

PHIL 203: Introduction to Existentialism Spring 2009 WNC – Wednesday 7:00-9:45 pm (Cedar 313)

Credits: 3

Prerequisite: None

Transferability: Transfer to institutions within UCCSN as **PHIL 203**.

Fulfills: Humanities requirement for Transfer & General Education Degrees. This course is designed to allow students to demonstrate appropriate:

1. College-level writing skills;
2. College-level reading skills;
3. Critical-thinking skills; and
4. Appreciation for ethics, diversity and cultural traditions.

Instructor: Susan Priest

Email: spriest@wnc.edu

Office: Cedar 311

Phone: 775-445-3318

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:15-2:15 PM; Wednesday 4:00 – 5:00 PM, and Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 am – 12:00 pm.

****NOTE – Office Hours may change during the semester, but I will announce them in class and update my website if this happens.**

MY Website: www.susanpriest.com Check it out and tell me what you think! Class syllabi and other helpful hints are located on the website.

THIS IS AN ENHANCED CLASS: Login to BLACKBOARD(Online learning platform) --

<http://webcampus.wnc.edu/webct/entryPagelns.dowebct> If you have never taken an online or an enhanced class, first read directions for logging in to BLACKBOARD at

<http://www.wnc.edu/online/login.php> . IF you need help, please check the frequently asked questions and then contact the Reference Librarians at **(775-445-3227.)** They will help you. Make sure to let me know if you have not been able to access Blackboard/WebCT by Week 2 of the semester.

Take advantage of your instructor's Office Hours ☺ !

I) **Course Description:**

Reviews readings from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Sarte, Heidegger. An examination of the existentialist concepts: "being" and "nonbeing," "estrangement," "dread," "anxiety" and "freedom."

II) **Course Objectives:**

- A) To **identify** the main tenets of existentialism in history, literature, philosophy, psychology, and religion;
- B) To **examine** the existentialist concepts of "being" and "nonbeing," "estrangement," "dread," "anxiety" and "freedom";
- C) To **analyze** existentialist themes in modern art, film, life, literature, and politics;
- D) To **create** an existentialist project that **applies** existentialist concepts and questions to the student's life; and
- E) To improve **critical thinking skills** in oral and written communication.

III) **Methods of Instruction:**

Class may involve a combination of activities including: lecture, class discussion, writing, viewing films and video analysis.

IV) **Course Requirements – Student Responsibilities:**

A) **Preparation, Attendance & Participation (50 Points)**

Preparation: It is important to be at every class, and be prepared to participate in class discussion. Being prepared includes **completing 100% of reading assignments** and being ready to discuss them. Use the Calendar of Assignments to prepare for class discussions. In all philosophy courses being prepared also includes being open to new ideas.

Attendance & Participation:

- “90 % of success is showing up.” Woody Allen
- Without you class is not the same. Plan to attend every session. (NOTE: If you miss a class, it will be important for you to find out what you missed.)
- You will receive **four points** for every class you attend and in which you participate.
- If you are late to class, leave early or do not participate you will receive a fraction of those **four points**.
- The instructor may drop any student when she feels the student has had an excessive number of unexcused absences. For this course, unexcused absences in excess of 2 classes may be considered excessive. If you have an emergency, please contact the instructor.

A word on class discussions in Philosophy 203: We will be actively discussing philosophical topics in this class. Discussing involves practicing argumentation. By argument I do not mean verbal attacks or accusations, but the practice of honestly examining the rationality and logic of ideas. To that end, it will be important for all of us to take a civilized approach to discussions both by practicing respect and not mistaking honest inquiry for personal attacks.

B) **Weekly Quizzes (200 Points)**

There will be a very short weekly quiz at the beginning of class. (Weeks 2-15) [NOTE: There may be a week or two where there is no quiz.] The Quiz will be 4-5 short-answer questions from the reading for that week and/or the lecture/discussion from the previous week.

Each quiz is worth 20 points. I will count the ten highest quiz scores at the end of the semester (I will drop the lowest quiz scores at the end of the semester.) If you miss a Quiz, you will receive a zero. As a general rule, there are no make-up quizzes.

