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PHIL102, Existentialism and European Philosophy Syllabus

1.1 Course Information

Course Name: PHIL102, Existentialism and European Philosophy

SECTION: 001

Course Location: UP. 217 Thomas

Course Date & Time: MWF 1:25PM - 2:15PM

Instructor: David W. Agler

Instructor Email: dwa132 AT PSU dot EDU

Website: www.davidagler.com

Office Location / Hours W 2:30 - 3:45PM, and by appointment (243 Sparks)

Office Mailbox: 232 Sparks

1.1.1 Brief Course Description

Existentialism is a late 19th - 20th century philosophical movement (centered in Europe) whose focus is on the human subject certain key concepts that center around that subject, e.g. freedom, authenticity, personal identity, absurdity. This course will cover these concepts and key existentialist figures, including Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, and others.

1.1.2 Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

1.2 Course Overview

1.2.1 Required Texts

1. Camus, Albert. 1991. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Vintage. ISBN13:978-0679733737
2. Kierkegaard, Søren. 1987. *Either/Or, Part I*. Princeton University Press. ISBN13: 978-0691020419
3. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. 1992. *Notes from the Underground*. Dover Publications. ISBN13: 978-0486270531
4. Sartre, Jean-Paul. 2007. *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. Yale University Press. ISBN13: 978-0300115468

1.2.2 Course Objectives

There are a number of objectives for this course. By the end of the course you should be able to do (or have done) all of the following:

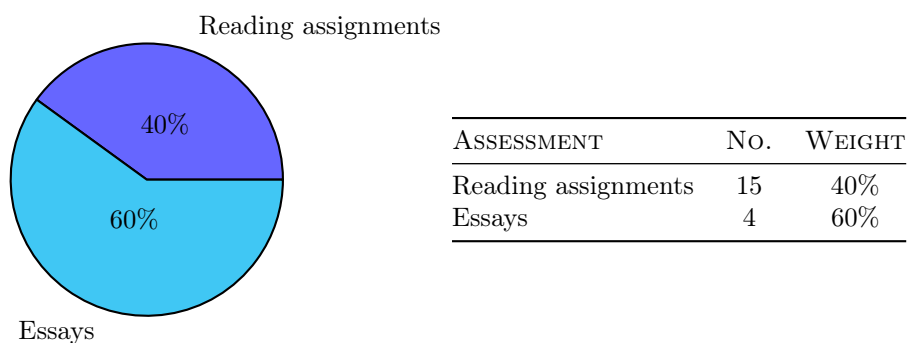
Objective 1, *Key Tenets of Existentialism*. Students will learn the key tenets (core concepts) of existentialism and be able to articulate these with some detail.

Objective 2, *Key Texts of Existentialism*: Students will read four key texts in existentialism.

Objective 3, *Dialogue and Oral Expression*. Students will develop their ability to engage in respectful conversation with others. Students will be encouraged to formulate their views on questions raised by existentialist philosophers, provide reasons for their position, and address the shortcomings of their outlook by considering alternatives.

Objective 4, *Articulation and Writing Skills*. Students will develop the capacity to summarize key texts written by existentialists and articulate key philosophical themes found in these texts.

1.3 Course Work



READING ASSIGNMENTS (*40% of final grade*): Reading assignments consist of three different varieties:

1. pop quizzes (administered at the beginning of class) that covers the **reading questions** for the day.
2. a collaborative (group) assignment (administered during class) that covers the **discussion questions** for the day.
3. take-home assignments that cover the **discussion questions** for the day.

Some key notes:

- There is no make-up for reading assignments.
- Your lowest **two** reading assignment grade will be dropped.

ESSAYS (*60% of final grade*): You are asked to write four short exploratory papers, one for each book that we read in this course. The paper should be at least 1000 words (include a word count with your paper) and should consist of the following:

1. Your name, class name, and a paper title
2. A paper consisting of four sections:
 - (a) Section 1 should be **an introduction** where you provide a brief summary of one of the core claims/questions made by existentialists (see handout) and a statement of how you *plan* to explore, clarify, or illustrate this idea by using one of the readings.
 - (b) Section 2 should be **your clarification section** where you use a reading covered in the course to explore, clarify, illustrate one of the core claims made by existentialists.
 - you must quote at least one line of the reading
 - be sure to cite any places that you refer to with the appropriate page numbers, e.g. (pp.2-3)
 - (c) Section 3 should be your **reaction section** where you provide an **an argument** that explicitly states whether you agree or disagree with the idea you have explored. That is, you will state whether the existentialist claim is true or false (justified or unjustified) and then provide at least two reasons why that claim is true/false or justified/unjustified. In putting forward your argument, here are some tips:

Tip 1. In summarizing an argument / objection you disagree with, make sure you present the strongest version of that position.

Tip 2. Be sure to criticize the position and/or argument that is being put forward; don't criticize the person putting forward the argument. One exception is if they claim that you should accept a position based on their expertise or testimony.

Tip 3. Avoid appealing to controversial authorities in supporting your view. That is, avoid statements like "P is true because I think it is so" or "P is true because the President thinks it's so."

Tip 4. It is okay to give your view on a matter but make sure it is supported by reasons that are not based solely on your personal experience.

Tip 5. Write your argument with the following audience in mind: someone who is intelligent, who is pretty different from

you in terms of their beliefs, and who would likely disagree with what you are saying.

