

FALL 2014

PHIL 117: EXISTENTIALISM

COURSE INFORMATION

Class Meetings:	TR 1:30-2:45pm, DH 208
Instructor:	Prof. Christina Bellon
Office Hours:	T 3:00-4:00pm and W 10:00-11:30am in MND 3000; and by appointment.
Contact:	MND 3000, 278-4759, www.csus.edu/indiv/b/bellonc and via SacCT messaging (please keep all course communications within SacCT, thanks!).
Availability:	Every effort is made to communicate with you quickly, effectively, and accurately. I take this as an important element of my responsibility to you. However, after 5pm M-F or on the weekend, please do not expect a response until the next business day (though, you will likely get one far sooner). If the concern regards a due date problem or an assignment submission problem, please check frequently for a response from me with a solution, as often the best solution is one which can be implemented quickly.
Turnitin Component:	Login to http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/home to create a student account. Enroll in Course ID# 8510721, Enrollment Password: beans.
Special Note:	This faculty member is considered a 'mandated reporter' for suspected child abuse or neglect under the <i>California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act</i> and is bound by the requirements set forth in <i>CSU Executive Order 1083</i> (available here http://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-1083.html).

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

A study of the problems of the existing individual, or inner-most self, especially the problem of choice in the context of radical freedom and finitude. Particular attention will be paid to the philosophical writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and de Beauvoir. Some themes will be examined through the literary works of these and other philosophers, such as Camus, and Dostoevsky. (3 units.)

Pre-requisite (Absolutely no exceptions.): You must have GWAR certification before Fall 2009; or WPJ score of 80 or above; or 3-unit placement in ENGL 109M/W; or 4-unit placement in ENGL 109M/W + co-enrollment in ENGL 109X; or WPJ score 70/71 + co-enrollment in ENGL 109X.

GENERAL EDUCATION CRITERIA

This course satisfies General Education Requirements for Advanced Study Writing Intensive. *Students are required to write not less than 5,000 words of clear and logical prose.*

This course also satisfies General Education Requirements Area C2: Humanities. Students completing C2 requirements should be able to:

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
- B. Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
- C. Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
- D. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Robert Solomon (ed), *Existentialism, 2nd Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2005). ISBN: 9780195174632
Amazon, <http://www.amazon.com/dp/0195174631>

Oxford University Press,

<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/he/?queryField=keyword&query=9780195174632+&&viewVeritySearchResults=true&ss=relevancy>

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

ASPIRATION/OBJECTIVE	PRACTICAL SKILLS	ASSESSMENT TOOLS
Develop competence in philosophical, especially existential, analysis, language and literature, including the historical origins and transformations of Existentialist philosophy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accurately <i>describe</i> and <i>distinguish</i> between a variety of relevant philosophical concepts; 2. <i>Develop</i> and <i>express</i> one's own critical judgements in a cogent and clear fashion; 3. <i>Engage</i> in cogent and respectful discussion of difficult and sometimes controversial issues; 4. <i>Analyse</i> specific arguments for consistency and credibility; 5. <i>Apply</i> processes of critical analysis to key existential texts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content in each of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interpretive Exercises b. In-class Discussion 2. Short written essays 3. Semester Essay Project
Develop written communication skills, especially as those are associated with expository and argumentative writing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Write</i> competently, concisely, precisely, logically; 2. <i>Develop</i> and <i>express</i> a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument; 3. <i>Explain</i> and <i>interpret</i> text in a coherent manner to an audience of peers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality of the form (essay structure, logic) and mechanics (syntax, grammar) of each of the short written essays and the semester Essay Project.
Develop an appreciation of the diversity of the human condition, as this is formulated in diverse historical and cultural contexts and by a diversity of individuals.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accurately <i>describe</i> and <i>distinguish</i> the central elements of the existential approach. 2. <i>Identify</i> and <i>analyse</i> the cultural values and historical developments which contribute to the development of existentialism. 	<p>Discussion of the variations in existentialism, especially as these are informed by culture and historical events, through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. written assignments b. in-class participation

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on their attainment of these learning outcomes by several means. These will include a series of short in-class interpretive essays, a series of short essays, and the Meaning of Life project. The course is graded on the basis of 100pts (1pt = 1%).

ALL assignments and essays are administered within Blackboard. Print or hand submitted copies will not be accepted, except for work assigned and completed in class. All assignments must be completed in the appropriate assignment or assessment area in Turnitin and then submitted in Blackboard.