C) **Homework, Activities & Writing Assignments (175 Points)**

Homework – Throughout of the semester there will be a few brief assignments for which you will receive points. See Calendar of Assignments (p.6-7) for Due Dates:

- **LOGIN to BLACKBOARD/CE6** – To familiarize yourself with the enhanced portion of this course and to make sure you are familiar with the assignments before “crunch” time, please login to BLACKBOARD and complete the following “brief” assignments. Due: End of Week 2, 1/30/09. (25 points Total)

- **Post an Introductory Bio about yourself for the class:**

- Tell the class something about yourself and why you decided to take this class. Also tell the class at least 5 experiences, objects, actions, and/or relationships that shape and/or define your existence. This bio should be at least 7 sentences. **(10 points)**

- **Complete “SAMPLE” Turnitin Assignment:** All writing assignments in this course will be submitted electronically via BLACKBOARD (CE6.) Your papers will be processed through the Turnitin (anti-plagiarism) website and software. Submit this “sample” assignment to become familiar with the process. You will need to access BLACKBOARD (CE6) to learn what the assignment is. **(15 points)**

Writing Assignments – Three short papers (3-6 pages) are designed to give each student an opportunity to reflect critically on the varied texts of existentialism. Use MLA formatting. **You will need to login to BLACKBOARD (CE6) in order to see the writing assignment topics.** (NOTE: if you want to suggest your own topic please consult with the instructor before the due date.)

50 points (max) are given for each writing assignment. I will deduct 5 points each day that a paper is late. IF you turn your paper in on time, you may re-write it for an improved grade.

- **Writing Assignment 1 – Due Week 5 (February 18, 2009)**

- **Writing Assignment 2 – Due Week 9 (March 25, 2009)**

- **Writing Assignment 3 – Due Week 13 (April 22, 2009)**

ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS WE BE EVALUATED ON THE FOLLOWING:

Composition (15 Points)

- The writing assignments should be typed (double-spaced), use 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, and be approximately 3-6 pages in length.
- Please include your name, PHIL 203 - Carson, Spring 2009 and the date in the upper left hand corner of the paper.
- **Citing References (MLA):** Every time you include a direct quote or refer to an idea mentioned in the book, you need to include a reference note. For this class, please include author's name and page # in parentheses. (e.g., If you are referring to ideas on existentialism that you read about in your textbook (on page 15) your note should look like this: (Kaufman 11))¹
- Proper punctuation, grammar and spelling. (*Don't just rely on the computer spell checker, proof read your assignment before you turn it in.*)
 - Clear writing style.²

A Word on Plagiarism: When you properly cite references you avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense in writing papers and all academic coursework.

“Plagiarism = taking any idea or writing that is not your own and including it in your paper without citing your source. For example, if you go to a website and take information or sentences from that website and do not cite that website in your paper, you are plagiarizing...This also includes using the textbook, quoting it, or describing a philosopher's view not your own without citing the page from which you took the information.”³ **Plagiarizing = F.**

Content (35 points) ask yourself these questions before you turn in the assignment:

- Have you clearly stated a thesis on a philosophical, literary, artistic or psychological aspect of the text?
- Have you addressed the assigned essay topic?
- Have you fully explored the nuances of the texts?
- Have you accurately represented the texts?
- Is your brief essay a collection of random thoughts or a coherent series of interrelated thoughts? (*You are striving for the second.*)

¹ You may need to outside research and I want you to get in the habit of properly documenting ideas, which is a part of all scholarly writing. For philosophy courses you should be using MLA format -- Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th Ed. New York: The Modern Language Association, 2003. You may also consult: <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm> and http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html#Works-Cited.

² If you need some concrete suggestions for how to improve your writing style I recommend looking at William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White's classic book The Elements of Style. 4th Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

³ Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus. David Yount, Ph.D., Mesa Community College.
<<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/~yount/text/101syllbs.html>>

HOW YOUR WRITING WILL BE EVALUATED: The following are some general guidelines that I will be following, when I grade your written work, submitted online in BLACKBOARD(CE6):

- All writing (including official discussion posts, writing assignments and final projects) will follow standard practices of English Grammar. For full credit you will write in complete sentences. Please, NO "text message" symbols or shortcuts will be accepted.
- When you consult references or cite material in your papers you must use MLA (Modern Language Association) format to cite your sources. **(Otherwise you will be plagiarizing.)**

I will use the **CARS** method of evaluating the form and content of your writing. Are you **Clear, Accurate, Relevant** and have you used **Sufficient support**?

