accommodations to meet your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach me in front of others to discuss your needs.

If you miss a written assignment because of observance of a religious holiday, you will be given an opportunity during the semester to make up missed work. The makeup will apply only to the absence on the religious holiday. It is your responsibility to notify me within the first fourteen calendar days of the course of your intention to participate in religious holidays that do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For more information, see http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531.

This class meets the requirements for the Great Works Academic Certificate.