

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Title, Time, and Location	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Existentialism Tues and Thurs 13:00-16:00, BUCH A104	PHIL 385 001	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	wverkerk@mail.ubc.ca	BUCH E172	By appointment

OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the tradition of Existentialism by looking to both its foundations and its innovations. Although Heidegger is often assumed to be the father of Existentialism, its legacy can be traced back further to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and to Hegel before them. Perhaps most well-known through Sartre's statement that "existence precedes essence," the existentialist movement flourished during the twentieth century in France with thinkers such as Sartre, Camus, Beauvoir, and Fanon. It continues to have relevance today, structuring our every-day discourses about identity, the meaning of life, and interpersonal relationships. By engaging with the French and German traditions, from Hegel through to Fanon, this course provides a comprehensive introduction to the philosophy of human existence. This is a lecture style course with class discussion. It has no prerequisites.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students are expected to read the materials before class and come prepared to take part in class and small group discussion.

The textbook is available through the bookstore:

Gordon Marino, *Basic Writings of Existentialism*, New York: Modern Library, 2004, hereafter BW (\$20).

The schedule includes all the readings. Those not found in the textbook will be available through the Library Online Course Reserves (LOCR), through an online link provided, or under Modules (M) on the Canvas course page.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam (1500 words) 30% due July 28.

Final Essay (3000 words) 60% due August 18.

Participation 10% (class attendance and participation in class and small group discussion).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS 13:00-16:00

Tuesday July 7: Introduction: What is the Meaning of Existentialism?

Existentialism according to Jean-Paul Sartre

Sartre, "Existentialism" in *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (BW, pages 337-367).

Thursday July 9: The Roots of Existentialism: Hegel and Nietzsche

I. Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage," Paragraphs 178-196 in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/phindex.htm>

II. Nietzsche, "The Madman," s. 125 in *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, 1974 (LOCR).

Tuesday July 14: The Singularity of Existence: Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard, "Problema I" and "Problema II," in *Fear and Trembling* (BW, pages 3-39).

Thursday July 16: Becoming Human: Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche, "Second Essay. 'Guilt,' 'Bad Conscience' and the Like" in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (BW, pages 107-109; 145-187).

Tuesday July 21: The Paradox of Freedom: Fyodor Dostoevsky

Dostoevsky, "Part I: Underground," in *Notes from the Underground* (BW, pages 189-230).

Questions for Take Home Exam distributed July 21

Thursday July 23: The Question of Being: Martin Heidegger

Heidegger, "The Possible Being-A-Whole of Dasein and Being-Toward-Death" (sections 46-53) in *Being and Time* (BW, pages 295-336).

** Take Home Exam Due July 28 **

Tuesday July 28: Embodiment and Intersubjectivity: Maurice Merleau-Ponty

I. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, London; New York: Routledge, 1958, pages 112-222 (last sentence ends: "quite simply he is his body and his body is the potentiality of a certain world.") (LOCR)

II. "Other Selves and the Human World," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, pages 403-425 (LOCR).

Thursday July 30: Being and Nothingness: Jean-Paul Sartre

Sartre Selections from “Self-Negation” and “The Encounter with the Other,” in *Being and Nothingness* (BW, pages 369-409).

Essay Questions and Essay Writing Guidelines distributed July 30

Tuesday August 4: Existence and Sexual Difference: Simone de Beauvoir

I. “Ambiguity and Freedom” in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/ch01.htm>

II. “Introduction” and “Conclusion,” in *The Second Sex*

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/index.htm>

Thursday August 6: The Phallogocentric Status of Sex: Luce Irigaray

Irigaray, “The Sex Which is Not One,” in *The Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, New York: Cornell Uni Press, pages 23-33 (LOCR).

Tuesday August 11: Being Human First: Franz Fanon’s Critique of Racialized Identity

Fanon, “Introduction” and Chapter 1; Chapter 5; “The Black Man and Hegel” and “Conclusion” in *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, New York: Grove Press, 2008, pages xi-23; 89-119; 191-206 (LOCR).

Thursday August 13: Living with the Absurd: Albert Camus

Camus, “An Absurd Reasoning,” in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (BW, pages 437-492).

Final Essay due Tuesday August 18

LEARNING OUTCOMES

During the course, students will learn the key concepts of these existentialist philosophers. They will learn how to talk and think critically about the arguments and ideas. The take home exam provides an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the concepts studied to date. The final paper is an exercise in critical thinking to explore and deepen understanding of one or more of the thinkers studied during the course. By the end of the semester, students will be familiar with the tradition of Existentialism and its central themes.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest

academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on **the UBC Senate website**.

AMS Speakeasy is a free, confidential, one-on-one drop-in peer support resource on campus for UBC students and staff facing a wide variety of challenges - located in Room 3125 of the Nest. Please see the AMS Speakeasy website for more information: <https://www.ams.ubc.ca/student-services/speakeasy/>

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Audio recordings of the class are allowed (video recordings and photographs are not permitted).