

Fall 2022 – Carleton University
PHIL 3009: Topics in European Philosophy (Existentialism)
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:35AM-9:55AM
Southam Hall 415

Instructor: Kyla Bruff

Email: kyla.bruff@carleton.ca

Office hours: Thursdays, 12:30-2:00PM in 3A56, Paterson Hall (or by appointment)

Course Delivery: In-person

I. Course description:

“Existentialism,” or the philosophy of human existence, is a debated term. It was, in fact, explicitly rejected by many of thinkers that we will read in this course, such as Martin Heidegger and Albert Camus. At minimum, we can say that existentialism focuses on the structure and specificity of the individual’s experience of their own existence. It is concerned with the human being’s unique existence in a world, and how the individual gives meaning to the often anxious and even absurd experience of life. Existentialism begins with the freedom of the singular individual, who can experience the world in a variety of states, including states of alienation or homelessness.

In this course on existentialism, we will explore what it means for an individual to freely self-determine, without guidance from any supreme authority—including the authority of reason itself. How can one live life on one’s own terms, without any stable, traditional framework to structure one’s existence? Answering this question requires an investigation into the exercise free will and how we make authentic choices.

Some other themes we will investigate include: responsibility (What does it mean for a person to be completely responsible for themselves and their actions? Why is it impossible to hide from responsibility, even when we see ourselves as passive in conflicts or absent from live interaction?), subjective truth, despair, anxiety, faith in God, the death of God, Nietzsche’s thought experiment of the “eternal recurrence,” the individual’s path to self-overcoming through risk-taking, the question of being from the point of view of worldly existence, the meaning of authenticity, the concept of nothingness, Sartre’s concept of bad faith, the possibility of an existentialist ethics, existential feminism, and absurdism.

We will do this by reading texts from Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus.

II. Prerequisite(s): 0.5 credit in philosophy or second-year standing.

III. Preclusions: none (except additional credit the same course, PHIL 3009, offered as a different topic)

IV. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- provide an account the historical background of the tradition known as existentialism
- critically analyze, relate and juxtapose different approaches to human existence and responsibility as developed in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, verbally and in writing
- describe their own individual view of what it means to live an authentic, meaningful existence
- evaluate in detail the claim that human existence is absurd and without meaning

V. Course readings and texts:

The required text for this course is: *Existentialism: Basic Writings, Second Edition*, ed. Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001. This book is available in the campus bookstore.

In addition to the readings in *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, we will also study passages from the following texts throughout the course. These required readings will be made available to you online:

- F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews, Albany: SUNY Press, 2007.
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley, London: Jonathan Cape, 1956.
- Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975).

The recommended readings additionally include passages from:

- Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. and trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- Jessica Valenti, *The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2009).

VI. Calendar description: Topics in European Philosophy. A study of philosophers, texts, problems and issues in any period of European philosophy.

VII. Course calendar and overview:

Date	Themes, Deadlines & Feedback	Required Reading (all from <i>Existentialism: Basic Writings</i> , unless otherwise stated)
Sept. 8	Introduction to Existentialism	<u>Recommended:</u> “ <i>The Legacy of Existentialism</i> ” (pp. xiii-xxxviii).
Sept. 13	Introduction to the context of Kierkegaard’s existentialism (Hegel and Schelling)	<u>Required:</u> Background reading from Hegel’s <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> (pp. 1-25 in the textbook). Schelling, <i>The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy</i> , pp. 135-138. <u>Recommended:</u> <i>Textbook introduction to Kierkegaard</i> (pp. 1-17).
Sept. 15	Kierkegaard’s <i>Fear and Trembling</i>	<u>Required:</u> Preface; A Panegyric upon Abraham (pp. 26-34).
Sept. 20	Kierkegaard’s <i>Fear and Trembling</i>	<u>Required:</u> Problemata: Preliminary Expectoration (pp. 35-54)
Sept. 22	Kierkegaard’s <i>Fear and Trembling</i>	<u>Required:</u> Problems I and II (55-77)
Sept. 27	Kierkegaard’s <i>The Sickness unto Death</i> and <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i>	<u>Required:</u> pp. 78-84; 85-92. <u>Recommended:</u> <i>Kierkegaard’s The Concept of Anxiety (excerpts on Brightspace)</i>
Sept. 29	Introduction to Nietzsche and Nietzsche’s <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>	<u>Required:</u> Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> (Section One), pp. 119-122 <u>Recommended:</u> <i>Textbook introduction to Nietzsche</i> , pp. 93-118.
Oct. 4	Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i>	<u>Required:</u> Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i> , pp. 123-133
Oct. 6	Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i>	<u>Required:</u> Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i> , pp. 136-151; <u>Recommended:</u> pp. 160-161; 167 (from §377)-171
Oct. 11	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i>	<u>Required:</u> Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , pp. 172-181
Oct. 13	Paper 1 returned with feedback Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>	<u>Required:</u> Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> , pp. 211-219 <u>Recommended:</u> <i>Textbook introduction to Heidegger</i> , pp. 183-210.
Oct. 18	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>	<u>Required:</u> Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> , pp. 219-236.
Oct. 20	Nietzsche assignment due Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>	<u>Required:</u> Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> , pp. 236-254.
Oct. 25 & 27	NO CLASSES – MIDTERM BREAK	
Nov. 1	Introduction to Sartre through Husserl	<u>Required:</u> Husserl, “Phenomenology and Anthropology,” pp. 278-289 <u>Recommended:</u> <i>Textbook introduction to Sartre</i> (pp. 255-275).