D) Existentialist Project ~ Exam (75 points)

Choose **one** of the following "existentialist" projects. All existentialist projects are **due May 13th, 2009 at 7 pm**. Any written portion of these projects is to be submitted online to the Turnitin.com dropbox within Blackboard/WebCT. (No existentialist project will be accepted after 5 pm Thursday May 14th and you may lose points.) Extra-credit may be given for presenting some aspect of your project Week 16. A more detailed rubric will be handed out by Week 8 of the semester.

1. **Create your own samples of existentialist art** integrating existentialist concepts and themes from this course. (e.g., Movie, Short Story, Poetry, Play, etc.)
2. **Keep an Existentialist Journal this semester**. Document your own existence this semester. Include reflection on the reading assignments as well as reflection on your daily life and discussion of world events. May include photography, video journal, or web documentation as well.
3. **Design your own project** (e.g., research paper of one or more of the existentialist themes/authors we have covered.) Please plan to consult with the instructor if you want to desire to design your own project (No later than Week 11.)
4. **Take-Home Exam**. You will be given a number of take-home essay questions both Week 8 and Week 14 of the course. These essay questions will be designed to synthesize (or at least document) your reflections on existentialist authors and themes.

V) Assignments for Instructor – Susan Priest:

- I will come to class on time.
- I will give this class 100% of my attention while we are meeting.
- I will prepare and deliver class lectures, bringing in relevant additional sources.
- I will facilitate class discussions and seek to create a respectful forum at all times.
- **I will grade writing assignments and quizzes promptly.** Papers will include sufficient comments to assist students in re-writing. (*Exception: I may not turn late papers back promptly.*)

- I will make myself available for your class related questions and concerns by appointment, as needed.
- I will assign final grades to each student using the following criteria:

VI) Grades:

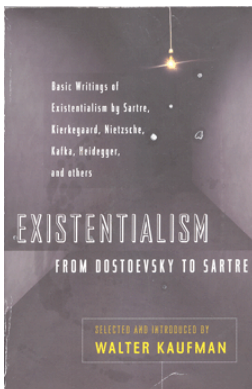
The final grade will be determined by the course requirements:

➤ Class attendance & participation	50 points
➤ Weekly Quizzes (10 highest scores)	200 points
➤ Homework, Discussion & Writing Assignments	175 points
➤ Existentialist Project ~ Exam	<u>75 points</u>
	500 points

Points Earned	Grade Received
465 - 500 points	A
450 - 464 points	A-
435 - 449 points	B+
415 - 434 points	B
400 - 414 points	B-
385 - 399 points	C+
365 - 384 points	C
350 - 364 points	C-
335 - 349 points	D+
315 - 334 points	D
300 - 314 points	D-
Below 300 points	F

NOTE: If you wish to withdraw from the course, rather than receive the grade that you have earned, it is your responsibility to withdraw. If you have earned below 300 points, you receive a grade of F, not W, for this class. If you run into problems, ask for help (445-3318). MAY 8TH is the last day to drop a full-term class with a "W."

VII) Reading:



Required TEXT (TX): *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre.*
 Edited by Walter Kaufman. New York: Penguin Group, 1975.

Additional reading will be announced in class and either handed out in-class or made available electronically.

VIII) Calendar of Assignments:

All reading assignments are to be completed before class.

