PHILOSOPHY 211
Introduction to Existentialism

PHIL 211  Instructor: Nina Belmonte
FALL 2016  Office: Clearihue 318
T,W,F: 12:30-1:20  Office Hours: Tues: 1:30-2:30
Clearihue A203  Thurs: 1:00-2:00

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Course Objectives:

What does it mean to “exist”, to be self-aware? How do we experience our selves and our world? Does our kind of existence imply anything about how we ought to live? This course will be an introduction to the ideas and literature of Existentialism through the texts of its major thinkers and literary figures. We will discuss how what we call “Existentialism” emerges from out of "modern" philosophy claiming the absolute primacy of individual existence. We will then explore how Existentialism works out the implications of that claim.

Readings will include selections from the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, along with some relevant short fiction.

Texts: In the Bookstore:

Kauffman, Walter: Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre
Kierkegaard, Soren: Fear and Trembling
Nietzsche, Friedrich: The Gay Science

Available in Reserve and on CourseSpaces site:

Descartes, Meditations, 1&2 (electronic)
Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (electronic)
Sartre, Jean-Paul: Being and Nothingness (CourseSpaces)

Assignments:

2 Short Papers: 25% each 50%
Class Participation & Study Questions 20%
Final Term paper: 30%
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

**Study Questions and Class Participation/Discussion:** You are expected to read and to come to class prepared. Each week there will be short-answer questions relating to the readings posted on the CourseSpaces site. Because these questions are intended to help you come to class prepared to engage in discussion, these will be due by class time on the designated day. No late assignments accepted. It will not be possible to make them up.

**Two short exegetical papers** (750-1000 words): There will be two short papers required for this course. These will be exegetical writings, 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:** (1500-2000 words) There will be one substantial paper due at the end of the semester, giving you an opportunity to deepen your engagement with the course material and present a more synthetic discussion. 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 paper should deal with at least two of the thinkers covered in the course, and include at least two secondary sources. Papers will be evaluated on your understanding of the material, the quality of your thought and the clarity and presentation of your discussion (including spelling, punctuation and grammar).

**Late Assignments:**
Late papers will lose one grade for each day they are late. Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness and personal crisis, a request for which must be received by me in writing before the deadline. *Final papers will not be accepted after the due date. Late papers will receive a grade of ‘0’.*

**Class Attendance:**
Attendance is a mandatory course requirement, as stated in the University Calendar:

*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

**Academic Misconduct:** Academic integrity requires commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any action that contravenes these values, including but not limited to plagiarism, falsification, multiple submissions, or cheating of any kind undermines the purpose of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community. Please read the University Calendar’s “Policy on Academic Integrity.”
Schedule of Classes

Week One – Introductions

Sept. 7 Introductions, Explanations, Hesitations
9 A Voice from Underground
   Read: Dostoevsky, “Notes from the Underground” (in Kaufmann)

Week Two - Philosophical Context of Existentialism: The Human(?) Subject

13 That New Voice: Dostoevsky (cont.)
14 Thinking Thing
   Read: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation 2 (CourseSpaces)
16 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)

Week Three – Kierkegaard: Paradox of the Singular

20 That Individual
   Read: Sections 1 and 4 in Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, (pgs. 85-87, 94-101)
21 Only One
   Read: Section 7 in Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*
   (pgs. 114-120)
23 Abraham
   Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart

Week Four -- Kierkegaard: Ethics of the Singular

27 The Singular and the Universal
   Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Problem 1
28 Kierkegaard ‘Rap’
30 Kafka, “The Imperial Message” in Kaufmann, pgs. 144-145
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**Course Outline**

**Week Five - Nietzsche: Life, Art and Value**

Oct. 4* Nietzsche, “The Challenge”
Read: Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Sect. 1 (122-125)

*First Paper Due*

5 Nietzsche on Nietzsche
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface 1-4 and Rhymes

7 The Value of Values

**Week Six - Nietzsche: Morality and the Death of God**

11 The Death of God
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 124, 125, 143, 153

12 The Eternal Return

14 Higher Humans
Read: Zarathustra (CourseSpaces)

**Week Seven - Heidegger: Being and the Nothing**

18 Rilke “Notes”, in Kaufmann, pgs. 137-141.

19 Anxiety and the Nothing
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Kaufmann, 242-249

21 “What is Metaphysics?” (cont)
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Kaufmann, 250-257

**Week Eight – Heidegger: The Call to Authenticity**

25 “The Call of Conscience”
Read: *Being and Time* (excerpt: CourseSpaces)

26 Authentic Existence
Read: *Being and Time* (excerpt: CourseSpaces)

28 Heidegger Rap

**Week Nine - Sartre: “Ontology”**

Nov. 1* Being In-Itself
Read: *Nausea*, p. 126-135 (CourseSpaces)

*Second Paper Due*

2 Being For-Itself
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 24-30

4 The Being of Others (Park)
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301-303; 340-369 (bottom)
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**Week Ten: No Exit**  
**Nov. 9-11 Reading Break**  
8 Play Break: Hell is Other People  
Read or Watch: Sartre, “No Exit” (CourseSpaces)

**Week Eleven - Sartre: Death, Freedom and Responsibility**  
15 Non-Being: Death  
Read: “The Wall” in Kaufmann, pgs. 281-299  
16 Freedom and Responsibility  
Read: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pgs. 345-369

18 Sartre Rap

**Week Twelve - de Beauvoir: Existential Ethics**  
22 Ambiguity & Freedom  
Read: Simone de Beauvoir, “Ambiguity and Freedom,” from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (CourseSpaces)

23 Ambiguity & Freedom (cont)

25 DeBeauvoir Rap

**Week Thirteen - Literary Adventures**  
29 Camus, “Sisyphus” in Kaufmann, 375-378  
30 Ortega y Gasset

Dec. 2 *Final Class*

December 14**  
**FINAL PAPERS DUE**