

University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy
PHILOSOPHY 2170: EXISTENTIALISM
Summer 2011

Lectures: M W 7:00-8:20, Mackinnon 029

Instructor: Daniel McDonald dmcDon03@uoguelph.ca

Office Hours: W 5:00-6:30, Mackinnon 368 or by appointment

Existentialism is a 20th century philosophical movement that examines what it means to be an existing individual. Human life, the existentialist argues, has no predetermined purpose or meaning and thus human beings are free to choose how to live. The central claim of existentialism is expressed neatly by Jean-Paul Sartre's slogan "existence precedes essence," which means that human beings have no pre-determined essence; rather, they choose who or what they will become through the decisions they make and the way they lead their lives. This realization is liberating but also involves great responsibility; we alone choose and are responsible for what we will (or will not) become. In this course we will explore several important existentialist themes such as subjectivity, anxiety, death, freedom, authenticity, and responsibility through the works of several prominent philosophers including Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Although the philosophers we will study have divergent approaches and interests, they each, in their own way, address the question of how to understand human life in the absence of any ultimate authority or purpose.

Texts:

- (1) *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Simone de Beauvoir
- (2) *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger
- (3) *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, ed. Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom

Evaluation:

10 Weekly Discussion Questions	20% (2% each)
1 short Essay (900 words)	20% (due M June 20 th)
1 Long Essay (1500 words)	30% (due M July 25 th)
Final Exam	30% (M Aug 15 th , 7 pm)

Weekly Discussion Questions:

Every week, except for the first week and the two weeks in which essays are due, you will be required to submit a discussion question on that day's readings in the lecture. The questions should be somewhere between a sentence and a short paragraph in length. They should demonstrate that you have read that text closely and have attempted to critically engage with it. Questions should help to further our understanding of the text by identifying difficult concepts that require further clarification or by challenging the author's position. Where possible they should make reference to specific pages in the text and possibly direct quotations. An excellent

question will demonstrate a strong understanding of the text and identify important issues in it that require further investigation. A good question will demonstrate some understanding of the text and show that you have put some thought into formulating a question. A satisfactory question will demonstrate that you have read the text. A poor question will give the impression that you haven't read the text. This assignment will receive a 2, 1.5, 1, or 0 out of 2.

Note: Questions must be typed and double spaced. Only one question will be accepted for credit per week. Questions must be submitted during the lecture; i.e. no late questions will be accepted and no electronic versions (i.e. email) will be accepted.

Essays:

You will be required to write a 900 word essay and a 1500 word essay. The format of the essays will be discussed in class. A handout with instructions and a list of essay topics will be given out at least 2 weeks before the assignment due date.

Note: Papers must be typed and double spaced. Electronic copies will not be accepted. Late papers will only be accepted on course days (i.e. Monday, Wednesday) and will be penalized 5% for the first course day, 10% for each additional course day.

Final Exam:

The final exam is scheduled for Monday August 15th, 19:00-21:00 (7:00-9:00 pm). Location TBA.

Schedule of Readings:

[EBW: *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, EA: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, BT: *Being and Time*]

M May 16: Intro

W May 18: Sartre, EBW, pp. 255-259 and 290-296

M May 23: NO CLASS

W May 25: Sartre, EBW pp. 297-308

M May 30: de Beauvoir, EA pp. 27-34

W Jun 1: de Beauvoir, EA pp. 35-52

M Jun 6: de Beauvoir, EA pp. 52-75

W Jun 8: de Beauvoir, EA pp.75-96

M Jun 13: Kierkegaard, EBW pp. 12 (2nd paragraph), 35-45

W Jun 15: Kierkegaard, EBW pp. 46-55

M Jun 20: Kierkegaard, EBW pp. 55-66 [**1st paper due**]

W Jun 22: Kierkegaard, EBW pp. 66-77

M Jun 27: Kierkegaard, EBW pp. 85-92

W Jun 29: Nietzsche, EBW pp. 101-104, 107-111, 138-142 (sections 116-125), 157-158 (section 353)

M Jul 4: Nietzsche, EBW pp. 114-118, 172-181

W Jul 6: Heidegger, BT pp. 21-28

M Jul 11: Heidegger, BT pp. 78-86

W Jul 13: Heidegger, BT pp. 91-102

M Jul 18: Heidegger, BT pp. 149-159

W Jul 20: Heidegger, BT pp. 160-168

M Jul 25: Heidegger, BT pp. 293-299[**2nd Paper due**]

W Jul 27: Heidegger, BT pp. 302-311

M Aug 1: NO CLASS

W Aug 3: Heidegger, BT pp. 319-325

TH Aug 4: Heidegger, BT pp. 341-348

M Aug 8: Heidegger, BT pp. 370-380

M Aug 15: Exam, 7:00-9:00 pm, Location TBA

SEVEN STANDARD STATEMENTS – SUMMER 2011

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their uoguelph.ca email account regularly - email is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement...

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Summer 2011** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday July 8th**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments; you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>