PHILOSOPHY 211
Introduction to Existentialism

FALL 2022
TWF: 11:30-12:20
COR A129
CRN: 12727

Instructor: Dr. Nina Belmonte
Office: Clearihue B326
Office Hours: Wed. 2:00-4:00
Email: belmonte@uvic.ca

Course Description:

We are beings that do not only exist but know that we "exist" – and we also know that we will die someday. How does this color how we experience ourselves and our world? Does what we are imply anything about what we ought to be? 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 abstract claims of a human subject, claiming the absolute starting point 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, Franz Fanon and Ralph Ellison, 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*

Assignments

Class Participation & Study Questions	20%
Two Short Essays	
25% each	50%
Final Term paper:	30%
	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. Spaced throughout the course, there will be short-answer questions relating to the readings to be completed and submitted to the Assignment dropbox on Brightspace. These Study Questions are intended to help you review the course material and prepare you to engage in class discussion.

Short exegetical essays: (750-1000 words): There will be two short papers required for this course. These will be exegetical essays, intended to improve skills of critical reading and concise composition, and to prepare you for your final essay. Paper topics will be posted at least 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 ideas of the course and to explore a more synthetic topic. I will provide a list of possible topics, but again, you are free to choose one of your own, so 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 (material not covered in the course). 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).

Course Policies

Policy on Late Assignments

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

Withdrawals and Deferrals

Students are to familiarize themselves with the withdrawal dates in the academic calendar.

Students who miss substantial amounts of class and assignments without documentation will be asked to withdraw, as they will receive an N at the end of the semester. Students who miss more than six classes for documented medical or personal reasons may still be asked to apply for a backdated withdrawal. ***However, even when the reasons for failing to meet course requirements are valid, it is neither academically sound nor fair to others in the course to allow students missing significant amounts of work to continue in the course and receive credit***.

Students may only apply for a course deferral if a) they have serious and documented medical or personal reasons for not completing some of the end-of-term requirements and b) they have already completed practically all the course requirements at the time of their application.

Accessibility Statement

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning as soon as possible. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

A Note on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Actions such as plagiarism, multiple submissions, falsifying materials used in academic evaluations, cheating, aiding others to cheat, or unauthorized use of an editor violate University policies on academic integrity and are considered serious offences. **You must inform yourself about the university regulations** (see UVic Policy on Academic Integrity).

Unauthorized Use of an Editor

An editor is an individual or service, other than the instructor or supervisory committee, who manipulates, revises, corrects or alters a student's written or non-written work. The use of an editor, whether paid or unpaid, is prohibited unless the instructor grants explicit written authorization. If you have questions, please ask!

University Policy on Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness
According to the Policy on Human Rights, Equity, and Fairness, the "University promotes a safe, respectful and supportive learning and working environment for all members of the university community. The University fosters an environment characterized by fairness, openness, equity, and respect for the dignity and diversity of its members. The University strives to be a place that is free of discrimination and harassment, injustice and violence. The strength and vibrancy of the University is found in the diverse life experiences, backgrounds and worldviews of all its members."

Classroom Conduct and Course Responsibilities
With regard to the learning environment, the University Calendar's Policy on Creating a Respectful and Positive Learning Environment states that UVic "is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and productive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment. In any course, the instructor has the primary responsibility for creating a respectful and productive learning environment in a manner consistent with other university policies and regulations."

In terms of expectations for students, the University Calendar's Attendance Policy states that "[a]n instructor may refuse a student admission to a lecture, laboratory, online course discussion or learning activity, tutorial or other learning activity set out in the course outline because of lateness, misconduct, inattention or failure to meet the responsibilities of the course set out in the course outline."

Students engaging in misconduct or failing to meet their course responsibilities can expect a communication from the instructor that outlines the concerning behavior, explains how such behavior is disrupting the learning environment, and requests that the student refrain from further disruptive behavior. Should such instances of misconduct continue, the student will receive a formal request to meet with the Department Chair in order to seek remediation between the parties. If necessary, further procedures to resolve the situation can be found in the Policy on Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations.

Please keep in mind the overlapping policy on Online Student Conduct specifies standards of behavior in the online environment.

****Territory Acknowledgement****

We acknowledge with respect the Lkwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Schedule of Classes

Week One: A New Voice

September Beginnings

7 Introductions

9 A Thinking Thing
Read: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditation 2

Week Two: A Single Voice

13 A Voice from Underground
Read: Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground" (in Kaufmann, pp. 52-82)

14* A Voice from Underground (cont) ***Study Questions #1 Due**
Read: Dostoevsky, "Notes from the Underground"

16 *That* Individual
Read: Sections 1 and 4 in Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, (pgs. 85-87, 94-101)

Week Three: Kierkegaard: The Ethics of the Singular

20 Only One
Read: Section 7 in Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (pgs. 114-120)

21 Abraham
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preface, Exordium and Eulogy

23 Knight of Faith
Read: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preliminary Expectoration

Week Four: Nietzsche: Life, Art, Truth

27* Story Break ***Study Questions #2 Due**
Read: Kafka, "The Imperial Message" in Kaufmann, pgs. 144-145

28 "The Challenge"
Read: Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Sect. 1 (122-125)

30 Sickness and Health
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface and Sects 1-4

Week Five: Nietzsche: The "Death" of God

October

4** Eternal Return **** 1st Short Essay Due****
Read: *The Gay Science,* Sect. 341

5 Will to Truth
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 108-110,

7 The Death of God
Read: *The Gay Science*, Sects. 124-125

Week Six: Nietzsche: A Sort of Ethics

11 Higher Humans
Read: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sects. 283, 290

12 Discussion

14 Philosophers and Nazis

Week Seven: Heidegger: Dasein and the Nothing

18* Angst as Revelation ***Study Questions #3 Due**
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Kaufmann, 242-257

19 The Nothing
Read: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?"

21 Discussion

Week Eight: Sartre: Freedom and Responsibility

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

26 Anguish, Abandonment & Despair
Read: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," (cont)

28 The Meaning of the End
Read: "The Wall" in Kaufmann, pgs. 281-299

Week Nine: Sartre: Hell is Other People

November

1** The Being of Others (Park) ****Short Paper Due****
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301-303

2 The Being of Others (Key Hole)
Read: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 340-369 (bottom)

4 Discussion

Week Ten: Existential Changes

November

8 Existential Identities
Watch: Chloe Zhao, *The Rider*

9-11 ***Reading Break****

Week Eleven: de Beauvoir: Existential Ethics

15* Ambiguity & Freedom ***Study Questions #4 Due**
Read: Simone de Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom,"
from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

16 Ambiguity & Freedom (cont)
Read: Simone de Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom"

18 Discussion

Week Twelve: Existence in Black

22 Lived Existence
Read: Charles Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums"

23 Outside-In
Read: Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*

25 Discussion

Week Thirteen: A Sisyphean Task ***Study Questions #5 Due**

29* Visible/Invisible
Read: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible* Man (Prologue)

30 Discussion

December

2 Why Sisyphus?
Camus, "Sisyphus" in Kaufmann, 375-378

5 Last Class

*** April 12th - FINAL PAPERS DUE****