

Syllabus for PHIL 385, Fall 2025

Existentialism

Instructor: Dr Anders Kraal

Latest update: June 24, 2025

1. Course Description. In this course we study two major texts of Søren Kierkegaard, the father of the existentialist movement in modern philosophy. In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard contrasts a life of fun and pleasure with a life of duty and commitment, and raises questions about whether there is an ultimate justification of one of these lives over the other. In *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard goes on to offer a pioneering and celebrated analysis of despair, which he thinks provides the underlying framework of human life. In addition to these texts, we will also look at some passages from Kierkegaard's other writings, and shorter essays by 20th Century existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre (*Existentialism is a Humanism*) and Simone de Beauvoir (*What is Existentialism?*).

2. Lectures. MW 1:00-4:00pm

3. Instructor. Dr. Anders Kraal (anders.kraal@ubc.ca)

4. Instructor Office Hours. TBA

5. Instructor Email Policy. Instructor will reply to emails weekdays, typically within 48h

6. Teaching Assistant. TBA (TA will be marking exams and papers.)

7. Required Texts. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Hannay (Penguin edition) (In bookstore). Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Hannay (Penguin edition) (In bookstore). Some additional material (PDF's) will be uploaded on Canvas.

8. Course Requirements

Midterms (x3). These exams are worth 25% each. They are written via Canvas using Respondus Lockdown Browser. Questions occur in random order, and in different order for different students, and you will not be able to see all the questions at once, and you cannot go back and revise an answer to a question which has been submitted. These exams are open book (you can have course materials and written notes with you while writing). In these exams, you will be asked to provide answers to a few questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. If you miss one or more of these exams, for any reason, the weight will automatically be transferred to your final. There is no need to apply for academic concession. There will be no alternate arrangements to make up for missed exams (no makeup exams, no special arrangements).

Final Exam: The final exam is worth 25% and will be held during UBC's final examinations period. It is written via Canvas using Respondus Lockdown Browser. Questions occur in random order, and in different order for different students, and you will not be able to see all the questions at once, and you cannot go back and revise an answer to a question which has been submitted. These exams are open book (you can have course materials and written notes with you while writing). In these exams, you will be asked to provide answers to a few questions

dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. A missed final exam will be assigned 0p unless an explanation is provided that is acceptable by the standards of the UBC Academic Calendar (in which case there will be a standing deferred final exam after the course is over and administered by UBC Student Advising, not by the Philosophy Department).

9. Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be expected to be familiar with some main ideas in Kierkegaard's writings, as well as in Sartre and de Beauvoir. The student will be expected to be able to provide critical reflection on the aforementioned ideas on written exams.

10. Marking Parameters

Your mark in this course will be a function of three main factors i) your performance on the examinable momenta *relative to your peers*, ii) your comprehension of the course material, iii) demonstration of skill in assessing and evaluating philosophical ideas.

11. Marking Scale

A+ 90-100% / **A** 85-89% / **A-** 80-84% / **B+** 76-79% / **B** 72-75% / **B-** 68-71%

C+ 64-67% / **C** 60-63% / **C-** 55-59% / **D** 50-54% / **F** 0-49%

The degree of difficulty on the examinable momenta will be set so as to *aim* at a class average outcome that by and large conforms to the department average for this course down the years. Scaling may be used to this effect.

12. Policy on Review of Marked Work

Marks on exams and papers will be posted on canvas. Generic feedback on expected outcomes of exams and papers will be provided (typically by the Instructor) in so-called Feedback Sessions during class time. Additional feedback specific to your exam is up to the discretion of the TA who does the marking. Note that TA's are working under time restrictions (often they are allotted no more than 20min for the marking of each exam) and students cannot expect specific feedback beyond what the TA has or has not already provided. Any concerns about the marking of an exam should be submitted to the marker (the TA) via email, and will be responded to (typically by the TA) via email. Unresolved issues can be brought to the Instructor during the final exam period towards the end of the course, via email.

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

14. UBC Values and Policies

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 and cultural 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 here (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success>).

Class participants are expected to conduct themselves respectfully towards each other as well as to their instructor. All violations of such norms that are brought to the attention of the instructor will be reported to the University Administration. This includes violations on online forums.

15. Schedule

A more detailed schedule will be published on canvas.