

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 10-11 am LSK 201	PHIL 385 W2 2024	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mondays and Wednesdays 3-4 pm

#### OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Karoline Paier      karoline.paier@ubc.ca

#### 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 German and French 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. The schedule includes other readings to be found on LOCR or online.

#### ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam 1 (1500 words) 20% due January 27 (posted January 24)

Take Home Exam 2 (1500 words) 20% due February 10 (posted February 7).

Final Essay (3000 words) 60% due April 7 (posted March 7).

Participation Report 10% based on attendance and participation in class and/or during office hours due April 9 (posted April 4).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 10-11 AM

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**January 6: Introduction: What is the Meaning of Existentialism?**

**January 8-10: Existentialism According to Sartre**

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

**January 13-17: The Roots of Existentialism: Hegel and Nietzsche**

READ: 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. Nietzsche, "The Madman," s. 125 in *The Gay Science*, Cambridge University Press, 2001 (LOCR).

**January 20: The Death of God and the Problem of Nihilism**

Sections 1-5 from the Prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Cambridge University Press, 2006 (LOCR).

**January 22-24: Becoming Human: Friedrich Nietzsche**

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

LISTEN: Christopher Janaway on Nietzsche and Morality

[https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy\\_bites/2008/09/christopher-ian.html](https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy_bites/2008/09/christopher-ian.html)

*\*Take Home 1 posted January 24: Due January 27\**

**January 27- 31: The Singularity of Existence: Soren Kierkegaard**

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

LISTEN: BBC In Our Times Kierkegaard

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b009fycc>

Optional further listening: Clare Carlisle on Kierkegaard

[https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy\\_bites/2008/08/clare-carlisle.html](https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy_bites/2008/08/clare-carlisle.html)

**February 3-7: The Paradox of Freedom: Fyodor Dostoevsky**

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

*\*Take Home Exam 2 posted February 7; Due February 10\**

**February 10-14: The Question of Being: Martin Heidegger**

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

WATCH: film excerpt of Heidegger: Only A God Can Save Us by Jeffrey van Davis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuJvwyREoJo&t=11s>

**February 17-21: Midterm Break****February 24-28: Embodiment and Intersubjectivity: Maurice Merleau-Ponty**

READ: I. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2021, pages 100-109 (last sentence ends: "quite simply he is his body and his body is the potentiality of a certain world.") (LOCR).

II. "Others and the Human World," in *Phenomenology of Perception*, pages 361-383 (LOCR).

**March 3-7: Being and Nothingness: Jean-Paul Sartre**

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

LISTEN: Sebastian Gardner on Sartre and Bad Faith

[https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy\\_bites/2009/02/sebastian-gardner-on-jeanpaul-sartre-on-bad-faith.html](https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy_bites/2009/02/sebastian-gardner-on-jeanpaul-sartre-on-bad-faith.html)

\*March 7- Final Essay Topics, Essay Checklist, and Essay Writing Guidelines Posted (see Modules)\*

**March 10-14: Existence and Sexual Difference: Simone de Beauvoir**

READ: 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>

LISTEN: Interview with Beauvoir

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFRTI\\_9CbFU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFRTI_9CbFU)

**March 17-21: Being Human First: Frantz Fanon's Critique of Racialized Identity**

READ: Fanon, "Introduction" and Chapter 1; Chapter 5; Chapter 7: "The Black Man and Hegel" and Chapter 8: "By Way of Conclusion" in *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, New York: Grove Press, 2008, pages xi-23; 89-119; 191-206 (LOCR).

WATCH: film *Fanon, yesterday, today* by Mezine, Hassane (LOCR)

**March 24-28: Psychoanalysis, Sexuality, and the Meaning of Life: Luce Irigaray**

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

LISTEN: Interview with Irigaray:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msyTCN6Yytw>

**March 31: Discussion Day and Final Essay Prep****April 2-4: Living with the Absurd: Albert Camus**

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

*April 4- Participation Report posted*

*April 7: Concluding Discussion and \*Final Essay Due\**

*April 9: Participation Report Due*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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During the course, students will study key figures and concepts of Existentialism. They will learn how to think critically about the ideas and arguments. The take-home exams provide the 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 Existentialism and its central themes.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

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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 their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as their 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>

The use of *Chat GPT* and similar online resources is considered “cheating” in the UBC policy if students make unauthorized use of this tool in the creation of assignments or on exams (“use...of unauthorized means to complete an examination or coursework...including, but not limited to, ...accessing websites or other online resources not specifically permitted by the instructor or examiner”).

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