

# PL208 Introduction to Existentialism

Professor: 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 October 18. There will be a final essay of 3000 words due at 23:59 December 20. 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.

## 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).  
Herman Melville 2004 *Bartleby the Scrivener*. Hoboken: Melville House Publishing. (ISBN: 0-9746078-0-0).  
Jean-Paul Sartre (S. Gilbert, trs.) 1989 *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. New York: Vintage. (ISBN: 0-679-72516-4).  
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

Sept. 3 Introduction (no readings)  
Sept. 5 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* pp. 7-23.

Sept. 10 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* pp. 24-39.  
Sept. 12 Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death* pp. 41-57.

Sept. 17 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* pp. 193-208.  
Sept. 19 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* pp. 209-230.

Sept. 24 Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* pp. 231-254.  
Sept. 26 Unamuno, *Saint Manuel Bueno, Martyr* pp. 257-294.

Oct. 1 Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener*  
Oct. 3 Holiday No Class

Oct. 8 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* pp. 1-50.  
Oct. 10 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* pp. 51-75.

Oct. 15 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* pp. 111-144.  
Oct. 17 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* pp. 145-187.

Oct. 22 *Being and Time* pp. 299-319.  
Oct. 24 *Being and Time* pp. 319-336.

Fall Break

Nov. 5 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* pp. 369-390.  
Nov. 7 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* pp. 391-409.

Nov. 12 Sartre, *Existentialism* pp. 341-367.

Nov. 14 Sartre, *No Exit*.

Nov. 19 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 1-138.

Nov. 21 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 139-253.

Nov. 26 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* pp. 441-460.

Nov. 28 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* pp. 460-492.

Dec. 3 Camus, *The Stranger* pp. 1-59.

Dec. 5 Camus, *The Stranger* pp. 63-123.

Dec. 10 Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* pp. 413-436.

Dec. 12 Summary (no readings)

Completion Week