

PHILOSOPHY 211
Introduction to Existentialism
(Draft)

PHIL 211
Fall 2019
T,W,F: 12:30-1:20
Clearihue C112

Instructor: Nina Belmonte
Office: Clearihue B326
Office Hours: Tues. 11:00-12:00
Email: belmonte@uvic.ca

Course Description:

What does it mean to know that we “exist” and will die? How does this color how we experience our selves and our world? Does our kind of self-aware 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 and in opposition to "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 encourage you to come to class prepared to engage in discussion, these will be due *in class* on the designated day. *No late homework, or emailed homework accepted.* It will not be possible to make them up – you will simply be advised to do an extraordinary job on the next assignment.

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).

Policy on Late Assignments

Limited, short-term extensions on the short paper may be granted on a case by case basis, as long as the request is made *before the due date*. Appropriate accommodations on other assignments will be made for those with an accommodation letter from the Center for Accessible Learning, but please note that such a letter is not “a blanket extension on all work, nor is it a license to submit work after the course has ended.”

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. 4 Introductions, Explanations, Hesitations
6 A Voice from Underground
Read: Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground" (in Kaufmann)

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

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

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

Week Four - Kierkegaard: Ethics of the Singular

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

Week Five - Nietzsche: Life, Art and Value

- Oct. 1* Nietzsche, "The Challenge" *Midterm Due*
Read: Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Sect. 1 (122-125)
2 Nietzsche on Nietzsche
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface 1-4 and Rhymes
4 The Value of Values
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 1-4, 7, 11

Week Six - Nietzsche: Morality and the Death of God

- 8 The Death of God
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 109, 110, 124, 125, 143, 153
- 9 The Eternal Return
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 283, 290, 341
- 11 Higher Humans
Read: *Zarathustra* (CourseSpaces)

Week Seven – Nietzsche: Higher Humans

- 15 Higher Humans (cont.)
Read: *Zarathustra* (CourseSpaces)
- 16 Nietzsche Rap
- 18 Philosophers and Nazis
Readings TBA

Week Eight - Heidegger: The Call to Authenticity

- 22 Anxiety and the Nothing
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Kaufmann, 242-249
- 23 "What is Metaphysics?" (cont)
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Kaufmann, 250-257
- 25 Read: "The Call of Conscience" Authentic Being
Read: *Being and Time* (excerpt: CourseSpaces)

Week Nine - Sartre: "Ontology"

- 29* Heidegger Rap ***Short Paper Due***
- 30 Being In-Itself
Read: *Nausea*, p. 126-135 (CourseSpaces)

- Nov. 1** Being For-Itself
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 24-30

Week Ten - Sartre: Hell is Other People

- 5 The Being of Others (Park)
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301-303; 340-369 (bottom)
- 6 The Being of Others (Key Hole)
- 8 Non-Being: Death
Read: "The Wall" in Kaufmann, pgs. 281-299

Week Eleven – Breaks

11-13 *Reading Break*

15 Play Break: Hell is Other People
Read or Watch: Sartre, “No Exit” (CourseSpaces)

Week Twelve - Sartre: Death, Freedom and Responsibility

19 Freedom and Responsibility
Read: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Kaufmann,
Existentialism, pgs. 345-369

20 Anguish, Abandonment & Despair
Read: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Kaufmann,
Existentialism, pgs. 345-369

22 Sartre Rap

Week Thirteen - de Beauvoir: Existential Ethics

26 Ambiguity & Freedom
Read: Simone de Beauvoir, “Ambiguity and Freedom,”
from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (CourseSpaces)

27 Ambiguity & Freedom (cont)

29 de Beauvoir Rap

Week Fourteen - Literary Adventures

Dec. 3 Camus, “Sisyphus” in Kaufmann, 375-378

4 *Last Class*

**** December 13th - FINAL PAPERS DUE ****