

SYLLABUS: PHP 3786 EXISTENTIALISM 3 Credit Hours

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Office:

Spring Semester 2019
TR 3:00-4:15 pm
Location: ENG1 224



Psychology Building 223
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Hours: Mondays from 1:30-2:30 pm or by appointment

Course Description

All existence makes me anxious, from the smallest fly to the mysteries of the Incarnation; the whole thing is inexplicable to me, I myself most of all.

Søren Kierkegaard

This course will explore the diverse existentialist philosophies that are expressed in the writings of the major seminal thinkers who focus their attention on problems central to human existence. We shall begin with the 19th century precursors to existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and see how their thematic concerns are appropriated and developed by the 20th century French existentialists, Sartre and Camus. Themes and topics dealt with will include angst, radical freedom, existential choice, commitment, authenticity, subjectivity, the absurd, bad faith, etc. The majority of reading assignments will be from primary sources and will include several complete works. Classes will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, and students will be expected to participate actively in class.

Course Goals

- Students will acquire detailed and sophisticated knowledge about the writings by the central existentialist philosophers.
- Students will discover, identify, and explain the central problems in existentialism.
- Students will actively engage in philosophical dialogue by critically discussing and evaluating the philosophical texts.
- Students will respect the multiple perspectives that are presented and developed throughout the course.
- Students will begin to develop their own responses to the problems raised by the existentialist philosophers and will take responsibility for and ownership of their own personal philosophical development.

The thing is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die.

Søren Kierkegaard

Required Texts (listed in the order we shall read them in class)

Aho, Kevin. *Existentialism: An Introduction*. Polity Press, 2014.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Translated by Alastair Hannay. Penguin Classics, 1992.

Kierkegaard, Søren. [*Fear and Trembling*](#). Translated by Alastair Hannay. Penguin Classics, 1986.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann. Penguin Books, 1982. Includes [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*](#) and [*Twilight of the Idols*](#).

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Essays in Existentialism*. Edited by Wade Baskin. Penguin, 1993. Includes "[Existentialism is a Humanism](#)" and selections from [*Being and Nothingness*](#).

Camus, Albert. [*The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*](#). Translated by Justin O'Brien. Penguin, 1983.

Tolstoy Leo. [*The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*](#). Translated by Ronald Wilks, Anthony Briggs, and David McDuff. Penguin Classics, 2008.

N.B. Additional readings assigned for the class will be provided electronically.



Course Requirements

➤ Class Participation

Whenever something happens to me, I prefer to be there. Albert Camus

The instructor will use various pedagogical activities (e.g., timed writing tasks, small group discussion, etc.) to enhance and facilitate student learning. Consequently, class attendance and participation are essential. Students will not have the opportunity to make up missed classroom exercises, which will affect one's grade adversely in the case of unexcused absences. Students who miss class work because of official excused absences including religious holidays—which require appropriate documentation—will not be penalized, as the points from those exercises will not be included in the student's final points. However, in the event of sudden illness or emergency when it is not possible to see a doctor, students may be excused and/or able to make up missed work when they are better. However, it is necessary that students notify the instructor as soon as possible (an email message is fine) regarding a possible absence to determine whether the absence will be excused. If you cannot notify the instructor before a missed class, then you must notify the instructor within two days after the missed

class to have him consider whether the absence will be excused. After two days without any notification the absence will be marked as unexcused. If a student is excused on a day that a graded assignment is due, then after communication between the student and the instructor, the instructor will determine when the student will be expected to submit the assignment.

➤ **Reading Assignments**

The existentialist philosophers were exceptionally prolific writers who have left us with a wealth of writings. Consequently, there are many texts to be read and we shall do our best to read widely and deeply in many of the classic existentialist texts. Readings of approximately 20-60 pages will be assigned for each class (see the reading schedule below), and ideally classes should be a mixture of lecture and discussion. The reading assignments will help students to follow the lectures and participate in the classroom discussions. Students should read the assigned texts and come to class mindful of the content of the readings. Students are not expected to understand all the details of the material but should have an understanding of the major points or issues discussed in the readings. Students should feel free to ask questions about the material; however, it is important that all students are respected and that questions that are not directly relevant are asked after class.

➤ **Timed Writings (TWs)**

In order to facilitate student learning there will be approximately ten to fifteen unannounced timed writing assignments (approx. three to five minutes) throughout the course on material that has been assigned or previously covered. These assignments may occur at the beginning, middle, or end of class, and they may also occur in pairs or groups. Consequently, it is essential to be well prepared and mindful of the course content. Each timed writing assignment will be worth four points. Generally, timed writings cannot be made up, but if you have an illness or otherwise reasonable excuse (which must be approved by the instructor, see above) for missing a timed writing, the missed exercise will not count against you and the points will not be included in your total points.

The timed writing assignments will be assessed as follows.

