Existentialist PHIL 385  

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməʔkwəy̓am (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.

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<tr>
<th>Course Title, Time and Location</th>
<th>Course Code Number</th>
<th>Credit Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existentialism Mon, Wed, Fri 16:00-17:00</td>
<td>PHIL 385 W1 2021</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<th>Course Instructor</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
<th>Office Location</th>
<th>Office Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Willow Verkerk</td>
<td><a href="mailto:willow.verkerk@ubc.ca">willow.verkerk@ubc.ca</a></td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>By appointment</td>
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**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 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.

1 University of British Columbia
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**
(“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**

**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](https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/ch01.htm)
II. “Introduction” and “Conclusion,” in *The Second Sex*
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

November 22-26: The Phallocentric Status of Sex: Luce Irigaray

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

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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