Description. In the 1950s, Existentialism was a cutting edge perspective on the world (European nihilism after World War II), a lifestyle for intellectuals (in smoke-filled coffee houses), and a glamorous corner of academic philosophy itself (Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir). But the origins of Existentialism go back to at least the nineteenth century in the Western tradition--- Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Is existentialism relevant today? Yes, if there are philosophical truths about human life that have to be lived, if individual subjectivity is important, and if we are responsible for our lives. The course will survey all of the figures just mentioned, and Heidegger and Camus. Our main work will be to address questions such as: Am I free? Is it my fault? Does life have a purpose? What does death mean? All required reading will be from *Existentialist Philosophy*, ed. Oaklander, 2nd ed. Prentice Hall isbn 0-13-373861-2 pbk (On sale at the DuckStore and also on reserve at Knight Library.)

Work will consist of reading (about 30 pp a week) student participation (despite a large class) and 5 very short (2pp--No more than 600 words) papers out of a choice of 10.

UO standard letter grading. 1/3 grade off per class for late papers without documented excuses (e.g. a B for a paper due on Monday will become a B- if submitted on Wednesday). Papers may not be more than one class day late. If your paper is later than that, go on and write the next paper instead. Make sure to cite all references in
standard format, including lecture notes and Oaklander’s introductory material. See appendix for more information on course mechanics.

Grade components – 5 papers @ 15 points each = 75

Attendance in both sections and main lecture course – 15. Attendance will be taken. There are 3 free absences for the lecture and 1 for the section. Beyond that, documentation of valid excuses is required, or there will be a loss of ½ point for each absence, deducted during the computation of final grades.

Class participation - 10

75+15+10 = 100

Course Objectives

- Acquire a familiarity with the most important ideas of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus.
- Critically engage with these thinkers by analyzing their main claims, translating them into more ordinary language, if necessary, applying the main claims to real life or one’s own life, and giving reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with them.
- Contrast and compare philosophical existentialism with other philosophical traditions which the student is already familiar or with traditions the student will learn in the future.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

✓ Knowledge acquired of a distinctive philosophical tradition and its key figures.
✓ Exposition, Interpretation, and Criticism of the ideas of specific thinkers.
✓ Ability to contrast and compare different philosophical traditions.

SCHEDULE AND PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

To keep in mind regarding your papers

- Papers are due before 12 noon on the Monday indicated. Please consult with your GTF section leader for how to submit your papers. All readings are from Oaklander.
- Fewer pages will be assigned for each Friday, in order to summarize the work for the week. Also, on Mondays when a new author is begun, students should read Oaklander’s introduction to that author, because those classes will be devoted to an overview of the readings to follow.
- Although there is a choice of 5 out of 10 papers, all assigned readings are required and the readings for papers 1-5 will be relevant for answering the paper questions for papers 6-10. *Do not repeat from one paper to another.*
If there is more than one question for your essay, divide the space equally between the questions.

Reading Assignments

- Reading assignments are expected to have been done before the class for which they are assigned.
- When a reading assignment is repeated for two consecutive classes, it will either be divided between those classes or the second class will be a summary with further discussion.

Week 1

M. Introduction, Discussion of Syllabus, What is Existentialism?

W. Kierkegaard, “An Existential System is Impossible,” pp. 29-32; Subjectivity is Truth,” pp. 32-43.


Week 2

Paper no. 1: What is Existentialism? Why does Kierkegaard say that an existential system is impossible? How is that related to his view of Christianity?

M. Kierkegaard, From Fear and Trembling, Prelude, pp. 46-7; Preliminary Expectoration, pp. 47-63.

W. Preliminary Expectoration, pp. 47-63.

F. Problem I, pp. 63-68.

Week 3

Paper no. 2. What does Kierkegaard mean by “a teleological suspension of the ethical?” How does this idea relate to his claim that there can be no existential system?


W. Nietzsche, From Daybreak, Human, All Too Human, The Will to Power, and Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 101-109.


Week 4

Paper no. 3. What are Nietzsche’s main concerns in the selections you’ve read during week 3? Why do you think, based on these concerns, that he is considered an existentialist philosopher?


F. Nietzsche, from *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, pp. 136-143.

Week 5

**Paper no. 4. How do Nietzsche’s views on morality relate to Kierkegaard’s religious teleology suspension of the ethical. (Note, you will have to first explain both positions before going on to their relation.)**

M. Heidegger, Introduction.


Week 6

**Paper no. 5. Explain what Heidegger means by Being and Dasein as Being-in-the-world. What does he mean by Dasein as care and how is that an existential perspective?**


F. Dasein as Temporality, 202-204.

Week 7

**Paper no. 6. How is Heidegger’s analysis of the human condition different from Nietzsche’s analysis of morality? In your answer, recap Nietzsche’s analysis and Heidegger’s notion of authenticity, first, and then explain how they are different kinds of analyses.**


Week 8

**Paper no. 7. With reference to the readings assigned for Week 7, explain what the nature of consciousness is according to Sartre.**
M. Sartre from *War Diaries*, Authenticity, and from *Being and Nothingness*, Existence of Others, pp. 279-292.

W. Sartre, from *Being and Nothingness*, Concrete Relations with Others, pp. 292-301.

F. Existentialist Psychoanalysis, pp. 301-308.

Week 9

**Paper no. 8** How does Sartre’s idea of human relations compare with Nietzsche’s ideas about power? How does Dasein as care according to Heidegger compare with Sartre’s idea of existential psychoanalysis?

M – Memorial Day Holiday

W. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Ethical Implications, pp. 308-9 and *Existentialism is a Humanism*, pp. 310-319.


