

Existentialism

Kent State University Course Syllabus

PHIL 31030/001/16887 Spring 2019
MW: 11:00-12:15 pm Location: Bowman 204
Instructor: Dr. Matthew Coate
Office: Bowman 320 Q
Office hours: MW 12:20-1:00 pm
(or by appointment)

Contact: mcoate@kent.edu

Course Description:

Official Course Description:

Examination of the themes of existentialism, which include absurdity, freedom, and the individual's relationship to the world. Philosophers studied may include Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus, de Beauvoir, Ortega y Gasset, Marcel, and Tillich.

Course Description for PHIL 31010 Spring 2019:

The term "existentialism" was coined in the 1940's by the French philosopher and playwright Gabriel Marcel, to refer to a new line of thinking, manifest in French philosophy and literature at the time, which was greatly influenced by the 19th century Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard. Eventually, the term stuck, and began to be used to refer the thought of Kierkegaard himself, as well as any later thinkers or works of philosophy and literature that have been markedly influenced by Kierkegaard's work or that deal with the same basic themes. Existentialism reached the height of its popularity in the aftermath of the Second World War, and for a time was downright fashionable; yet it remains an important philosophical tradition, whose influence can be seen in fine art, literature, theater, as well as psychology and therapy.

In this course, we'll read a variety of essays and literary works written by a number of different authors, but will be focusing on the philosophical works of Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, and on short stories written by the Czech writer Franz Kafka. Students will have to complete weekly writing assignments as well as a term paper and final exam.

Course objectives:

- To learn about the major themes and ideas of the Existentialist thinkers and writers whose works we'll be reading over the course of the semester, and, crucially, to demonstrate an understanding of these works (primarily through our final exam);
- To develop the ability to provide an accurate explication of the works in question, and to cogently respond to them and to the ideas they present (primarily, through our term paper and weekly writing assignments); and
- To increase our own understanding of Existentialist thought and, through an engagement with this thinking, our own capacities for critical self-reflection.

Course requirements:

Required texts:

- Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, edited by Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton University Press, ISBN-13: 9780691019406);
- Franz Kafka, *Complete Stories*, edited by Nahum Glatzer (Schocken Books, ISBN-13: 9780805210552);
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Basic Writings*, edited by Stephen Priest (Routledge, ISBN-13: 9780415213684); and
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Open Road Media, ISBN:13 9781480442801).

Grading:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| □ Term Paper | 40% |
| □ Weekly Writing Assignments | 30% |
| □ Final exam | 30% |

Exams:

A comprehensive final exam will be given at the end of the semester. This will be worth 30% of your final grade.

Written Essays:

One paper of 8-12 pages will be required from each student. At the end of week 10, each student will have to complete and submit a topic paper form, and will then have to turn in the completed paper by the end of week 13. After receiving a grade and my comments on the paper, each student can optionally submit a revised version before the end of the semester, if that student desires to attempt to earn a higher grade for this assignment. The term paper will be worth 40% of the final class grade.

Weekly Writing Assignments:

Beginning with week 2, each student will have to turn in a one paragraph summary for that week's reading on the Sunday before the start of the week. If there is more than one reading for that week, students must choose which of the readings to summarize. Thoughtful summaries will receive full credit, while less than adequate ones will receive only half credit for that week's work. Each of these assignments will count for 2% of the final grade, for a total of 30% of the final class grade overall.

University services and policies:

Enrollment and registration statement:

The official registration deadline for self-adding this course is 1/20/19. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

The course withdrawal deadline is 3/22/19. The last day to drop without a “W” being assigned will be 1/20/19.

Student Disability Services statement:

University policy 3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas for more information on registration procedures).

Personal responsibility and academic integrity statement:

University policy 3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at <http://www2.kent.edu/policyreg/chap3/index.cfm> and/or ask.

Attendance Policy:

Students are responsible for attending all classes. Any student missing a class will receive an unexcused absence, unless they inform the professor of the absence and provide legitimate reason for it, including any relevant documentation. After 4 unexcused absences, a student will lose one half letter-grade from his or her final grade, with an extra half letter-grade deduction taken for every two unexcused absences following that point.

Electronic device policy:

Cel phones and smart phone devices may not be used in class at any time. Laptops or tablets are also prohibited, except if a student has received prior permission from me for their use in class (for note-taking or other academic purposes only, of course).

