Existentialism
PHIL 211

Course Description
This course will explore many of the classic philosophical questions like: What is the nature of the self? Are we free? What is truth? What is the meaning of human existence? Is faith a necessary part of life? And, how should we live? Throughout the quarter, we will familiarize ourselves with how major figures in the Existentialist tradition approached these questions. This course is unique in that it approaches philosophy as a practice. While students will become familiar with how authors respond to philosophical problems, it is hoped that the course will open up a space in which students can develop the ability to think critically about their own lived experience in light of the readings. In addition to philosophical texts, this course will address the aforementioned themes through a play, a film, and a novel. Authors include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus.

Course Objectives
The main objectives of this course are:

1) to learn how to interpret philosophical texts
2) to accurately present a philosopher’s argument, raise questions and possible objections, and provide real world examples in writing
3) to think critically about one’s own life in light of the philosophical issues we discuss

Required Texts
1) The Stranger, Matthew Ward, trans. (available at the UO Bookstore)
2) A course reader will be available for purchase at the Copy Shop on 13th Ave, 4 blocks west of campus.

Assignments & Grading
Exam: One take-home exam will be given during Week 2. The Exam will cover key concepts in the readings and lectures. The format will be short answer and essay questions. An in-class exam will be given during Week 3. The format will be multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer.
**Papers:** Students will be responsible for writing one 5 page paper due at the end of Week 4. Paper topics will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class at least a week before the papers are due.

**Class Participation:** Students are required to come to class having done the reading and ready to participate. If there is reason to believe that students are not completing the readings, the instructor will administer reading quizzes. Students will be given a grade based on their attendance as well as the quantity and quality of their participation.

- Take-home Exam 25%
- In-class Exam 25%
- Paper 30%
- Attendance 10%
- Participation 10%

**Attendance & Late Paper Policy**
Attendance is mandatory. Absences that are not cleared with the instructor will result in missed participation points (Absences will only be excused if they are due to sickness, family emergency, etc.) Late papers will only be accepted if students communicate with the instructor before the due date and receive permission or present a doctor’s note, etc.

**Academic Honesty**
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is the student’s responsibility to understand what counts as plagiarism for the university. Please see the Student Conduct Code: [http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/conduct-code.html](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/conduct-code.html). If students are caught plagiarizing they will fail the course.

**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Unit 1: What is Existential Philosophy and What is Truth?**

- M- Opening Lecture: Historical Introduction to Existential Philosophy

- T- Kierkegaard – “On the Impossibility of an Existential System” by Nathan Oaklander 11-19 and *From Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 118-125

- W- Kierkegaard *From Concluding Unscientific Postscript* “Truth is Subjectivity” 189-218

- Th- Kierkegaard *Fear and Trembling* 56-83
Week 2
Unit 2: How Should One Live? Choice and Responsibility

M- Nietzsche – Preface to Human, All Too Human 5-18; From The Gay Science 117-121
T- Nietzsche – Selections from Beyond Good and Evil 9-16; 23-31
W- Nietzsche – Selections from Beyond Good and Evil Aphorisms 186-192, 211, 260, 287, 289

**Take Home Exam Due**

F- Sartre “Existentialism is a Humanism” 345-369

Week 3
Unit 3: Who am I?; What is the Nature of Freedom?

M- Sartre – Selections from Being and Nothingness 153-160 and “The Look,” 228-241
T- Sartre - “No Exit”
W- Beauvoir – The Ethics of Ambiguity 7-33; 35-73
Th- Beauvoir – The Ethics of Ambiguity 35-73
F- Beauvoir – Introduction to the Second Sex 3-17

**Exam 2**

Week 4
Unit 4: Is Life Absurd or does Life Have Meaning?

M- Marcel “On the Ontological Mystery” 9-45
T- Camus – The Myth of Sisyphus 4-21, 38-48
W- Camus – The Stranger
Th- Film Viewing: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

F- Closing Lecture

**Final Paper Due**