

PHILOSOPHY 211

Introduction to Existentialism

PHIL 211
FALL 2015
M,W,Th: 3:30-4:20
Clearihue A203

Instructor: Nina Belmonte
Office: Clearihue 318
Office Hours: Mon: 2:30-3:30
Tues: 1:30-2:30
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Course Objectives:

This course will be an introduction to 19th & 20th century European Existentialism. We will explore how what we call “Existentialism” emerges from out of “modern” philosophy, identifying its distinct claims, its primary concerns, and its philosophical and ethical imperatives.

Readings will include selections from the work of Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

Texts: In the Bookstore:

Kauffman, Walter : *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*
Kierkegaard, Soren: *Fear and Trembling*
Nietzsche, Friedrich: *The Gay Science*
Heidegger, Martin: *Basic Writings*
Sartre, Jean-Paul: *Being and Nothingness*

Available in Reserve and on CourseSpaes site:

Descartes, *Meditations*, 1&2 (electronic)
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (electronic)
Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Assignments:

Four Short Papers: 15% each =	60%
Class Participation/Quote & Comment	10%
Final Term paper:	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the following scheme:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 65-69	D = 50-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A- = 80-84	B- = 70-72		

Description of Assignments

Readings and Class Participation/Discussion: You are expected to read and to come to class prepared. Each day there will be a student responsible for presenting a discussion quote and comment from the readings. These presentations will be evaluated on the level of engagement with the texts.

Four short exegetical papers (700 Words): There will be one short paper required for each section of this course, making a total of four short papers. These will be brief expositions, intended to improve skills of critical reading and concise composition. Paper topics will be given out one week before the due date, but you are always free to write on a topic of your own choice, so long as you speak with me *before the due date*.

Final Paper: There will be one substantial (1500-2000 words) paper due at the end of the semester, to give you an opportunity to deepen your engagement with the course material and present a more synthetic argument. I will provide a list of possible topics, but again, you are free to choose one of your own, as long as you speak with me *in advance*. This work should deal with at least two of the texts assigned in the course, and include at least two secondary sources. These papers will be evaluated on your understanding of the material, the quality of your thought and the clarity and presentation of your argument (including spelling, punctuation and grammar).

Late Assignments

Papers will be accepted without penalty up to 2 classes after the deadline, *provided you speak with me before the due date*. No papers will be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline. Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness and personal crisis, a request for which must be received by me in writing no later than 2 days after the deadline.

Class Attendance:

Attendance is a *mandatory* course requirement. Please be aware of the academic regulations cited on page 31 of the University Calendar:

“Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled...

.../Students may be assigned a final grade of N or debarred from writing final examinations if they have failed to satisfy a minimum attendance requirement set by an instructor for lectures... set out in the course outline.

Students missing more than 9 classes in this course may be debarred from writing the final examination. Students may ask for an academic concession regarding missed classes or late work upon providing proper documentation of a personal or medical affliction

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. Please see page 22 of the University Calendar for a description of plagiarism. The minimum penalty is a failing grade on the assignment produced by plagiarism. Serious or repeated plagiarism can result in failure of a course and even suspension.

Schedule of Classes

Week One – Introductions/Context

- Sept. 9 Introductions, Explanations, Hesitations
10 The Context of Existentialism: The Human? Subject
Read: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation 2 (CourseSpaces)

Week Two - Subject v. Individual

- 14 Transcendental Subject
Read: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*,
“Formula of Universal Law” and “The Need for Pure Ethics”
[420-423; 425-427] (CourseSpaces)
16 Universal Subject
Read: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Introduction: Sections 25-32
(CourseSpaces)
17 That Individual
Read: - Sections 1, 2, 4 and 7 in Kaufmann, *Existentialism
from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, (pgs. 83-88, 94-101; 114-120)

Week Three – Kierkegaard: That Individual

- 21 Abraham
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preface; Attunement;
Speech in Praise of Abraham
23 Only One
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart
24 Ethics and the Universal
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Problem 1

Week Four -- Nietzsche: Prometheus

- 28* Kierkegaard ‘Rap’ - * *First Paper Due**
29 Dionysus & Apollo
Read: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Ch. 1-4
29 Life as Art
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (TBA)
Oct. 1 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (cont.)

Week Five - Nietzsche: Will to Power

- 5 Power and Morals
Read: *Beyond Good & Evil* (TBA)
- 7 *Beyond Good & Evil* (cont)
- 9* Nietzsche Rap - * **Second Paper Due***

Week Six - Heidegger: *Da Sein*

- 12 ***Thanksgiving Day -- No Class***
- 14 Questioning Being
Read: Heidegger, "Introduction to Being and Time,"
Basic Writings, 38-89
- 15 Being the Question
Read: Heidegger, "Introduction to Being and Time"

Week Seven - Heidegger

- 19 Anxiety and Nothingness
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings*, 95-112
- 21 "What is Metaphysics?" (cont)
- 22* Heidegger Rap - ***Third Paper due***

Week Eight – Sartre: *le Pour-Soi*

- 26 In-itself/For-Itself
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 24-30
- 28 "The Look" - Others
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301-303; 340-369 (bottom)
- 29 Freedom, Responsibility and Death
Read: *Being and Nothingness*, 680-712; 795-798

Week Nine - Sartre

- Nov. 2 Humanism!
Read: Sartre, "Letter on Humanism,"
in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pgs. 345-369
- 4 Humanism?: Heidegger's Response
Read: Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 193-242
- 5* Sartre Rap - * **Fourth Paper Due***

Week Ten: No Exit

Nov. 9-11 Reading Break

- 12 Play Break: Sartre, "No Exit"

Week Eleven -- Existential Ethics

- 16 Ambiguity & Freedom
 Read: Simone de Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom,"
 from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
- 18 Ambiguity & Freedom (cont)
- 19 DeBeauvoir Rap

Week Twelve - Literary Adventure

Readings to be Announced (Class will Vote)

Dec. 3 *Final Class*

December 14**

****FINAL PAPERS DUE****