WK	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
1	1/21/09	SYLLABUS – Introduction to Existentialism A Brief History	SYLLABUS Discuss – Explore: What is Existentialism?	
2	1/28/09	Dostoevsky ~The Human Condition~	TX: Chapter 2 “Dostoevsky: Notes from the Underground” (p.53-82) <i>What themes does Dostoevsky consider in these excerpts?</i>	QUIZ DUE: Login to BLACKBOARD/CE6 – Introductory Post & Sample (1/30/09)
3	2/4/09	Kierkegaard ~Dread, Freedom, & Subjectivity~	TX: Chapter 3 “Kierkegaard: The First Existentialist” (p.83-121) <i>What is Kierkegaard's argument?</i>	QUIZ
4	2/11/09	Kierkegaard – Nietzsche ~Freedom & Passion~	TX: Chapter 4 “Nietzsche: Live Dangerously” (p.121-132) <i>What is Nietzsche's argument?</i>	QUIZ
5	2/18/09	Nietzsche ~The Will to Power~	<i>Compare and contrast Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.</i>	QUIZ DUE: Writing Assignment #1
6	2/25/09	Kafka – Ortega ~Human Nature, Subject~	TX: Chapter 6 “Kafka: Three Parables” & 7 “Ortega: Man Has No Nature” (p.142-157) <i>Compare and contrast Kafka and Ortega</i>	QUIZ
7	3/4/09	Jaspers ~Phenomenology, Metaphysics & Existence~	TX: Chapter 8 “Jaspers: Existenzphilosophie” (p.158-232) <i>What is Jaspers' argument?</i>	QUIZ
8	3/11/09	Jasper –Heidegger ~Phenomenology, Metaphysics & Existence (cont.)~	TX: Chapter 9 “Heidegger: The Quest for Being” (p.233-279) <i>What is Heidegger's argument?</i>	QUIZ
	3/16 – 3/22	No Classes	Spring Break	
9	3/25/09	Heidegger ~Authenticity~	<i>Cont.</i>	QUIZ DUE: Writing Assignment #2
10	4/1/09	Sartre ~Subject and Intersubjectivity~	TX: Chapter 10 “Sartre: Existentialism” (p.280-328) & Handouts <i>What is Sartre's argument in these essays?</i>	QUIZ
11	4/8/09	Sartre ~Politics and Religion~	TX: Chapter 10 “Sartre: Existentialism” (p.329-374) <i>What is Sartre's argument in these essays?</i>	QUIZ

12	4/15/09	Camus & Beckett ~Existentialist Literature~	TX: Chapter 11 “Camus: The Myth of Sisyphus” (p.375-378) & Handouts <i>Compare and contrast Camus & Beckett</i>	QUIZ
13	4/22/09	~Existentialist Literature (cont.)~	TBA	QUIZ DUE: Writing Assignment #3
14	4/29/09	May, Frankl & Rogers ~Psychotherapy & Existentialism~	Handouts <i>How have these psychologists interpreted existentialist themes in their work?</i>	QUIZ
15	5/6/09	~Existentialism in the 21 st Century~	TBA <i>May 8th is the last day to withdraw from class.</i>	QUIZ
16	5/13/09	Presentations & Wrap-Up		DUE: Existentialist Projects

IX) Final Notes:

- A) **CAVEAT FROM INSTRUCTOR ON COURSE CONTENT:** As the course progresses there may be a need to modify topics, offer additional readings and handouts, assign additional assignments, and/or change the calendar of assignments to meet course objectives.
- B) **DISABILITY STATEMENT:** WNCN supports providing equal access for students with disabilities. Susan Trist (DSS Coordinator) is available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that students may require. Please either meet with me or contact Susan Trist (445-3275) at your earliest convenience.
- C) **REVIEW OF CLASSROOM POLICIES:**
- **RESPECT:** This says it all about my expectations of classroom behavior. See WNC's "Principles of Community" (p.3, 2008-2009 Catalog) for more details. Also make sure to read WNC's "Student Code of Conduct" to know your rights and responsibilities.
 - **ATTENDANCE:** Please contact instructor with questions or concerns related to attendance. If you must be absent due to illness or unforeseen emergency you may ask instructor what in-class writing assignments you missed to make up points. It is your responsibility to find out what you missed.
 - **LATE WORK:** I accept late writing assignments, but you will lose 5 points per day. Writing assignments that are turned in late **may not be re-written** for an improved grade. Late Final Projects/Exams may not be accepted.
 - **MAKE-UP TESTS:** There are no make-up Tests or Final Exam. I drop the lowest test grade. Please contact the instructor with questions.
 - **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Honesty is the best policy. See WNC's policy on "Academic Integrity" 3-4-5 <http://www.wnc.edu/policymanual/3-4-5.htm> (OR read p. 3 of your Student Handbook 2008-2009.) Plagiarism and cheating may result in an automatic "F" for that assignment/quiz/test and an "F" for the course.
 - **CELL PHONES:** Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices in class. NO TEXTING in class.