

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 TBA	PHIL 385 002 2025W2	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2 PM

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 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 (750 words) 20% due January 26 (posted January 23)

Take Home Exam 2 (750 words) 20% due February 9 (posted February 6).

Final Essay (3000 words) 50% due April 10 (posted March 6).

Participation Report 10% based on attendance and participation in class and/or during office hours due April 12 (posted April 8).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 10-11 AM

January 5: Introduction: What is the Meaning of Existentialism?

January 7-9: Existentialism According to Sartre

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

January 12-16: 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 19: 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 21-23: 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

Take Home 1 posted January 23: Due January 26

January 26- 30: 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

February 2-6: 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 6; Due February 9

February 9-13: 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 16-20: Family Day and Midterm Break**February 23-27: 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 2-6: 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

March 6- Final Essay Topics, Essay Checklist, and Essay Writing Guidelines Posted (see Modules)

March 9-13: 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

March 16-20: 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 23-27: 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 30-April 1: Discussion Day and Final Essay Prep**April 3 and 6: Holidays- Good Friday and Easter Monday**

April 8-10: Living with the Absurd: Albert Camus and Closing Discussion

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

April 8- Participation Report posted

*April 10: *Final Essay Due**

April 12: Participation Report Due

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

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”).

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).