- 4 points = completely satisfactory attempt to answer question
- 3 points = limited, but generally satisfactory attempt; or completely satisfactory attempt to answer question, but student missed part of class
- 2 point = marginal attempt made with some accurate content, but not fully satisfactory or lacking in detail
- 1 point = no attempt, but student present for entire class period
- 0 points = student absent

➤ **Mindful Reading Assignments (MRAs)**



Throughout the course students will be required to submit three MRAs in which they (1) *identify a passage* from an assigned reading that has affected (deepened, changed, confirmed, qualified, raised new questions, etc.) the way they think and (2) *explain the significance of the passage* (e.g., its difficulty, originality, insight, truthfulness, etc.) and how their thinking has been affected (deepened, changed, confirmed, qualified, raised new questions, etc.). The assignments (see class schedule below for deadlines) should include the passage and reference (singled-spaced, use ellipses if more than 50 words) and the explanation (double-spaced, 300 to 500 words). MRAs must be submitted electronically within the webcourse by midnight of the due date.

➤ **Test Creation Assignments (TCAs)**

Students will individually create four test questions with answers that they would like to see on the test. The questions should include one multiple choice, one true/false, one short answer (answered in a phrase or couple sentences), and one essay question (answered in several paragraphs, one to two pages, i.e., 250-400 words). Note that all the questions should not be on the same text. Students should submit the assignments electronically within the webcourse as instructed by the due date. Late assignments received within 24 hours of the deadline will lose five points. Late assignments received after 24 hours of the deadline will not earn any points.

Although not all questions need to meet the following criteria, at least one question should cover each of the following learning objectives (if not more):

- A. Would your question allow students to demonstrate understanding of the course material?
- B. Would your question allow students to analyze central concepts and arguments?
- C. Would your question allow students to evaluate multiple perspectives of an issue?
- D. Would your question allow students to synthesize perspectives into an answer, argument, or position that one can live with?

Using the letters for the criteria A, B, C, and D, students must indicate after each question which objective it addresses. Students must also provide answers for all of the questions they create.

Students will be graded according to the following general rubric:

1. Content of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether the question is well written and contains appropriate options (in the case of multiple choice) and the depth of answers provided as well as length and whether all learning objectives have been covered.
2. Quality of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether your questions exhibit appropriate familiarity with the topics under consideration and the significance of the material, lack of typographical and other errors, creativity, accuracy, and thoughtfulness of answers provided.
3. Timeliness. See above on late assignments.
4. The questions and answers are assigned the following points:
 - Multiple Choice (5; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
 - True/False (4; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
 - Short answer (4)
 - Long essay (12)

Be Contemplative and Creative!

A Possible Bonus: Selected student questions will be used on the in-class tests, so if your questions are selected you should already know the answers to those questions!

Existence precedes essence.
John-Paul Sartre

➤ Tests

See the class schedule below for tests and approximate point totals. Throughout the semester there will be two non-cumulative tests and one partly cumulative final examination that students will help to create. Anything from the assigned readings and the lectures will be considered fair game for the tests, which may consist of multiple choice, true or false, short answer, and essay questions.

Students are required to bring both raspberry scantrons and notebook paper to each exam. Students must also have their PIDs to include on the scantron and will lose points if they do not follow these requirements. Also, only blank paper and a pen and/or pencil can be brought to the desk when taking a test.

Additional explanations of tests and grading criteria will be presented in class. Students should note that grades are earned based on standards (excellent, good, average, poor) and not simply “given.”

Missed exams cannot be made up—except for official university activities (requiring prior permission) or serious illnesses (requiring a formal doctor’s excuse) or serious emergencies (requiring consultation with the instructor and his consent

within 48 hours after missing a test). If a student does not take a test, then he or she will receive a “0”.

Grading

Students will be able to follow their progress in the course by the record of their grades found within the webcourse component. The student’s final grade will be determined by dividing the total points received by the total possible points. The percentage will be judged according to the following scale. Note that the instructor uses the “standard-plus” grading scale:

A = Excellent, far exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes significantly beyond the basics.	90-100%	C = Average, meets minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements	70-76.x%
B+ = Far above average, meets or exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and fully understands the basics and goes somewhat beyond that level.	87-89.x%	D+ = Below average, meets many minimum expectations and satisfies many course requirements.	67-69.x%
B = Above average, fully meets average understanding as evidenced in course work and fully understands the basics and can deal with concepts somewhat beyond that level.	80-86.x%	D = Below average, meets some minimum expectations and satisfies some course requirements.	60-66.x%
C+ = Slightly above average, fully meets expectations for basic understanding as evidenced in coursework and understands the basics.	77-79.x%	F = Fails to meet minimum expectations in understanding and coursework as evidenced by performance and submission of graded elements.	0-59.x%

Students’ grades will be based on the following points:

- Timed Writings 40-60 points (approx.)
- MRAs 75 points (3 x 25 points)
- TCAs 75 points (3 x 25 points)
- First Test 100 points
- Second Test 100 points
- Final Exam 125 points



Total Points 515-525 (This is a projection and may be modified.)