- (d) Section 4 should be a **a conclusion** where you (in one to two lines) briefly summarize the contents of your paper.
3. a bibliography (works-cited). For example:
- Fraleigh, W.P. 1984. Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Sport: The Ethical Issue. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 11:23-29.
 - Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. 1992. *Notes from the Underground*. New York: Dover Publications.

1.4 Course Policies

1.4.1 Academic Misconduct

The general principles and policy relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in the Penn State policy on academic misconduct. Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you are unclear about whether you or someone you know is engaging in academic misconduct, read the following: University Statement on Academic Integrity. For more information, see PSU Academic Integrity, Plagiarism Tutor, & PSU Teaching & Learning with Technology

1.4.2 Deadline & Late Work

If you cannot attend an **exam** (and thus turn in your **homework**), it is your responsibility to email me *before* class begins. If you do not, your work will be considered **late** and thus subject to a penalty of a letter grade for each day I do not hear from you.

In rare cases, however, it is impossible to contact me before class begins, e.g. emergencies like hospitalizations. In this case, it will be necessary for you to produce documentation that clearly indicates that (i) you could not attend the exam and (ii) it would have been unreasonable (or impossible) for you to contact me to notify me of your absence. When this is the case, you will be able to make-up the exam and turn in the homework without penalty.

1.4.3 Technical Support

There are a number of ways to receive technical support:

- For UP Students: contact the ITS Help Desk through their website (<http://its servicedesk.psu.edu>) by phone (814-865-HELP (4357) or via email (ITShelpdesk@psu.edu).

- For World Campus Students: contact the Outreach Help Desk via email (ohd@psu.edu), by phone 1-800-252-3592, option 4 (toll free within the United States), or through their website: <http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/technical-support>.

1.4.4 Grading Scale, Rounding, & Curving

This course uses the following grading scale:

A	B	C	D	F
A: 91–100	B+: 89.0–89.9	C+: 79.0–79.9	D: 60.0–69.9	F: 0–59.9
A–: 90.0–90.9	B: 81.0–88.9	C: 70.0–78.9		
	B–: 80–80.9			

Grades will be rounded up from the second decimal point, e.g. 90.95 rounds up to 91.0 while 90.94 rounds down to 90.90. In the event that eLION does not allow for a particular grade (e.g. D+), you will simply be given the letter grade (e.g. if you have a D+ then you will receive a D, and if you have a C–, you will receive a C).

1.4.5 On Calculating Your Grade

While ANGEL provides a rough approximation of your grade, the syllabus is the definitive guide for determining your grade. Please use the percentages in the Course Work section (??) to determine your grade. See also, University Grading Scale and University Policy 47-00.

1.4.6 On Dropping the Course:

Consult the Registrar or your academic adviser for drop procedures. Consult the Handbook for taking an Incomplete (D/F).

1.4.7 On Curving

The default curving policy is that individual assignments will not be curved. However, in the case that the average grade for students who have fully completed the course is below 75%, a curve will be instated so that the average grade of students who completed the course is 75%.

1.4.8 Accessibility & Further Student Guidance

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site at: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>

In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation.¹ If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State's Counseling & Psychological Services (phone: 814-863-0395). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the Student Affairs Services, your Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

1.5 Course Calendar

¹See the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines/documentation-guidelines>

Existentialism: Basic themes and <i>Notes from the Underground</i>		
1/11	none	Introduction
1/13	none	Modernism and the context of existentialism
1/15	see ANGEL	Core Ideas of Existentialism
1/18	no class	MLK Day!
1/20		Core Ideas of Existentialism
1/22		Core Ideas of Existentialism
1/25	NfU:1-9	<i>Notes from the Underground, part I</i>
1/27	NfU:9-18	<i>Notes from the Underground, part I</i>
1/29	NfU:18-28	<i>Notes from the Underground, part I</i>
2/1	NfU:29-42	<i>Notes from the Underground, part II, chs.I-II</i>
2/3	NfU:42-56	<i>Notes from the Underground, part II, chs.III-IV</i>
2/5	NfU:56-91	<i>Notes from the Underground, part II, chs.V-X</i>
2/8	none	peer-review
2/10	none	paper due

Existentialism: <i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>		
2/12	EO:301-313	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/15	EO:313-327	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/17	EO:327-342	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/19	EO:342-354	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/22	EO:359-376	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/24	EO:390-392, 404-406	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/26	EO:410-412, 416t-418t, 420b-423	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
2/29	EO:433-440t, 441b-445	<i>Either/Or: The Seducer's Diary</i>
3/1	none	peer-review
3/4	none	paper due

Spring Break		
3/7	spring break	woohoo!
3/9	spring break	woohoo!
3/11	spring break	woohoo!

Existentialism: <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>		
3/14	MoS:3-16	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/16	MoS:16-28	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/18	MoS:28-41	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/21	MoS:41-65	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/23	MoS:66-77	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/25	none	none
3/28	MoS:78-92	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
3/30	MoS:93-104	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
4/1	MoS:104-118	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
4/4	MoS:118-123	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
4/6	none	peer-review
4/8	none	paper due

Existentialism: <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>		
4/11	EH:17-27	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
4/15	EH:28-37	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
4/18	EH:38-48	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
4/20	EH:49-59	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
4/22	EH:60-72	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
4/25	none	peer-review
4/27-4/29	none	paper due

Table 1.1 – NfU: *Notes from the Underground*, EO: *Either/Or*, MoS: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, EH: *Existentialism is a Humanism*