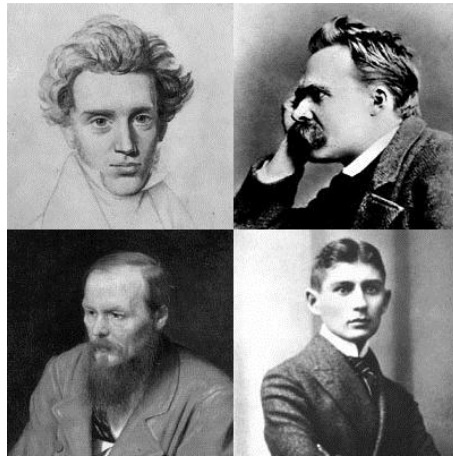


**Existentialism (PHIL 211, CRN: 15465)
MTWR, 9:00am-9:50am, PLC 189**



Instructor: David Alexander Craig
Email: dcraig@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-4pm, PLC 317

Course Description:

What is/was existentialism? What does it mean to relate to the existential dimension of one's own life? How does existentialism stand in relation to the tradition of philosophy we have come to know, and what can it contribute to philosophy today? This course is an introduction to the existential way of life through a sustained reading of canonical and non-canonical existential texts and media. We begin with the proto-existential philosophy of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, before turning to more self-avowedly existentialist material from the twentieth-century. Classic films and literary works are used to illustrate ideas—and to spark reflection—throughout. In the end, existentialism emerges as a means of engaging and relating to modern life in all its joy, anguish and complexity.

Assignments and Evaluation:

- Attendance and Participation: 10%
- Short Paper on Kierkegaard or Nietzsche: 25%
- Short Paper on Sartre, Camus, or Beauvoir: 25%
- Existential Film or Literary Analysis: 20%
- Existential Journal: 20%

Attendance will be taken each class period. While I do not expect every student to speak up every day, I do expect every student to speak up in class, and/or visit my office hours for further discussion *at least three times* throughout the term. Three unexcused absences will be allowed, after which three percentage points from the total course grade will be deducted for

each unexcused absence. Please be in touch *in advance* if you know you will have to miss class for any reason.

Short papers will be due after the Kierkegaard and Nietzsche portion of the course, and again after the Sartre, Camus and Beauvoir portion. Paper prompts will be distributed at least one week prior to the paper due date. Target lengths will be 3-4 pages, and critical engagement with the primary texts will be required.

The existential film or literary analysis will ask you to compare two or more of the films or literary works treated in the course in terms of how they reflect insights presented in the philosophical materials we will have read and discussed. Target length will be 3-4 pages, and a prompt will be distributed at least one week prior to the paper due date.

A blank existential journal will be distributed to you on the first day of the course. You will be tasked with recording full-page entries in the journal, at least twice per week for the first nine weeks of the course, each of which will document the ways in which the themes covered in the course are relating to your own life. Week ten's entry will be a two-page reflective summary of the impact the course has had on your life across the term, however large or small that impact may have been. You will then read or otherwise share this reflective summary during the final days of week ten. Your journal, which may be as personal and expansive as you'd care for it to be, will be collected during week ten, and returned to you during finals' week.

The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon, which I will follow in my evaluation for this course:

- A** = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- B** = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- C** = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
- D** = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- F** = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Late paper policy: late papers will have their grades reduced by 1/4 per class day that the paper is late, if no extension has been granted *before* the paper is due.

Plagiarism: failure to properly cite your sources and/or give credit to others for their work is a violation of academic honesty, and will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question, and possibly a failing grade in the course overall.

Required Texts:

The following are required and available at The Duck Store (and for less online). There will also be several texts posted on blackboard (**BB**):

- *Basic Writings of Existentialism*, ed. Gordon Marino (New York: Modern Library, 2004), ISBN: 0375759891 (**BW**)

- *The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony, and Other Stories*, by Franz Kafka, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Scribner, 2000), ISBN: 0684800705 (**FK**)
- *Where I'm Calling From: Selected Stories*, by Raymond Carver (New York: Vintage, 1989), ISBN: 0679722319 (**RC**)

Schedule:

Week 1 What is existentialism? What is the existential life?

- 1: Course Overview: On the Existential Tradition and the Existential Life
- 2: From *Existentialism*, in *BW*
- 3: Gordon Marino, "Introduction," in *BW*
- 4: Film: *The Seventh Seal*

Week 2 Kierkegaard

- 1: *Fear and Trembling*, "Problema I," in *BW*
- 2: *Fear and Trembling*, "Problema II," in *BW*
- 3: *The Sickness Unto Death*, "Despair is the Sickness Unto Death," in *BW*
- 3: Film: *The Seventh Seal* (continued)

Week 3 Nietzsche

- 1: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "First Essay," in *BW*
- 2: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "Second Essay," in *BW*
- 3: Dostoyevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor," in *BW*
- 4: Film: *The Trial*

Week 4 Kafka

- 1: "The Judgment," in *FK*
 - 2: "In the Penal Colony," in *FK*
 - 3: "The Hunger Artist," in *FK*
 - 4: Film: *The Trial* (Continued)
- (Paper on Kierkegaard or Nietzsche Due in Class Friday)**

Week 5 Sartre

- 1: From *Existentialism*, in *BW*
- 2: From *Being and Nothingness*, "Self-Negation," in *BW*
- 3: From *Being and Nothingness*, "The Encounter with the Other," in *BW*
- 4: Film: *Twilight Zone Episode*: "Eye of the Beholder"

Week 6 Camus

- 1: "An Absurd Reasoning," in *BW*
- 2: "An Absurd Reasoning," in *BW*
- 3: "The Myth of Sisyphus," in *BW*
- 4: Film: *Breathless*

Week 7 Beauvoir

- 1: From *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, in *BW*
- 2: From *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, in *BW*
- 3: From *The Second Sex*, “Mythology,” on *BB*
- 4: Film: *Breathless* (Continued)

Week 8 Carver

- 1: “Where I’m Calling From,” in *BW*
- 2: “Kaleidoscope,” in *BW*
- 3: “Cathedral,” in *RC*
- 4: Film: *Twilight Zone Episode: “Five Characters in Search of an Exit”*
(Paper on Sartre, Camus or Beauvoir Due in Class Friday)

Week 9 Ellison/Fanon

- 1: From *Invisible Man*, “Prologue,” in *BW*
- 2: Franz Fanon, From *Wretched of the Earth*, on *BB*
- 3: Franz Fanon, From *Black Skin, White Masks*, on *BB*
- 4: Film: *The Battle of Algiers*

Week 10 Existentialism in Our Lives

- 1: Film: *The Battle of Algiers* (Continued)
- 2: Presentation of Material from Existential Journals
- 3: Presentation of Material from Existential Journals
- 4: Course Summation: Leading an Existential Life

Finals Week

(Existential Film or Literary Analysis Due)