Classics 192 (Fall 2005)
“From Alexandria to Baghdad”: Classical Sciences in Islamic Lands
Tuesdays, Thursdays: 12-1pm
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A course on the transmission and transformation of classical sciences in the Islamic Middle Ages, with a focus on the early scientific traditions and institutions of Arabic and Persian speaking lands. The course includes review of modern and historical literature, analysis of selected works (in English), and exposure to non-literary sources such as instruments, artifacts, films and plays, with close attention to cross-cultural and intra-cultural contexts.

(Image: A frontispiece honoring nine Greek physicians from the Arabic copy of the Pseudo-Galen Book of Antidotes.)
Unit I (Weeks 1-3): Themes (Tradition, Transmission, Transformation)

Week 1: Continuity and Discontinuity
9/20: A Western Intellectual Tradition in a Non-Western Setting
9/22: The Intellectual, Historical and Geographical Settings

Week 2: Transmission and Transformation
9/27: Textual Transmission–From Alexandria to Baghdad and Beyond
9/29: Conceptual Transformation–Beyond The “Intermediate” Tradition

Week 3: Commensurability and Incommensurability
10/4: Intellectual Commensurability–“Unity of Knowledge”
10/6: Cultural Incommensurability–“In Our Language”

Unit 1 Handout: Translational Transferability (3-5 page Response due 10/11: 10%)

Unit II (Weeks 4-6): Themes (Reception, Appropriation, Naturalization)

Week 4: Reception, Appropriation, Naturalization
10/11: The “Miracle” of the Scientific Movement
10/13: The “Decline” of the Scientific Traditions

Week 5: Science and Context
10/18: Science Agents–Science Authors, Scientific Sources
10/20: Context Agents–Science Sponsors, Institutional Settings

Week 6: Science, Philosophy, Religion
10/25: Science, Philosophy–Knowledge and Utility
10/27: Science and Religion–Exchange and Authority
**Unit II Handout: Questioning Authority** (3-5 page Response: due 11/1: 10%)  

**Unit III (Weeks 7-9): Case Studies (Mathematical, Philosophical, Medical Traditions)**

Week 7: Mathematical and Philosophical Traditions  
11/1: Geometry, Algebra, Geometric Algebra  
11/3: Demonstrative Sciences

Week 8: Mixed Mathematical-Physical Traditions  
11/8: Optics  
11/10: Mechanics

Week 9: Medical and Natural-philosophical Traditions  
11/15: Anatomy and Ophthalmology  
11/17: Biology and Psychology

**Unit III Handout: Distorting History?** (3-5 page Response: due 11/23, 10%)  

**Unit IV (Weeks 10-12): Case Studies–Cross-Cultural and Intra-Cultural Settings**

Week 10: Cross-Cultural Settings  
11/22: Greek Scientific Traditions in Arabic and Persian Sources  
11/24: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 11: Intra-Cultural Settings  
11/29: Arabic Scientific Traditions in Latin Sources  
12/1: Arabic Scientific Traditions through Eastern and Western Islamic Lands

Week 12: A Western Intellectual Tradition in a Non-Western Setting  
12/6: A Western Intellectual Tradition  
12/8: A Non-Western Setting

**Unit IV Handout: Decline: Quantity vs. Quality** (3-5 page Response due 12/13: 10%)  
Kāshī’s (d.1436), Letter to his father (A Newly Found Letter of Al-Kāshī on Scientific Life in Samarqand)
Unit V (Weeks 13-15): Themes Examined through Cases—“Why/“Why-Not” Questions

Week 13: Themes—The “Why” and “Why-Not” Questions
12/13: The Translation Movement—Knowledge, Patronage, Ideology, Diversity
12/15: The Decline Arguments—Instability, Economy, Institutions, Communication

Week 14: The Arguments and the Evidence
12/20: Self-selected Case Studies (based on weekly lectures: 20%)
12/22: Self-selected Case Studies (based on weekly lectures: 20%)

Weeks 15-16: Reading period
1/3: Self-selected Case Studies (based on weekly lectures/readings: 20%)
Office Hours

Weeks 17-18: Exam period

Final Exam (options for essay questions: 40%)

Readings: Copies on reserve in the Classics Department, Lamont and Hilles Libraries.
Grading: Weekly Attendance/Self-selected Case-study (20%); 4 short Essays (40%); Final Exam (40%)

University Schedule (2005-2006):
First Day of Classes: Tues. Sep 20
Final Exams: Jan.15-Jan. 25