

# **Existentialism**

PHIL 181 – Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:20pm  
ERC Robinson Building [RBC] Gardner Room

## INSTRUCTORS

Professor: Clinton Tolley  
Email: [ctolley@ucsd.edu](mailto:ctolley@ucsd.edu)  
Office: HSS 8018  
Hours: Tues, 2:15-3:30pm

Assistant: Chirag Barai  
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Office: Audrey's (Geisel)  
Hours: Tues, 1-2pm

## EMAIL LIST

<https://mailman.ucsd.edu/mailman/listinfo/phil181-f18-1>

## ONLINE DISCUSSION SITE

<http://pli.ucsd.edu/f18phil181/>

## COURSE READINGS

All of the course readings will be made available electronically as pdfs on our TED site.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will serve as an introduction to the basic themes and texts of existentialism as a philosophical movement that emerged from modern philosophy and came into its own in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will discuss topics like: the distinction between essence and existence; the essence of being human, human existence, and human action; the relation between reason, existence, and freedom; the meaning of death; the idea of 'the death of God'; the absurd; anxiety; boredom; the determination of our individual identity by others; the conditions for the possibility of novelty and creativity; the meaning of life – and lots more. We will read selections from writings central to the existentialist tradition by Blaise Pascal, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, Emilio Uranga, Frantz Fanon, and Iris Murdoch. Throughout the term we will also talk about how these themes show up in art from the period.

## REQUIREMENTS

### 1. *Weekly questionnaires* (40%)

On Monday of each week, there will be a questionnaire posted on the course's TED page, to be completed on TED by **the end of Friday (midnight)** of the same week. The form of these questions will be multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank. The topics of the questions will typically be drawn from both the assigned readings and the lectures from the current week, and answering them will be a straightforward affair for anyone who attends lectures and completes all the readings.

\* *Extra credit*: During finals week there will be an optional extra-credit questionnaire, due Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 5pm.

### 2. *Weekly online discussion posts* (20%) & *comments* (10%)

(A) Also **by Friday midnight** of each week, you will need to contribute a post to our course's online discussion site (pli). Your post should include:

- (1) a quote of one sentence (or two) of particular interest to you from the week's readings,
- (2) 150-word response, including your thoughts and opinions about the subject-matter being discussed, and
- (3) at least one question about the sentence(s) you've chosen.

(B) Before the **end of the following Sunday (midnight)**, you will also need to post one 100-word (minimum) comment on someone else's post.

\* *Extra credit*: Each week you can earn another 0.5% toward your grade by responding to a second post or comment made by others (50-word minimum; once per week; up to an additional 5% toward the overall course grade).

### 3. *Final essay* (25%)

By **5pm** Wednesday of exam week (**December 12th**), you will be required to turn in a 2500-word essay in which you argue for a philosophical thesis concerning existentialism that engages with two of our authors. Your essay must be submitted by this time both in hard-copy to my dept mailbox and electronically at Turnitin.com (see note C below). The word-count for your essay should be placed at the end.

### 4. *Attendance and class participation* (5%)

Due to the nature of the assignments, attendance at the lectures is a prerequisite for doing well in the course. Students are thus expected not to miss any meetings, and roll will be taken on a regular basis. Students are also expected to come prepared to discuss the readings, ask questions, raise objections, and otherwise actively contribute to the class meetings. Extra participation in the online discussion groups will also be taken into account.

\*\*\**NOTE: A minimum of 50% recorded attendance at lectures is required in order to pass the class.*\*\*\*

## NOTES ABOUT REQUIREMENTS

A. No extensions will be granted for any assignment or exam, except in cases of **genuine** emergency (e.g., earthquake, flood, fire, death in the family, illness certified by a doctor).

B. The UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship must be observed in this course. This includes observance of the following six principles:

As a student,

1. I will not receive or provide unauthorized assistance in examinations.
2. I will not use unauthorized materials during an examination.
3. I will not use materials from sources without proper quotation, acknowledgement or citations.
4. I will not alter examinations, essays, or other assignments for regrading.
5. I will not fabricate data or references.
6. I will not use false excuses to obtain extensions of time for examinations or writing assignments.

C. *Maintaining academic integrity*: Though students are strongly encouraged to discuss the assignments with one another, each student must submit answers to the assignments independently of one another, written in her or his own words. Additionally, students agree that by taking this course, their mid-term examinations and final papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted exams and papers will be included as source documents in the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) site.

D. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing (i) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, (ii) will receive a failing grade on the assignment at issue, and (iii) will be in jeopardy of failing the entire course, depending on the nature of the breach of academic integrity.

E. The use of *technology* (phones, tablets, computers, etc.) is prohibited during class meetings.

F. If any accommodations are needed due to a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me at the end of the first class period or as soon as possible. Students requesting accommodations for the course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and also to the OSD Liaison in the Philosophy Department (Nancy Guerrero) in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS  
{tentative}

0.		Thurs Sept 27	Pascal, <i>Pensées</i> #164, 226-34
1. Tues Oct 2	Kierkegaard, <i>Sickness unto Death</i> (sel)	Thurs Oct 4	Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i> Bk 1 §1, Bk 3 §§108-25
2. Tues Oct 9	Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?'	Thurs Oct 11	Heidegger, <i>Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics</i> §§16-17, §§18c-20, §37
3. Tues Oct 16	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> §§25-27, §§35-38	Thurs Oct 17	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> §§39-41, §45, §§49-53
4. Tues Oct 23	Camus, <i>Myth of Sisyphus</i> (sel)	Thurs Oct 25	Camus, <i>The Stranger</i>
5. Tues Oct 30	Sartre, 'On Camus'; 'Existentialism is a Humanism' (sel)	Thurs Nov 1	Sartre, <i>No Exit</i>
6. Tues Nov 6	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> 'Origin of Nothingness'	Thurs Nov 8	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> 'Bad Faith'
7. Tues Nov 13	De Beauvoir, 'Existentialism and Popular Wisdom'	Thurs Nov 15	De Beauvoir, <i>Second Sex</i> 'Woman's Situation and Character'
8. Tues Nov 20	De Beauvoir, <i>Second Sex</i> 'The Independent Woman'	Thurs Nov 22	[Thanksgiving]
9. Tues Nov 27	Uranga, 'The Ontology of Being Mexican'	Thurs Nov 29	Fanon, 'Introduction'; 'The Fact of Blackness'
10. Tues Dec 4	Murdoch, 'On 'God' and 'Good''	Thurs Dec 6	Murdoch, 'Against Dryness'
11. Weds Dec 12	final essay due 5pm	Fri, Dec 14	extra-credit due 5pm

*Note:* Especially if you do not already have some background in modern European philosophy, the degree of difficulty of many of the readings, especially early on, might seem to be high relative to readings for other courses. Students are very much encouraged to read all of the texts carefully at least two times, once before our course meeting, and once after, to facilitate comprehension.