Late assignments received within 24 hours of the deadline will lose five points. Late assignments received after 24 hours of the deadline will not earn any points. Note that if a problem with the website may lead to a submission being late, then the student must email the assignment to the instructor before the deadline in order for it not to be considered late.

At the close of the course the instructor may award borderline individual students a few (generally 1 to 3) bonus points (not percentage points) for observable effort and philosophical endeavor, which would include things like active participation in discussions, completing all timed writings, and showing improvement.

Incompletes will be given only if a student could not complete the course requirements because of something over which he or she had little or no control, e.g., an illness or death in the family. To receive an "I" for the course a student must have done at least some of the work for the course, and he or she must speak to the instructor before the final examination.

Academic Policy

Students are expected to follow UCF's Golden Rule for academic excellence and integrity. Regarding excellence, this means, at the very least, that when in the classroom, students should be attending *completely* (i.e., 100% or wholeheartedly) to the intellectual work of the day. Thus, for example, there should be no abstractions from electronic devices, and computers may only be used for note-taking in class.

Any inappropriate behavior, academic or otherwise, will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. For further guidance, please see www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/. Students' work may be submitted to www.turnitin.com for authentication. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will receive at minimum an F for their work and be referred to UCF's Office of Student Conduct. They may also receive an F for the course and a "Z" grade designation.

*We make it a point of honor to
be affirmers.*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Central Florida considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus

events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at www.shield.ucf.edu and <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact Student Accessibility Services.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

Title IX – EO/AA - <http://www.eeo.ucf.edu/> & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> & sas@ucf.edu
Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events – www.diversity.ucf.edu
Student Bias Grievances – Just Knights response team – <http://jkrt.sdes.ucf.edu/>
UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – <http://compliance.ucf.edu/> & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
Ombuds Office – <http://www.ombuds.ucf.edu>

*A book must be the axe for the
frozen sea within us.*

Franz Kafka

PHP 3786 Existentialism: Class Schedule

Date	Readings	Tests or Other
Tuesday, January 8	Syllabus	
Thursday, January 10	Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , ix-xii, 1-18	
Tuesday, January 15	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , "Preface," "Diapsalmata," "The Immediate Erotic Stages," 23-71	
Thursday, January 17	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , "The Immediate Erotic Stages," 72-102	
Tuesday, January 22	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , "Crop Rotation," "The Seducer's Diary," 223-259, 275-279, 339-341, 349-352, 359-376	
Thursday, January 24	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , "The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage," 377-406, 413-419, 455-474	
Tuesday, January 29	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , "Equilibrium...," "Last Word," "The Edifying...," 475-492, 509-516, 523-526, 549-551, 590-609	
Thursday, January 31	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> , 39-82	
Tuesday, February 5	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> , 83-147	
Thursday, February 7	Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript , "Truth is Subjectivity," 159-173 Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 19-33	TCA 1 due (25 points)
Tuesday, February 12	First Exam	First Test (100 pts); MRA 1 due by Wed., Feb. 13 (25 points)
Thursday, February 14	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , 121-145	
Tuesday, February 19	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , 146-191	
Thursday, February 21	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 463-492	
Tuesday, February 26	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 492-521	
Thursday, February 28	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 522-563	

Tuesday, March 5	Sartre, <i>Essays in Existentialism</i> , 31-62; Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 63-79	
Thursday, March 7	Sartre, <i>Essays in Existentialism</i> , 63-91	
Tuesday, March 12	Spring Break	No Class
Thursday, March 14	Spring Break	No Class
Tuesday, March 19	Sartre, <i>Essays in Existentialism</i> , 91-146	Withdrawal deadline, Wed. March 20
Thursday, March 21	Sartre, <i>Essays in Existentialism</i> , 147-186; Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 80-104	TCA 2 due (25 points)
Tuesday, March 26	Second Exam	Second Test (100 points); MRA 2 due by Wed., March 27 (25 points)
Thursday, March 28	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , “An Absurd Reasoning”	
Tuesday, April 2	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , “The Absurd Man”	
Thursday, April 4	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , “Absurd Creation” & “The Myth of Sisyphus”	
Tuesday, April 9	Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 34-62	
Thursday, April 11	Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 105-122	
Tuesday, April 16	Tolstoy, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i> , 157-217	
Thursday, April 18	Kierkegaard, <i>Works of Love</i> selection; Aho, <i>Existentialism</i> , 140-164	TCA 3 due by Friday, April 19 (25 points)
Thursday, April 25	Final Exam Period 1:00 – 3:50 PM: Cumulative Final Exam, although mostly on material not covered on the first two exams.	Final Exam (125 points) MRA 3 due by Friday, April 26 (25 points)

N.B.

The instructor welcomes comments and suggestions about the course and encourages feedback throughout the course. He also reserves the right to amend this syllabus at his discretion.