GRADING SCALE

A Outstanding (96pts and above)

B Range Satisfactory (80-89pts)

D Range Poor (60-69pts)

A- Very Good (90-95pts)

C Range Minimally Satisfactory (70-79pts)

F Unacceptable (below 60pts)

This is based upon a 100 pt scale with 1pt = 1%

TECHNOLOGY COMPONENT

Please note, this course includes a significant Blackboard component. Essay assignments can be found there, as well as required group discussion, and general calendar and class notification options. It is your responsibility to ensure you have regular and reliable access to computing facilities sufficient to the needs of this course. Technical problems must be reported to me at your earliest encounter of the problem. If the problem is more complex than instructor skills allow, you must address your problem to the SacLink Help Line @ 916-278-7337.

TURNITIN ORIGINALITY VERIFICATION

Consistent with Sacramento State's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, this course will use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score'. All submissions to this course will be checked using this tool. Students should submit papers to Turnitin without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number), the system will automatically show this information to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

A NOTE ON PARTICIPATION

As this is an upper division course, it should be taken as an opportunity for you to enhance your communication skills. I strongly encourage you to come regularly, do the readings ahead of time, and participate in class discussions and activities. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class.

“GETTING TO KNOW YOU” BLOG POSTING

This is a fun assignment – you just have to tell us a bit about yourself, why you’re here, what your hopes and dreams are, what you do for fun or relaxation – anything really, to give us all a sense of who you are and where you’re coming from. We’ll be doing some collaborative work in this course, and it will be so much more enjoyable if we knew a bit about who we are. That’s also the biggest obstacle to building a sense of community in any course – so go ahead, tell us about yourself!

ACADEMIC HONESTY ASSIGNMENT

This is the first assignment for the course and must be completed before any written assignments are submitted – by the end of the second week of semester. This assignment has no specific point value, but failure to complete it means I will not accept any of your required coursework. This would be a very costly omission!

INTERPRETIVE EXERCISES (30PTS)

At least 15 times during the semester, you will be given a question at the beginning of class which will prompt you to reflect on some aspect of the assigned reading. This might require you to analyse a select passage from the text – ALWAYS bring your text to class!

You will have approximately ten minutes in class to write and submit a one page (250 word) reflection. These prompts will serve to focus discussion for the class period. If more than 15 opportunities are provided, your grade for this component of the course will consist of your best 15 scores.

These submissions will be graded as excellent (A: 2.0), good (B: 1.75), satisfactory (C: 1.5), unsatisfactory (D: 1.0) on a two-point scale. Failure to submit a response during the class period assigned will result in a zero grade (F: 0). No make-ups, no late submissions.

SHORT ESSAYS (15PTS EACH X 3 = 45PTS)

You will be required to write and submit three formal essays, each of which consists of a 1200-1500 word (double spaced, normal font & margins) explication and analysis of the issue identified in the essay prompt. *You must submit all three essays for grading to complete the course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F for the course.*

MEANING OF LIFE PROJECT (25PTS)

This component of the course consists of a substantive philosophical response to the central question of meaning (What is the meaning of *my* life?), written as a formal essay, 1500-2000 words in length, and comprised of the product of your reflection on this issue over the course of the whole semester and in light of the breadth and complexity of the course material.

With instructor approval, alternate modes of presentation are permissible, but they must be the equivalent of a 1500-2000 word essay. Video projects must be properly captioned and edited for quality (privacy and copyright must be respected). Alternate modes must be approved by the instructor prior to beginning the project.

See project guide in Blackboard for further information and guidance.

Failure to complete and submit this project will be considered as a failure to complete the requirements of the course and a grade of F will be issued.

BONUS OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the semester, students will have the opportunity to earn bonus points by attending specified events and writing an analysis of it. Details and Instructions can be found in the Bonus Opportunities area of the Blackboard course content. Students can earn up to a maximum of 5 bonus points in this way.

COURSE POLICIES AND ETIQUETTE

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is expected from all class participants. Disruptions, rudeness and private discussions, including cell phone disruptions, will not be tolerated. This means while in class, you should be focused on classroom activities and material. Sleeping, using a cell phone, reading a newspaper, doing assignments for other classes, or otherwise engaging in disruptive or disrespectful behavior will be met with a loss of ½pt (per incidence) from the final course grade. **All cellular devices and iPods/music players must be turned off during class unless being used explicitly for class activities.**

DIVERSITY AND RESPECT

CSUS attracts a diverse population of students, faculty and staff with a wide range of cultural norms, lifestyles, beliefs and backgrounds. Opinions may vary on many issues, but students and faculty in this class will be expected to converse and debate in a respectful and tolerant manner.

This class will only be rich if everyone feels free to express her/his views and personal understanding of the course material. Because this is a philosophy class, and philosophy prompts us to think in ways that may be unfamiliar, let us all be mindful and respectful of each other's opinions. Everyone has a responsibility to make the classroom environment a place where we can respectfully agree to disagree, and perhaps even settle some long unsettled questions.