Grade scale:

A =	92-100%	4.0 per credit hour
A- =	90-92%	3.7 per credit hour
B+ =	88-90%	3.3 per credit hour
B =	82-88%	3.0 per credit hour
B- =	80-82%	2.7 per credit hour
C+ =	78-80%	2.3 per credit hour
C =	72-78%	2.0 per credit hour
C- =	70-72%	1.7 per credit hour
D =	68-70%	1.3 per credit hour
D+ =	60-68%	1.0 per credit hour
F =	0 - 60%	0.0 per credit hour

Course schedule:

Schedule is subject to change!!! Readings are due on the day listed!

Readings marked: “Book #1” are in *The Essential Kierkegaard*;
 “Book #2” are in *Franz Kafka: Complete Stories*;
 “Book #3” are in *Sartre: Basic Writings*;
 “Book #4” are in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*; and
 “Blackboard” are available on our class site.

☐ week 1:			
Monday 1/14	Class Introduction		
Wednesday 1/16	Kant <i>Groundwork...</i>	read: Blackboard	
☐ week 2:			
Monday 1/21	No Class: MLK Day!		Writing Assignment #1 Due: Tuesday, 1/22
Wednesday 1/23	Hegel Background reading (on Antigone)	read: Blackboard	
☐ week 3:			
Monday 1/28	Kierkegaard <i>Sickness Unto Death</i>	read: p. 350-361 Book #1	Writing Assignment #2 Due: Sunday, 1/27
Wednesday 1/30		read: p. 361-372 Book #1	
☐ week 4:			
Monday 2/4	<i>Either/Or, vol. II</i>	read: p. 66-75 Book #1	Writing Assignment #3 Due: Sunday, 2/3
Wednesday 2/6		read: p. 75-83 Book #1	
☐ week 5:			
Monday 2/11	<i>The Concept of Angst</i>	read: p. 138-146 Book #1	Writing Assignment #4 Due: Sunday, 2/10
Wednesday 2/13		read: p. 146-155 Book #1	
☐ week 6:			
Monday 2/18	<i>Works of Love</i>	read: p. 277-294 Book #1	Writing Assignment #5 Due: Sunday, 2/17
Wednesday 2/20		read: p. 294-311 Book #1	
☐ week 7:			
Monday 2/25	<i>Fear and Trembling</i>	read: p. 93-101 Book #1	Writing Assignment #6 Due: Sunday, 2/24
Wednesday 2/27	Derrida <i>The Gift of Death</i>	read: Blackboard	
☐ week 8:			
Monday 3/4	Kafka 2 Parables & “The Metamorphosis”	read: p. 3-5 & 89-105 Book #2	Writing Assignment #7 Due: Sunday, 3/3

Wednesday 3/6		read: p. 105-139 Book #2	
□ week 9:			
Monday 3/11	Assorted short stories	read: p. 268-278, 388, 399-401, 427-429, 432, 444, 446-449 Book #2	Writing Assignment #8 Due: Sunday, 3/10
Wednesday 3/13	Camus "The Myth of Sisyphus"	read: Blackboard	
□ week 10:			
Monday 3/18	Sartre "Existentialism is a Humanism"	read: p. 26-45 Book #3	Writing Assignment #9 Due: Sunday, 3/17
Wednesday 3/20	Heidegger <i>Basic Problems of Phenomenology</i>	read: Blackboard	Due: selection of paper topic
□ week 11:			
Monday 3/25	No Class: Spring Break!		
Wednesday 3/27	No Class: Spring Break!		
□ week 12:			
Monday 4/1	Sartre <i>Being and Nothingness</i>	read: p. 70-88 Book #3	Writing Assignment #10 Due: Sunday, 3/31
Wednesday 4/3		read: p. 106-134 Book #3	
□ week 13:			
Monday 4/8		read: p. 156-162 & 166-176 Book #3	Writing Assignment #11 Due: Sunday, 4/7
Wednesday 4/10		read: p. 191-200 & 206-220 Book #3	Due: Term Paper!
□ week 14:			
Monday 4/15	De Beauvoir <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i>	read: p. 7-34 Book #4	Writing Assignment #12 Due: Sunday, 4/14
Wednesday 4/17		read: p. 35-58 Book #4	
□ week 15:			
Monday 4/22		read: p. 59-73 Book #4	Writing Assignment #13 Due: Sunday, 4/21
Wednesday 4/24		read: p. 129-159 Book #4	
□ week 16:			
Monday 4/29	Levinas Assorted short essays	read: Blackboard	Writing Assignment #14 Due: Sunday, 4/28
Wednesday 5/1	TBA		
□ Finals week:			
Monday 5/6	Final Exam 10:15-12:30		