

PL208 Introduction to Existentialism

Seminar Leader: Tracy Colony

Course Times: Tues. 17:30-19:00, Thurs. 17:30-19:00

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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

One of the most important philosophical movements of the 20th century is unquestionably Existentialism. The philosophy of existence developed by Jean-Paul Sartre can be seen as the clearest expression of this movement. In this course we will read selections from Sartre and other core representatives of French Existentialism. However, this reading will be prepared for by tracing through important philosophical lines of influence which the existentialists often acknowledged in the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger. All texts will be read in translation, however, parallel readings in the original French or German will be supported and encouraged.

Requirements

Attendance is required in all classes. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as an absence. More than two absences in a semester will affect your participation grade for the class. For periods of illness or leaves of absence consult the Student Handbook. Assessment and Writing Assignments: There will be specific reading assignments for each meeting. Everyone is expected to have done all assigned reading in advance. There will be a midterm essay of 2000 words due at 23:59 on March 20. There will be a final essay of 3000 words due at 23:59 on May 21. Each person will be required to give one 15 minute in class presentation introducing the specific reading for that meeting. Policy on Late Submission of Papers: All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. As the Student Handbook states: essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+ for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021

Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Course Readings

Books to be purchased:

(Gordon Marino, ed.). 2004 *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. New York: Modern Library. (ISBN: 0-375-75989-1).

Jean-Paul Sartre (Robert Baldick, trs.) 2000 *Nausea*. London: Penguin. (ISBN: 978-0-141-18549-1).

Albert Camus (Matthew Ward, trs.) 1989 *The Stranger*. New York: Vintage. (ISBN: 0-679-72020-0).
Jean-Paul Sartre (S. Gilbert, trs.) 1989 *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. New York: Vintage. (ISBN: 0-679-72516-4).
Herman Melville 2004 *Bartleby the Scrivener*. Hoboken: Melville House Publishing. (ISBN: 0-9746078-0-0).
Franz Kafka (Ian Johnston, trs.) 2009 *The Metamorphosis*. Mansfield: Martino. (ISBN: 1-57898-785-7).

Grade Breakdown

Midterm Essay 20%
Final Essay 30%
Presentation 20%
Participation 30%

Schedule

Feb. 2 Introduction (no readings)
Feb. 4 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* pp. 7-23.

Feb. 9 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* pp. 24-39.
Feb. 11 Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death* pp. 41-57.

Feb. 16 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* pp. 193-208.
Feb. 18 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* pp. 209-230.

Feb. 23 Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* pp. 231-254.
Feb. 25 Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener*.

Mar. 2 Unamuno, *Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr* pp. 257-294.
Mar. 4 Unamuno, *Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr* pp. 257-294.

Mar. 9 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* pp. 1-50.
Mar. 11 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* pp. 51-75.

Mar. 16 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* pp. 111-144.
Mar. 18 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* pp. 145-187.

Mar. 23 Heidegger, *Being and Time* pp. 299-315.
Mar. 25 Heidegger, *Being and Time* pp. 316-336.

Spring Break

Apr. 6 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* pp. 369-390.
Apr. 8 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* pp. 391-409.

Apr. 13 Sartre, *Existentialism* pp. 341-367.
Apr. 15 Sartre, *No Exit*.

Apr. 20 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 1-138.

Apr. 22 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 139-253.

Apr. 27 Camus, *The Stranger* pp. 1-59.

Apr. 29 Camus, *The Stranger* pp. 63-123.

May 4 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* pp. 441-492.

May 6 Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* pp. 413-436.

May 11 Final Summary (no readings)

May 13 Holiday No Class

Completion Week