Nov. 3	Nietzsche assignment returned with feedback Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism” (from <i>Existentialism and Human Emotion</i>)	<u>Required:</u> Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism,” pp. 290-308
Nov. 8	Sartre on negation and nothingness in <i>Being and Nothingness</i>	<u>Required:</u> Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> , pp. 309-328
Nov. 10	Sartre on bad faith in <i>Being and Nothingness</i>	<u>Required:</u> Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> , pp. 328-348
Nov. 15	Final paper outline due Sartre on freedom and ethics in <i>Being and Nothingness</i>	<u>Required:</u> Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> , pp. 348-359
Nov. 17	Existential feminism: Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>	<u>Required:</u> Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , Introduction, 13-29
Nov. 22	Existential feminism: Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>	<u>Required:</u> -Book 1, Part 1, Chapter 1 (The Data of Biology), pp. 33-37 -Book 1, Part 3 (Myths), Chapter 1, pp. 159-163 -Book 2, Part 4, Chapter 1, pp. 273-276 <u>Recommended:</u> Jessica Valenti, <i>The Purity Myth</i> , introduction, pp. 9-15.
Nov. 24	Final paper outline returned with feedback Existential feminism: Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>	<u>Required:</u> -Book 2, Part 7, Chapter 1 (The Independent Woman), pp. 666-672 -Conclusion, pp. 673-687
Nov. 29	Absurdism and ethical choices: Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> – Chapter 1	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , Chapter 1: An Absurd Reasoning
Dec. 1	Absurdism and ethical choices: Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> – Chapter 2	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , Chapter 2: The Absurd Man
Dec. 6	Absurdism and ethical choices: Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> – Chapter 3	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , Chapter 3: Absurd Creation
Dec. 8	Absurdism and ethical choices: Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> – Chapter 4; Course conclusion	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , Chapter 4: The Myth of Sisyphus
Dec. 9, 11:59pm	Final Paper: Existentialism due	

VIII. Evaluation

The evaluation for this course is as follows:

- **Short paper** on Kierkegaard, 1,500 words, **25% (due Sept. 30)**
- **Reflective assignment** on Nietzsche, 500 word expository summary + 400 word reflection, **15% (due Oct. 20)**
- **Final paper proposal**, one page plus short bibliography, **15% (due Nov. 15)**
- **Final paper**, 2,500 words, **35% (due Dec. 9)**
- **Attendance and Participation, 10%**
 - The most important factor in your participation grade is class attendance. To gain full participation marks, you cannot have more than two unexcused absences from class throughout the term and you must participate in class discussion. The more notice you can give regarding an anticipated class absence, the better.
 - Participation will be graded in consideration of: attendance, interventions in discussions about the course material (whether in class, after class, and/or during office hours...), and preparation for class. You are expected to have read the required readings before class each day in accordance with the schedule above. Please speak to me for accommodation requests regarding participating in discussions.

All papers are to be typed in Times New Roman font, size 12, 1.5 line spacing with a title. Please submit your paper as a .doc or .docx file.

You must submit all assigned evaluations (two papers, a paper proposal, and an assignment) in order to pass the course.

Late papers will be penalized by - 3% per day.

IX. Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

- Sept. 7 Classes start.
- Sept. 20 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
- Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Oct. 10 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Oct. 24-28 Fall Break – no classes.
- Nov. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
- Dec. 9 Last day of fall term classes. *Classes follow a Monday schedule.* Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
- Dec. 10-22 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Dec. 22 All take-home examinations are due.
- Jan. 9 Classes begin.
- Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
- Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Feb. 20 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.
- Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
- Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. *Classes follow a Friday schedule.* Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
- Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.
- Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>