

Syllabus for PHIL 385, Summer 2026

Existentialism

Instructor: Dr Anders Kraal

Latest update: March 24, 2026

1. Course Description.

We study the book “Either/Or” by Søren Kierkegaard, the father of the existentialist movement in modern philosophy. In this book 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 addition to this book, 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 Albert Camus (“The Myth of Sisyphus”).

2. Lectures. MW 1:00-4:00pm in Buch A 203

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).*

Some additional material (PDF’s) will be uploaded on Canvas.

8. Course Requirements

In-Class Exam (x3) (25% each).

8.1 In each in-class exams, you will be asked to provide answers to (usually four) questions dealing with matters brought up in class prior to the date of the exam. Unless otherwise announced, in-class exam 2 will not deal with the subject-matter of in-class exam 1, and in-class exam 3 will not deal with the subject-matter of in-class exams 1 or 2.

8.2 The in-class exams are written online via Canvas using Respondus Lockdown Browser (UBC’s usual system for online exams). You must come to the classroom with your computer to write the exam. Any student who takes the exam without being physically present in the classroom will be deemed to have committed academic misconduct.

8.3 Exams are closed book. You must put all notes, cellphones, and books away *before* you enter the classroom to write the exam. You must have your UBC student ID card with you and displayed during the exams.

9.4 Note: If a student suspects that their computer will glitch during the online exam, they should bring sheets of paper to the exam that they can write their answers on by hand. However they are also asked to show each sheet of paper to the instructor before they start to write, and should also

sit in the front row of the class so that the instructor can easily invigilate their exam at all times. Students who hand in paper exams may not receive these paper exams back, nor do are they promised they will receive written feedback on their exams (this will be up to the discretion of the TA).

8.5 If a student misses an in-class exam, for whatever reason, the weight of that exam will be transferred to their final exam. However, if a student misses two in-class exams, they will not be able to score more than 80% in the course; and if a student misses all three in-class exams, they will not be able to score more than 75% in the course. Moreover, a student that misses an in-class exam is not entitled to request the exam questions after the exam.

8.6 TA's are entitled to judge from case to case if and how much written feedback to give on an in-class exam beyond the mark itself; students asking TA's for additional feedback should be aware that each TA has limited time allotted for each exam and may not be able to provide as much feedback as they ask for.

Final Exam (25%).

8.7 The final exam is cumulative (unlike the midterms), and will be held during UBC's final examinations period. The time and date of the final exam is fixed by the UBC admin, not the instructor.

8.8 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 typically several months after the term ends.

8.9 Finals are not handed back to students, as per UBC policy. Final exam scores are not posted or handed back to students, rather it is added directly to the scores earned from the midterms and uploaded directly to UBC Workday's grade database. The student will see the final grade as soon as UBC Workday provides them with this information.

9.10 The midterms and the final exam are written online via Canvas using Respondus Lockdown Browser (UBC's usual system for online exams).

8.11 Final exams are closed book. You must put all notes, cellphones, and books away *before* you enter the classroom to write the exam. You must have your UBC student ID card with you and displayed during the exam.

8.12 Note: If a student suspects that their computer will glitch during the online final exam, they should bring sheets of paper to the exam that they can write their answers on by hand. However they are also asked to show each sheet of paper to the instructor before they start to write, and should also sit in the front row of the class so that the instructor can easily invigilate their exam at all times. Students who hand in paper exams will not receive these paper exams back, nor will they receive written feedback on their exams.

8.13 There will be no makeup exams for students who performs poorly on exams.

9. Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be expected to be familiar with some main ideas in Kierkegaard's book, as well as in Sartre and Camus. 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)

July 6: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read the "Preface" and the essay "Crop Rotation"

July 8: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read the essay "Ancient Tragedy's Reflection in the Modern"

July 13: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read the essay "The Musical Erotic"

July 15: **[Exam1 at 1:00-1:50pm]**. We continue with "The Musical Erotic"

July 20: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read the essay "The Seducer's Diary"

July 22: **[Exam2 at 1:00-1:50pm]**. Read the essay "The Unhappiest One"

July 27: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read "Diapsalmata"

July 29: Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*: read the essay "*The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage*"

August 3: *BC Day*: no class

August 5: **[Exam3 at 1:00-1:50pm]** Read "Equilibrium"

August 10: Read "The Edifying..." Excerpts from Kierkegaard's "Postscript" and "Sickness Unto Death"

August 12: Sartre and Camus

Aug 17-21: **Final exam period**