Week 10

**Paper no. 9.** How does Sartre’s idea of freedom and responsibility compare with Kierkegaard’s idea of the individual having to make a religious choice? State whether you agree with Sartre’s claim that the individual is completely free and responsible for everything---give reasons.

M. Introduction, Beauvoir and Camus.

W. Beauvoir, from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 343-356.


Week 11

**M Paper no. 10.** Due Monday at noon. What is the main difference between Beauvoir and Camus concerning existentialist ethics? How does each differ from Sartre regarding ethics?

APPENDIX, A-D

**A. Disability**

Philosophy Department faculty and instructors do their best to comply with Disability Services policy and instructions, as follows. Please see no. 4 in particular.

At a minimum, Instructors have the responsibility to ensure Full access for students with disabilities by responding to a student’s need or request for accommodations as outlined below.

1. If a student presents you with a notification letter from DS:
2. You have the responsibility to cooperate with DS in providing authorized accommodations in a reasonable and timely manner. The specific accommodation determines the amount of involvement required. Refer to the section below entitled "Examples of Shared Responsibility" for a description of your involvement in providing the most common accommodations.

3. If a student does not present you with a notification letter from DS:

4. If a student requests an accommodation without having presented you with the notification letter from DS, please refer the student to DS. If the student is already on file with DS, a request form just needs to be filled out. If the student is new to DS, the process to review documentation and meet with the student may take some time. If the disability is obvious and the accommodation appears appropriate, you may need to provide the accommodation while awaiting official notification. If you are unsure, please call DS for assistance.

5. If a student discloses a disability to you:

6. Ask to see the notification letter from DS. This letter describes the accommodations that the institution is legally mandated to provide. During an office hour or at another convenient time, discuss the letter and the accommodations with the student. Students MUST present a notification letter from DS to receive testing accommodations. If the student does not have a letter, please refer the student to DS. Appropriate accommodations will be determined after reviewing documentation of the disability and the student will be issued the notification letter.

7. If you have a question about the appropriateness of an accommodation:

8. Questions about the appropriateness of certain accommodations should be directed to the Director of DS.

9. If a disability is suspected:

10. Share your concerns with the student regarding his or her performance. If the concern seems disability-related, ask if he or she has ever received assistance for a disability. If it seems appropriate, refer the student to DS for further discussion and guidance. It is the student's decision whether or not to self-identify to DS; however, to receive accommodations, disclosure to DS with proper documentation is required.

B. GRADES : U of O Philosophy Department Policy

What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

- **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.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

**Discussion** forms an integral part of the course, and your performance will be graded on the basis of the quantity and quality of your participation. You should arrive prepared to discuss the material and course assignments.

**C. Academic Honesty**

The stiffest punishments possible will be sought for those who plagiarize, fabricate, or cheat. (The usual punishment is an “F” for the course.) The following offers examples of academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary slightly among disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.
A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. 

**Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:**

1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work, printing, computer program, art or design work, musical composition, and choreography) prepared totally or in part by another.

Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

**Fabrication**

Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. citing information not taken from the source indicated;
2. listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise;
3. inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

**Cheating**

Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
1. copying from another student's paper, computer program, project, product, or performance;
2. collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation;
3. resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor;
4. writing a paper for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.

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**D. HOW TO WRITE GOOD PHILOSOPHY PAPERS**

Note: When you get your papers back, there will be comments on ‘track changes’—please make sure you turn it on. The letters in parentheses indicate what aspect of your writing might need improvement and you may see them the second or third time this aspect still needs work.

1. **CLARITY** (CL) Since this is a philosophy paper, make sure that you define your terms and give reasons for claims. All of your ideas should be explicitly stated and not left to the reader to infer. One difference between philosophy and literature is that philosophers spell everything out, while creative writers depend on the imagination of the reader.

2. **PRECISION** (P) Try not to make vague claims or general statements about the ideas in the readings. Be accurate in reporting the views of others and exact in stating your own.

3. **ORGANIZATION** (O) Organize the ideas in the paper into a few coherent paragraphs. Summarize the main claims of your paper in 2 or 3 sentences that you write *after* you write the paper, but put at the very beginning of the paper. This is an appropriate introductory paragraph for a philosophy paper, not a filler or a fluffy beginning.

4. **WRITING MECHANICS** (WR) The mechanics include spelling, punctuation, syntax and complete sentence structure. Make sure that you already have these down or consult a source if you don’t. Highly
recommended is Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*. This is available on line at www.bartleby.com/141/.

4. **ANALYSIS** (A) Analyze claims. This means breaking your ideas down into their simpler components, and defining them. Do not start with or rely on dictionary definitions, but use your own words and cite the dictionary only if necessary. Dictionary definitions report usage, whereas a philosophical definition may be critical of current usage or find it vague. Examine the logical consequences of your claims and the claims of others.

5. **CITATION** (C) Cite the required readings this way in your text: (author’s last name, page no.) As well, provide a list of citations at the end of the paper. It is important to do this to show you have done the required reading and are not just recycling notes from class or discussion group lectures. If you do use material from lecture, please make sure to cite that as well.

6. **QUOTATIONS** (Q) Quotations should be used to illustrate a claim that you are making about an author. They are not a substitute for explaining the author’s thought in your own words. A good strategy is to state the author’s ideas in your own words first and then “prove” your interpretation with a short quote.

7. **DIRECT** (D) Be direct. Make sure that you give a direct and focused answer to the question for the paper. This is the most important requirement for papers to reach the B and A range.