

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 Mon, Wed, Fri 16:00-17:00	PHIL 385 W1 2021	3 credits

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

OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

TBA

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 great 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.

The textbook can be found in the bookstore:

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

The schedule includes other readings to be found on LOCR or online.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam (1500 words) 30% due October 15

Final Essay (3000 words) 60% due December 8

Participation 10% (attendance and participation in class, during office hours, and on discussion forum).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 16:00-17:00

September 8: Introduction: What is the Meaning of Existentialism?

September 10: Existentialism according to Sartre

Selection from *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (BW, pages 337-367)

September 13-17: The Roots of Existentialism: Hegel and Nietzsche

I. G.W.F. Hegel <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/phindex.htm>

("Lordship and Bondage," Paragraphs 178-196 in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*)

II. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Madman," s. 125 in *The Gay Science* (LOCR)

September 20-September 24: The Singularity of Existence: Soren Kierkegaard

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

September 27-October 1: Becoming Human: Friedrich Nietzsche

Second Essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (BW, pages 107-109; 145-187)

October 4-8 The Paradox of Freedom: Fyodor Dostoevsky

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

Questions for Take Home Exam posted October 8

* *Take Home Exam Due October 15* *

Holiday October 11- Thanksgiving Day

October 13-15 : The Question of Being: Martin Heidegger

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

October 18-22: Embodiment and Intersubjectivity: Maurice Merleau-Ponty

I. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," pages 112-122 in *Phenomenology of Perception* (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," pages 403-425 in PP (LOCR)

October 25-29: Being and Nothingness: Jean-Paul Sartre

Selections from "Self-Negation" and "The Encounter with the Other" (BW, pages 369-409)

November 1-5 Existence and Sexual Difference: Simone de Beauvoir

I. "Amiguity 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>

Essay Topics and Essay Writing Guidelines posted November 5

November 8: No class, Watch film available in LOCR *Fanon, yesterday, today*
Midterm Break November 10-12

November 15-19 : Being Human First: Frantz 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).

November 22-26: 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).

November 29-Dec 3: Living with the Absurd: Albert Camus

"An Absurd Reasoning," in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (BW, pages 437-492)

Dec 6: Concluding Discussion on Existentialism

Final Essay due December 8

LEARNING OUTCOMES

During the course, students will discover 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](#).

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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>

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

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