
EXISTENTIALISM

PHIL159

Course Description

We live in confusing times and are haunted by the suspicion that there are no simple truths or stable authorities that can resolve those questions that most unsettle us. Deep down, we know that “there is something disturbing going on in the basement of our cozy middle-class world.” This knowledge lurks in wait. It emerges late at night, or in daylight, as we wait to cross the street, or as we mourn the loss of a loved one. Who are we? How do we live meaningful lives? Is there meaning at all? Do we live in an absurd, broken, hopelessly ambiguous world? Can we ever be at home in this world? Can we ever be home with ourselves? Robert Solomon wrote that the “existential attitude begins with a disoriented individual facing a confused world that she cannot accept.” And this is where we will begin.

Existentialism is a philosophical as well as literary movement. We will examine the philosophical origins of the tradition in the work of (among others) Simone de Beauvoir, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Iris Marion Young, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Frantz Fanon. Many existentialist writers and filmmakers beautifully and vividly take up these philosophical themes. We will read fiction and essays by Ralph Ellison, Albert Camus, Flannery O’Connor, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Patricia Highsmith, and Phillip K. Dick. We will also analyze movies by Ridley Scott, the Coen Brothers, David Lynch, and Terrence Malick.

Assessment

Assessment will consist of **three** in-class tests, **one** class presentation, and **ten** short homework assignments. Homework will be assessed a *pass*, *low pass* (for incomplete or hastily completed work), or *fail*.

Attendance

Attendance is required. Because this is a summer class, you will quickly fall behind if you are absent. You are, however, allowed to miss **once** without excuse (a free pass!). If you have good reason to miss class beyond this, you will need permission and (especially in the case of illness) documentation. **For every unexcused absence you accrue, your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade** (so if you have an A, with one unexcused absence, you will receive an A-; if you have two unexcused absences, your grade will be a B+; if you have 3 unexcused absences, it will be a B; etc.).

Academic Integrity

The Georgetown University Honor System defines cheating as, “the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or unauthorized collaboration on in-class examinations, take-home examinations, or other academic exercises. It is the responsibility of the student to consult with the professor concerning what constitutes permissible collaboration. Cheating or assisting another student to cheat in connection with an examination or assignment is academic fraud.” Unless otherwise instructed, **using any materials or collaboration with anyone during the in-class exam or for homework/short assignments is prohibited**. All exams are **closed book**. All short-assignments are to be completed **without the assistance of others**.

Lateness Policy

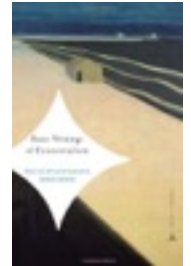
I do not accept late homework/short assignments. Exams may be rescheduled for 1) medical reasons, 2) religious holidays, or 3) schools-sanctioned extracurricular activities. I will consider other circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Except in the case of illness, you will need to let me know of your excuse a week in advance of the exam date. I reserve the right to request a doctor’s note in the case of medical emergencies or illness.

SUMMER 2016
[MTWR 3:15-5:15]
White-Gravenor 409

Instructor: Katherine Ward
Email: kw555@georgetown.edu
Office: New North 214
Office Hours: MW 2-3

REQUIRED TEXTS

Gordon Marino, ed.,
*Basic Writings of
Existentialism*
(Modern Classics
Library)



Ralph Ellison
Invisible Man
(Vintage
International)

SUPPLIES

- 2” Three-Ring Binder
- Index Dividers

IMPORTANT DATES

7/11	First Day of Class
7/18	Test 1
7/25	Test 2
8/01	Presentations Begin
8/11	Test 3

Assessment		Grade Point Scale	
		Grade	Point
		A	4.0
Short Assignments	40%	A-	3.7
Test 1	10%	B+	3.3
Test 2	10%	B	3.0
Test 3	20%	B-	2.7
Presentation	20%	C+	2.3
		C	2
		C-	1.7
		D+	1.3