

University of Guelph  
Department of Philosophy  
Winter 2015

## **PHIL\*2170 Syllabus**

Lecturer: Victoria I. Burke  
Lecture Time: MWF 10:30-11:20  
Lecture Location: MCKN 029  
Office Location: 339 MacKinnon (office wing)  
Office Hours: MWF 12:00-12:45 PM + by appointment  
E-mail: vburke@uoguelph.ca

### **Existentialism**

The existentialist movement took a variety of forms across the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries. It had both religious and atheistic manifestations, but it was generally concerned with issues that arise in the course of living out one's life, such as the meaning or meaninglessness of human life, freedom and responsibility, despair and affirmation, anxiety, finitude, and absurdity, as well as God or the absence of God. Existentialists, as the term suggests, generally believe that "existence precedes essence." They believe that our actually being there in the world is a truth that is more fundamental than any essence that might be ascribed to human beings as constituting a human nature. *PHIL\*2170 Existentialism* will examine selections from both nineteenth and twentieth century existentialism in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Camus, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Ellison, Fanon, and Beckett. We will examine Kierkegaard's assertion that existence is a paradox and Nietzsche's madman who proclaims that "God is dead" and that "we have killed him." We will also examine Heidegger's ontological analysis of the meaning of Being and the characteristics of our thrownness. We will consider Sartre's claim that we are condemned to be free and Camus' allegory that envisions life as endless toil in the absence of salvation. We will not only examine the details of each thinker's writings, but the way the existentialist movement evolved and how it was a reaction to and culmination of the modern philosophy that preceded it. How is existentialism a natural result of the evolution of modern theories of selfhood? How does it respond to the

eighteenth Century challenges to religious authority? How does it question the Enlightenment ideal of autonomy? How does it challenge the very idea of a unified philosophical system? How does it reconfigure traditional philosophical questions? This survey of the nineteenth and twentieth century existentialism will not only introduce students to the philosophical works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Heidegger, Camus, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Fanon, Ellison, and Beckett, but to some of the most enduring questions in the history of philosophy.

**Required Texts:**

Marino, *The Basic Writings of Existentialism* (ISBN-10: 037575989)

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (ASIN: B004NLQN2Q)

Photocopy Packet

**Acquiring Course Texts:** The 2 textbooks and photocopy packet can be obtained at the university bookstore; one copy of each of the course texts has been placed on reserve at the physical reserve desk at the McLaughlin library

**Course Requirements:** Students will be assessed on the basis of two Text Analysis papers (5-6 pages each), 3 quizzes), class participation, and a final examination.

**Distribution:**

3 Quizzes (Vocabulary Tests): 15% (3 x 5%)

First Essay: 25%

Second Essay 25%

Class Participation: 5%

Final Examination: 30%

**Course Objectives:** The objectives of PHIL\*2170-01 are: 1.) to acquaint students with an array of philosophical texts in the European tradition of existentialism; 2.) to encourage students to think critically about such concepts and issues; 3.) to provide students with the opportunity to formulate and write about their own original interpretations of literary existentialist texts; and 4.) to gain practice at employing their reading comprehension and capacity for self-expression in discussions with other course members on the course topics.

**Guidelines for submitting written work:** The essays must be submitted on white 8.5 x 11 paper, typed and double-spaced. Students must keep a copy of their work for their own files in case the paper should become lost. If the paper becomes lost (by the student, the office staff, or the Instructor), it is the student's responsibility to be able to replace it. Papers may *not* be submitted electronically via e-mail or by fax. For footnoting or citation style use Chicago Manual of Style, MLA Style, or APA Style. Any of the standard style sheets is fine, as long as you are consistent. Do not send emails to the professor inquiring about citation style. A sample style guide will be posted on the Courselink site for your convenience. Citation of the lectures and powerpoint: (Burke, May 22, 2013). Common knowledge that is widely known does not need to be cited.

**Ecologically friendly writing assignments:** In the interest of maintaining an ecologically sound course, cover sheets are not required on the assignments. Put your name and student number at the top of the first page and start the essay one quarter of the way down the page. Do not include a bibliography. External sources are not permitted on the analysis papers, and it is presumed you are using the course texts. Put the page citation for references in brackets within the text after the quotation, or use footnotes at the bottom of the page. Example: (Fraser, *Rethinking Recognition*, 234). Recently some students have been using slightly off-white recycled paper rather than brilliant white paper. This is encouraged. It is encouraged for students to use recycled paper.

**Readings and Lectures:** Students should read the assigned material prior to the lecture, and should bring the texts to class as the lectures may involve careful and close examination of the readings. Students will be assessed on the basis of their comprehension and synthesis of both the reading material and lectures.

**Deadlines:** The deadlines for the two essays are February 2, 2015 and March 2, 2015. Students should submit the essays in class on the assigned due date. Essays are not accepted by email or fax. Late penalties will accrue at 5% per day late.

