

Philosophy 181: Existentialism

Summer Session I - June 27-July 30, 2011

Time: Monday & Wednesday, 2:00-4:50

Location: H&SS 1128A

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Office hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00, 7043 H&SS

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Introduction:

Welcome to Phil 181! Nothing says summer in the San Diego sun like the death of God, the absurdity of human existence, being-towards-death and the enslaving power of the Other on us. In this course we will survey some of the ways that continental thinkers attempted to understand the status of the meaning and value of human existence from the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s. The Enlightenment had peaked and receded, but its permanent legacy of a fully scientific and rational worldview called into question the very possibility of such meaning. Different thinkers in different ways came up with various responses to the perceived absence of objective value in the new world. By reading a range of influential writers from this period, we will see some of the ways that humans can lead a life worth living, even in a world that might in itself be bereft of value and significance.

Course Requirements:

Quizzes: There will be bi-weekly online quizzes given through ted.ucsd.edu. These will be based on the reading assigned for the day on which they are due, and they will be due before class starts. (For example, there will be a quiz due at 2:00pm on June 29 covering the Kierkegaard reading.)

Essays: There will be two essays, one due on July 13th (4-5 pages) and another on July 20th (6-7 pages). Both assignments will be distributed at least one week in advance. All essays must be uploaded to ted.ucsd.edu for originality analysis.

Final exam: There will be an in class exam during the scheduled exam time (July 29, 3:00pm). It will cover content from the entire course, but will emphasize Sartre and Beauvoir.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all class meetings. With only nine meetings during the summer term, each session will cover more than 10% of the content of the course.

Students who will miss more than two lectures should not be enrolled in the course.

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate actively in class discussions, both by asking questions as well as advancing opinions on the material.

<i>Grade breakdown:</i> Online quizzes	20%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	30%
Final exam	30%

Required Course Materials

On The Genealogy of Morals – Friedrich Nietzsche (tr. Walter Kaufman) (Vintage Press, ISBN: 978-0679724629)

Existentialism: Basic Writings (2nd ed.) – Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom (editors)
(Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-0872205956)

The Ethics of Ambiguity – Simone De Beauvoir (tr. Bernard Frechtman) (Citadel Press, ISBN: 978-0806501604)

The Myth of Sisyphus – Albert Camus (tr. Justin O'Brien) (Vintage Press, ISBN: 978-0679733737)

Schedule:

M June 27 - Introduction – Coming to Terms with the Enlightenment

Film: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*

No assigned reading

W June 29 – Kierkegaard – Faith and Resignation

Book of Genesis chapters 17, 21-22 (any bible will do)

Fear and Trembling: EBW¹ pp. 26-66

(Recommended: EBW pp. 1-25, 85-92)

M July 4 – Holiday, no class.

W July 6 – Nietzsche – Revaluation of All Values

Genealogy of Morals: pp. 15-46, 57-63, 76-96

Book of Matthew 5:3-12 (any bible will do)

(Recommended: *Genealogy*, Parts 1 & 2: all; EBW pp. 93-118, 163-165, 169-170)

M July 11 – Heidegger – Being-in-the-world and Being-towards-death

Being and Time: EBW pp. 211-217, 219-221, 223-227, 230-238, 242-254

(Recommended: EBW pp. 183-210)

W July 13 – Camus – The Absurdity of Human Existence

Myth of Sisyphus: pp. 1-22, 28-31, 51-69, 117-123

(Recommended: *Myth of Sisyphus*: all)

First paper due at the beginning of class

M July 18 – Sartre – Existential Freedom

The Humanism of Existentialism: EBW pp. 290-308

Being and Nothingness: EBW pp. 309-328

(Recommended: EBW pp. 255-275)

¹ EBW = *Existentialism: Basic Writings*

W July 20 – Sartre – Nothingness

Being and Nothingness: pp. 328-362

M July 25 – Beauvoir – Ambiguity, Freedom and Others

The Ethics of Ambiguity: pp. 1-73

Second paper due at the beginning of class

W July 27 – Beauvoir – An Existential Ethics?

The Ethics of Ambiguity: pp. 74-159

*** Final: July 29, 3:00-6:00 ***

Recommended Additional Material

If, once the course is over, you'd like to continue exploring some of the ideas addressed by the philosophers we read in this course, perhaps you should investigate how others have addressed our themes through literature and film. Here are just a few recommendations to get you started.

Fiction:

Notes From Underground (Fyodor Dostoevsky; 1864)
Crime and Punishment (Fyodor Dostoevsky; 1866)
"A Hunger Artist" (Franz Kafka; 1922)
The Trial (Franz Kafka; 1925)
Steppenwolf (Herman Hesse; 1927)
Nausea (Jean-Paul Sartre; 1938)
"The Wall" (Jean-Paul Sartre; 1939)
She Came to Stay (Simone Beauvoir; 1943)

No Exit (Jean-Paul Sartre; 1944)
The Stranger (Albert Camus; 1946)
Waiting For Godot (Samuel Beckett; 1953)
Endgame (Samuel Beckett; 1957)
Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead (Tom Stoppard; 1966)
The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Milan Kundera; 1984)
Remains of the Day (Kazuo Ishiguro; 1989)

Film:

Ikiru (Akira Kurosawa; 1952)
Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard; 1960)
Winter Light (Ingmar Bergman, 1962)
Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick; 1971)
Solaris (Andrey Tarkovskiy; 1972)
Badlands (Terrence Malick; 1973)
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Milos Forman; 1975)
Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese; 1976)

Stalker (Andrey Tarkovskiy; 1979)
Bladerunner (Ridley Scott; 1982)
Groundhog Day (Harold Ramis; 1993)
The Big Lebowski (Joel and Ethan Coen; 1998)
Fight Club (David Fincher; 1999)
Being John Malcovich (Spike Jonze; 1999)
Waking Life (Richard Linklater; 2001)
I Heart Huckabees (David Russell; 2004)
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (Michel Gondry; 2004)