

PHILOSOPHY 211

Introduction to Existentialism

PHIL 211
SPRING 2018
T,W,F: 9:30-10:20
Clearihue A203

Instructor: Nina Belmonte
Office: Clearihue B318
Office Hours: Tues: 1:30-2:30
Thursday: 1:30-2:30
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Course Description:

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 particular 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, Sören: *Fear and Trembling*
Nietzsche, Friedrich: *The Gay Science*

All other readings will be available in Reserve and on CourseSpaces site.

Assignments

Class Participation & Study Questions	20%
Mid-term	25%
Short Paper	25%
Final Term paper:	<u>30%</u>
	100%

Grades

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 (assignments will be 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.

Midterm: There will be a take home midterm, handed out on a Friday and due the next Tuesday. The exam will consist of short answers and a longer essay question. The exam will be evaluated on your understanding of the material, the quality of your thought and the clarity and presentation of your essay (including spelling, punctuation and grammar).

Short exegetical paper: (750-1000 words): There will be one short paper required for this course. This will be an exegetical writing, intended to improve skills of critical reading and concise composition, and to prepare you for your final essay. 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).

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/paper. 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

- Jan.** 3 Introductions, Explanations, Hesitations
5 A Voice from Underground
Read: Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground" (in Kaufmann)

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

- 9 That New Voice: Dostoevsky (cont.)
10 Thinking Thing
Read: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation 2 (CourseSpaces)
12 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

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

Week Four - Kierkegaard: Ethics of the Singular

- 23 *The Singular and the Universal*
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Problem 1
24 *Kierkegaard 'Rap'*
26 *Story Break*
Read: Kafka, "The Imperial Message" in Kaufmann, pgs. 144-145

Week Five - Nietzsche: Life, Art and Value

30* Nietzsche, "The Challenge"
Read: Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Sect. 1 (122-125)
Midterm Due

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

Feb. 2 The Value of Values
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 1-4, 7, 11

Week Six - Nietzsche: Morality and the Death of God

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

7 The Eternal Return
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 283, 290, 341

9 Higher Humans
Read: *Zarathustra* (CourseSpaces)

Week Seven ***READING BREAK***

February 12-16

Week Eight - Nietzsche: Higher Humans

20 Higher Humans (cont.)
Read: *Zarathustra* (CourseSpaces)

21 Nietzsche Rap

23 Philosophers and Nazis
Readings TBA

Week Nine - Heidegger: The Call to Authenticity

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

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

March 2 "The Call of Conscience" Authentic Being
Read: *Being and Time* (excerpt: CourseSpaces)

Week Ten - Sartre: "Ontology"

- 6* Heidegger Rap
Second Paper Due
- 7 Being In-Itself
Read: *Nausea*, p. 126-135 (CourseSpaces)
- 9 Being For-Itself
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 24-30

Week Eleven - Sartre: Hell is Other People

- 13 The Being of Others (Park)
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301-303; 340-369 (bottom)
- 14 The Being of Others (Key Hole)
- 16 Play Break: Hell is Other People
Read or Watch: Sartre, "No Exit" (CourseSpaces)

Week Twelve - Sartre: Death, Freedom and Responsibility

- 20 Non-Being: Death
Read: "The Wall" in Kaufmann, pgs. 281-299
- 21 Freedom and Responsibility
Read: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pgs. 345-369
- 23 Sartre Rap

Week Thirteen - de Beauvoir: Existential Ethics

- 27 Ambiguity & Freedom
Read: Simone de Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom,"
from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (CourseSpaces)
- 28 Ambiguity & Freedom (cont)
- 30 Good Friday (No Class)

Week Fourteen - Literary Adventures

- April 3** de Beauvoir Rap
- 4 Rap Camus, "Sisyphus" in Kaufmann, 375-378
- 6 ***Last Class***

**** APRIL 16th - FINAL PAPERS DUE****