**Email:** Philosophical questions will not be answered on email. Students must avail themselves of class time and office hours, in order to have their questions answered. Only short administrative questions will be answered on email. You can expect a response in 48 hours. If the answer to your question can be found on the Courselink site, you will not receive a response, due to the volume of emails we receive. 40% of the emails I receive concern information that is freely available on the course website. If you have a question, first search the course website.

**Office Hours:** My office hours are 12:00-12:45 PM MWF + by appointment (Office Location: Mack 339 (office wing)). These are free and open hours when you can simply drop in to discuss material, and to ask questions of any sort. Students do not need to advise me in advance that they are coming to visit during office hours. The poster on the office door does not designate my office hours. It designates the hours I am occupying the office. Do not knock on the office door at any time other than my designated office hours, unless you have an appointment.

**Quizzes:** There will be three quizzes, worth 5% of your grade each (total 15%). The 3 quizzes are 20-minute vocabulary tests that could cover any material that has been covered in class thus far. They will begin at the start time of lecture on the designated date and end 20 minutes later. They will ask you to define one word or phrase. These quizzes cannot be made up at a later date. The only way to receive credit for them (potential 5% of course grade for each quiz) is to attend class on the scheduled class date of the quiz and write the 20-minute quiz. The dates of the scheduled quizzes are on the syllabus, and you have plenty of warning. If you miss class on that day, you will lose 5% of the possible 100% of course points. This may not seem like a lot at the beginning of term, but you will want those points later in the term. It is highly advisable to plan in advance to be in class on that day. There are no advanced study guides for the quizzes, and their contents will be a complete surprise. Anything that has been covered thus far in the term is fair game, although, if it has previously appeared on a quiz, it will not appear on a quiz again.

**A Note on the Powerpoint Presentations:** The powerpoint presentations provide summaries of the readings and lectures, but do not contain all the material covered in lecture. More content is provided in lecture than can be provided on the powerpoint, including student questions and comments in lecture. Exposure to student questions and comments are an important part of the learning process. Knowing the content of the live lectures could make the difference between a paper judged to be an A versus an A- because the lectures provide the opportunity for more exploration of the topics than is possible on the powerpoint, which merely provide sketches of the course content. The powerpoint is posted in advance of the lecture, with the intention that students can print them out, bring them to lecture, and take notes in lecture by annotating them. Students who rely on the PPTs alone, without attending class, will be disadvantaged when their work is compared with students who have attended.

**Class Participation Grading:** Participation marks will be awarded on the basis of the level of student engagement with the class sessions. Points will not necessarily be awarded on the basis of attendance alone, and no records of attendance will be kept. In a group of this size, I will become familiar with students who participate by name. Generally, students who make regular class contributions have a good chance of getting full marks. Students who display a capacity to engage with others (students, lectures) dialogically (and display a capacity to listen) will generally be given greater credit than students whose social orientation is one-sided or aggressive. Other factors include: level of insight into readings, level of currency with present states of affairs, reading comprehension, consideration of others and productive engagement. If you are concerned about your mark, you can ask me at 2/3 point in the term what your expected participation grade will be, and I will give you an estimate at that point. The university does not permit

assigning participation grades for attendance alone; the university requires that students actually participate to receive participation points.

**Late Papers:** Late papers must be uploaded to the course website drop box, where they will be read online by the TA, and graded, without comments. Essays are not to be submitted to front office staff at the philosophy department. Upload the paper to the Courselink site Dropbox for late papers to give it a time and date stamp. You will receive a grade and no comments. If you want comments, you must submit your essay on time.

**Courselink Site:** This course will have a Courselink site where all handouts will be posted. Please check the Courselink site regularly for announcements. The Powerpoint Presentations will also be posted on the Courselink site. Your grades on the essays and quizzes will also be posted on the courselink site.

### Course Schedule

#### WEEK I

January 5: Course Introduction, Existentialism in Context, Kierkegaard  
No Reading

January 7: Kierkegaard  
Reading: *Fear and Trembling* "Problema I," Marino, pp.7-23

January 9: Kierkegaard  
Reading: *Fear and Trembling*, "Problema II," Marino, pp. 24-39  
\*Instructions for 1<sup>st</sup> Essay Posted by this Date

#### WEEK 2

January 12: Kierkegaard and Irony  
No new Readings

January 14: Kierkegaard  
Reading: "Despair is the Sickness Unto Death," Marino, pp. 41-50

January 16: Kierkegaard  
Reading: "The Universality of the Sickness," Marino, pp. 51-57

#### WEEK 3

January 19: Kierkegaard  
Reading: "Forms of this Sickness," Marino, pp. 58-105

January 21: Nietzsche  
Reading: *The Gay Science* (2-page PDF download from course website)

January 23: Nietzsche  
No new Reading: *The Gay Science*, cont'd.

