

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, Web Oriented Course	PHIL 385A 001	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	Online	By appointment

#### OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

To be announced

#### 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. 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 Irigaray, 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. Online lectures on Zoom are scheduled on Tues/Thurs from 13:00-14:45. The remaining time from 14:45-16:00 will include asynchronous activities.

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 on the Canvas course page.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

---

Take Home Exam (1500 words) 30% due July 27.

Final Essay (3000 words) 60% due August 19.

Participation 10% (participation in class and weekly questions posted online in the Discussions tab on Canvas).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS 13:00-14:45

---

**Tuesday July 6: 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 8: 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 13: The Singularity of Existence: Soren Kierkegaard**

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

**Thursday July 15: 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 20: The Paradox of Freedom: Fyodor Dostoevsky**

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

Take Home Exam posted July 20

**Thursday July 22: 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 27 \*

**Tuesday July 27: 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 29: 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 Topics and Essay Writing Guidelines posted July 29*

**Tuesday August 3: 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 5: 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 10: 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 12: Living with the Absurd: Albert Camus**

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

*\*Final Essay due Tuesday August 19\**

---

## 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](#).

**International students:**

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit:

<http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

---

**COPYRIGHT**

All materials of this course (videos, course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without

permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

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