Recording class period is prohibited except with permission of the instructor and consent of the class.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due at the date and time specified in the assignment. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 10% per calendar day (not merely class period) beginning with the due date. After three late days, acceptance of the assignment is at the instructor's discretion. If you know you will not be able to meet a due date, it is your responsibility to consult with the instructor before the assignment is due. ***When submitting any assignment in Blackboard, ALWAYS check its status to ensure it was submitted. Do not merely hit "submit" and leave. It is your responsibility to ensure your assignment was submitted accurately and timely. Do not wait for the instructor to ask you about it or for a "0" to appear in your grade column!***

No extensions, no exceptions. It is your responsibility to know the due dates and to plan accordingly. Leaving an assignment until the day or two prior is risky and makes you more vulnerable than you already are to factors and events in the universe beyond your control!

PLAGIARISM/CHEATING

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offences which will not be tolerated in this class. Assignments in which plagiarism or other forms of cheating are found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). ALL incidents of cheating and plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction. ***It is your responsibility to know and comply with the University's Academic Honesty Policy***
<http://www.csus.edu/um anual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>

UNIVERSAL ACCESSABILITY

This course and all material have been designed for universal access. If you have difficulty accessing any of the material, please let me know at your earliest experience of difficulty. Also, this course has been designed to facilitate accommodation for specific disability needs. If you have a documented disability (visible or invisible) and require accommodation for assignments, tests, course material, etc., please let me know the ***end of the THIRD week of semester*** so that arrangements can be made. Failure to notify and consult with me by this date may impede my ability to offer you the necessary accommodation and assistance in a timely fashion. Also be sure to consult with the Services to Students with Disabilities (Lassen Hall) to see what other campus services and accommodation options are available for you,
<http://www.csus.edu/sswd/ApplicationProcess-Forms.html>.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Learning Modules and assignments can be accessed anytime during the course. See the course calendar in SacCT for due date and time details.

All assigned readings should be read prior to the first class period indicated.

Se 2 Introduction to Philosophical Methods and Existential Philosophy
Read: Solomon, "Introduction," pp xi-xx. Also available as PDF in Bb.

Unit 1: 18th & 19th Century Idealism and the Philosophical Roots of Existentialism

Se 4-11 Kant, Hegel, and the Ontological Turn
Read: Exchange between Kant and von Herbert; Kant on Metaphysics and Ethics; Hegel, On the Other, Master and Slave; all as PDF in Blackboard.
Read: Solomon: Kierkegaard, "The Present Age," 3-6, and "Concerning the Dedication to the Individual," 32-3; Sartre, "Marxism and Existentialism," 262-9; Rilke, "Notebooks," 154-5; Unamuno, "The Tragic Sense of Life," 156-60; Merleau-Ponty, "Freedom," 284-5; Roth, "The Human Stain," 374-5.

Se 14 Academic Honesty Assignment, due by 11:59pm. Submit to SacCT.

Unit 2: Early Explorations in Existence, Individuality, and Faith

Se 16-18 Dostoevsky
Read: Solomon, "Notebooks from the Underground" and "Grand Inquisitor," pp 37- 64.

Se 23-25 Kierkegaard
Read: Solomon, pp 6-33.

Se 30-Oct 9 Nietzsche
Read: Solomon, pp 65-101

Oct 12 Short Essay #1 is due, by 11:59pm. Submit to Turnitin. You may resubmit until the deadline, to make needed corrections, including basic grammar and proper citation of sources used.

Unit 3: Ontological Turn Completed: Being, Freedom, Death

Oct 14-23 Heidegger: Da-sein and Thrownness
Read: Solomon, pp 116-131

Oct 28-30 Heidegger: Freedom, Anxiety & Death
Read: Solomon, pp 132-152

No 2 **Essay #2 is due by 11:59pm. Submit to Turnitin. You may resubmit until the deadline, to make needed corrections, including basic grammar and proper citation of sources used.**

Unit 4: Post-WWII Reflections on Life, Freedom, and Conflict

No 4-13 Camus: Authenticity & the Absurd
Read: Solomon, pp 183-202

No 18-25 Sartre: Freedom, Nausea, Others
Read: Solomon, pp 203-270

No 27-30 Thanksgiving Break – Campus Closed

De 2-11 deBeauvoir: Freedom & Morality
Read: Solomon, pp 291-306

De 13 **Essay #3 is due by 11:59pm. Submit to Turnitin. You may resubmit until the deadline, to make needed corrections, including basic grammar and proper citation of sources used.**

De 15-19 Exam Week – No classes.

De 18 **Meaning of Life Project due Thursday, De 18 at 11:59, no late submissions, no exceptions. Submit to Turnitin. You may resubmit until the deadline, to make needed corrections, including basic grammar and proper citation of sources used.**