\*Quiz (Vocabulary Test)

WEEK 4

January 26: Nietzsche

Reading: *Genealogy of Morality*, "First Essay: Good and Evil, Good and Bad," Marino, pp. 111-144

January 28: Nietzsche

Reading: *Genealogy*, "Second Essay: Guilt, Bad Conscience," Marino, pp. 145-192

January 30: Nietzsche

No new Reading

WEEK 5

February 2: Dostoevsky

Reading: *Notes From the Underground*, Marino, pp. 193-230

\*1<sup>st</sup> Essay Due

\*Instructions for 2<sup>nd</sup> Essay posted by this date

February 4: Dostoevsky

Reading: *The Brothers Karamazov*, Marino, pp. 231-258

February 6: Dostoevsky

No new Reading

WEEK 6

February 9: Heidegger

Reading: *Being and Time*, "The Possible Being-a-Whole of Da-sein," Marino, pp. 299-341

February 11: Heidegger

Reading: No New Reading: *Being and Time*, cont'd

February 13: Heidegger

Reading: "Letter on Humanism," pp. 215-265 (photocopy)

**Reading Week: February 16-20 (no classes)**

WEEK 7

February 23: Heidegger

No new Readings: "Letter on Humanism" cont'd.

\*Quiz (Vocabulary Test)

February 25: Surrealism

Reading: *A Manifesto of Surrealism*, pp. 3-47 (photocopy)

February 27: Surrealism

No new Reading

## WEEK 8

March 2: Sartre

Reading: *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Marino, pp. 341-368

\*2<sup>nd</sup> Essay Due

March 4: Sartre

Reading: *Being and Nothingness*, "Self-Negation," Marino, pp. 369-390

March 6: Sartre

Reading: *Being and Nothingness*, "The Encounter With The Other," Marino, pp. 391-412

## WEEK 9

March 9: Comparison of Sartre and Heidegger

No new Readings

March 11: Simone de Beauvoir

Reading: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, "Ambiguity," Marino, pp. 413-440

March 13: Simone de Beauvoir

No New Reading: "Ambiguity," cont'd.

## WEEK 10

March 16: Camus

Reading: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "Absurd Reasoning," Marino, pp. 444-488

Quiz (Vocabulary Test)

March 18: Camus

Reading: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The Myth of Sisyphus," Marino, pp. 489-494

March 20: Ellison

Reading: *The Invisible Man*, "Prologue," Marino, pp. 495-505

## WEEK 11

March 23: Fanon

Reading: "The Fact of Blackness" (photocopy)

March 25: Ellison and Fanon Compared

No New Reading

March 27: Beckett

Reading: *Waiting for Godot* (complete)

## WEEK 12

March 30: Beckett

No New Reading: *Waiting for Godot*, cont'd.

April 1:

\*Review for Final Exam

\*Last Day of Classes

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**Final Examination** scheduled during the registrar's scheduled exam period: the final examination for PHIL\*2170-01 is scheduled for Monday April 6 at 11:30AM - 013:30PM (2015/04/06) (Room TBA)

UNDERGRADUATE CALENDAR: "Students are advised that the Final Examination schedules are available for Fall Semester by mid-August, for Winter Semester by mid-December, and for Summer Semester by mid-April. Students are required to consult the final examination timetable in order to avoid conflicts in examination times when adding courses. Written approval must be obtained from the dean or director and the instructor-in-charge of the course to register in courses that have conflicting examination times."

The Final Exam for PHIL\*2170-01 will not be re-scheduled or given at an alternative time; students may not ask the professor or the TA to invigilate the exam for them at an alternative time and date

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**Bibliography for photocopy package:**

Breton, Andre. *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 3-47. ISBN-10: 0472061828; 320 pp.

Heidegger, Martin. "Letter on Humanism". *Basic Writings*. Ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 215-265. ISBN-10: 0060637633; 464 pp.

Fanon, Franz. "The Fact of Blackness". *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 109-140. ISBN-10: 0802143008; 206 pp.

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Email 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 email contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar's [information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration](#).

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Friday March 6, 2015. See the Undergraduate Calendar's [regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses](#).

Copies of out-of-class assignments

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

### Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. For more information, contact CSD at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email [sas@uoguelph.ca](mailto:sas@uoguelph.ca) or refer to the [SAS website](#).

### Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of 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. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is [detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar](#).

### Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

### Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars>

## Learning resources for first-year students at the Library

The Library and Learning Commons offer free services to help you succeed at the University of Guelph. At the Library, you can:

- > get feedback on your writing
- > get assistance finding journal articles and books
- > fine-tune your time management skills
- > develop new study strategies
- > attend Supported Learning Groups (SLGs)
- > learn about citation and reference styles
- > and more

Visit the **Library website** to learn more about our workshops, online guides, individual appointments, and other services: [www.lib.uoguelph.ca](http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca)

