I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Contemporary relevance of theories of prophecy in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophy. Interplay of epistemological, moral, and metaphysical aspects, focusing especially on treatments of tensions between theory/practice, freedom/authority, reason/imagination, knowledge/intuition, and mind/world.

We begin with the outlines of a novel approach to the tradition of Islamic philosophy, focusing on the notion of prophecy. This approach draws from the work of Henry Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In this introduction, we also cover salient features of Ancient Greek philosophy and innovative interpretative approaches to that tradition in the works of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault. We will then read representative work by Alfarabi, Avicenna, Ghazali, and Maimonides. Next, we consider Aquinas’s critique of Judeo-Islamic prophetology and his own particular theory of prophecy, which revolutionizes the views of his precursors and lays the ground for modern philosophy. We finally study the direct interface between modern philosophy and Abrahamic prophetology in the writings of modern sceptics, such as Montaigne and Spinoza, using the work of Richard Popkin and his critics.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE COURSE:

1. Students will become familiar with an oft-neglected but a pivotal dimension of Abrahamic traditions of philosophy, that is, theories of prophecy.
2. They will gain insight into the relation between philosophy and religion.
3. They will become familiar with the historical roots of Abrahamic prophetology in Greek philosophy and its influence on later thinkers like Spinoza.
4. They will gain knowledge of groundbreaking contemporary theories in ethics, political philosophy, epistemology, and metaphysics.
5. They will become familiar with new interpretive approaches to Ancient and Medieval philosophy and will gain a deeper appreciation of the history of pre-Modern philosophy.
6. Students will understand better the continuities between Modern and Medieval philosophies and get a better grasp on their differences.
III. REQUIRED TEXTS

-Other readings essential for the course are available at ILearn (http://ilearn.sfsu.edu) in PDF form.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class attendance and active participation are required and count for 20% of the grade. The remainder of the grade will be determined by a 15-20 page term paper (40%) and class presentations (40%). Each presenter will also submit a 3-5 page paper on the topic presented.

V. PLAGIARISM

All work submitted for the course must be your own. Plagiarism will result in disciplinary action. For more details see: http://www.sfsu.edu/~collhum/plagiarism.html

VI. SCHEDULE: This schedule is subject to revision.

Week 1, Jan 26: Philosophy as a Way of life

Week 2, Feb 2: The Ethical Foundations
Foucault’s “Ethics of Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” on iLearn.
McDowell’s “Virtue and Reason,” iLearn.
McDowell’s “Values and Secondary Qualities,” on iLearn.

Week 3, Feb 9: Philosophy and Prophecy
Avicenna on the Just Person, Selection from the Metaphysics of *al-Shifā ’*, Book X.
Nasr’s “The Meaning and Concept of Philosophy in Islam,” on iLearn.
Corbin’s “The Theme of the Voyage and the Messenger,” pp. 135-142, on iLearn.
Corbin’s “Prophetology,” pp. 39-45, on iLearn.
Gutas, “The Starting Point of Philosophical Studies in Alexandrian and Arabic Aristotelianism.”

Week 4, Feb 16: Alfarabi on Cognition and Intellectual Prophecy
Davidson, “Alfarabi on Emanation, the Active Intellect, and the Human Intellect,” on iLearn.

Week 5, Feb 23: Avicenna on Cognition and Intellectual Prophecy
*Avicenna’s Psychology* (Selections), on iLearn.
Avicenna’s “On the Proof of Prophecies and the Interpretation of the Prophet’s Symbols and Metaphors,” on iLearn.
Marmura’s “Avicenna’s Psychological Proof of Prophecy,” on iLearn.
Azadpur, “From the Things Themselves to the Beginning (*ta’wil*): Practical and Theoretical Spiritual Exercises in Islamic Philosophy,” pp. 53-63.
Week 6, Mar 1: Prophecy and Political Imagination
Lameer, “The Philosopher and the Prophet: Greek Parallels to Al-Farabi’s Theory of Religion and Philosophy in the State,” on iLearn.

Week 7, Mar 8: Prophecy and Aesthetic Imagination
Selections from Avicenna’s *Poetics*, on iLearn.

Week 8, Mar 15: Jewish Peripateticism and Prophecy
Maimonides, Selections from *Guide for the Perplexed*.

March 22: No Class. Spring Recess

Week 9, Mar 29: Islamic Scepticism and Prophecy
Selections from al-Ghazali’s “Deliverance from Error,” on iLearn.
Van Ess, “Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought.”
Azadpur, “Unveiling the Hidden: on the Meditations of Descartes and Ghazzali.”

April 5: No Class. Pacific APA

Week 10, Apr 12: Peripatetic Reply to Ghazali
Ibn Rushd’s *The Decisive Treatise*.
Azadpur, “The Theologian’s Dream: Imagination and Intellectual Heresy”

Week 11, Apr 19: Christian Peripateticism and Prophecy
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Selections), on iLearn.
Altmann’s “Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas: Natural or Divine Prophecy,” on iLearn.

Week 12, Apr 26: Modern Scepticism and Prophecy I
Popkin, “Prophecy and Scepticism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” on iLearn.
Maclean, “The ‘Sceptical Crisis’ Reconsidered: Galen, Rational Medicine, and *Libertas Philosophandi*.”
Popkin, “Michel de Montaigne and the ‘Nouveaux Pyrrhoniens’”

Week 13, May 3: Modern Scepticism and Prophecy II
Popkin, “Spinoza’s Scepticism and Anti-Scepticism,” on iLearn.

Week 14, May 10: The Prophet, the Genius, and the Exemplars
Cavell, “Kierkegaard’s *On Authority and Revelation*,” on iLearn
Nietzsche, Selections from “Schopenhauer as Educator,” on iLearn
Emerson, “Uses of Great Men,” on iLearn
Conant, “Emerson as Educator,” on iLearn
Nietzsche, Selections from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, on iLearn
Azadpur, “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?” on iLearn.

May 18: Final paper DUE, by noon in my office (HUM 361).