

# EXISTENTIALISM ESSAYS

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May 10, 2016

## 1 Assignment Description

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 - it can be longer** (include a word count with your paper), be submitted as a **PDF**, and should consist of the following:

1. Your name, class name, a paper title, and word count, submitted as PDF.
2. A paper consisting of **four** sections (**explicitly** label each of these sections):
  - (a) **Section 1** should be **an introduction** where you do each of the following:
    - i. give a brief summary of one of the core claims/questions/ideas made by existentialists (see handout)
    - ii. a statement of how you *plan* to explore, clarify, or illustrate this idea by using one of the books we will read for this course
    - iii. a single-line statement of whether you agree or disagree with this idea. This section is introductory; you are simply preparing your reader for what is to come and so be brief but clear.
  - (b) **Section 2** should be **your clarification section**. This should be the largest section of your paper. Here is where you use a reading covered in the course to explore, clarify, expound upon, or illustrate one of the core claims made by existentialists. *Your goal here is to make one of the existentialist ideas **more understandable** through an analysis of the text.* In other words, this is where you use one of the core ideas put forward by the existentialists and bring it into *sharper* focus. You should not simply analyze the text. Instead, use the text to develop the existentialist idea. You can do this by covering aspects of the idea that are not considered in the handout or illustrating this idea with examples found in the reading. You must do the following:
    - 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)
    - when you quote some portion of the text, you should also explain the significance of that quote (don't *just quote*). Try to really explain the quote fully.
  - (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.** If you criticize the idea, make sure you present the strongest possible version of the existentialist's claims / views / ideas. You don't want to criticize a weak version.

**Tip 2.** You are stating whether the claim is true or false, not whether it is true for you (or whether you believe it). You don't need to justify (prove) your own belief, you need to persuade an *impartial* reader whether your view on the matter is right or wrong.

**Tip 3.** 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.

Be explicit about your reasons. It helps to signal them with the following phrases: "There are two reasons for X. First, Y. Second Z."

Tip 4. Try to tie the book into your reasons. Rather than giving independent reasons without any discussion of the book per se, incorporate some analysis of the book into your reasons.

(d) **Section 4** should be a **a conclusion** where you (in one to two lines) briefly summarize the contents of your paper.

No need for a Bibliography page unless you use outside sources (you are not required to do this).

## 2 What Your Paper Sections Should Look Like: A Formulaic Guide

Your Name

PHIL102 - Existentialism

Paper #

Word Count: #

### Paper Title

#### 1. Introduction

In this paper, I will explore the existentialist idea of **A** using book **C**. In general, the existentialist idea **A** is understood as **B**. In section 2, I will develop idea **A** as **B** through examining such and such part of book **C**. Finally, in section 3, I will argue that **A** is true/false for reasons **D1** and **D2**.

#### 2. Clarification

The existentialist idea **A** is understood as **B**. However, a careful reading of book **C** provides a clearer understanding of **A**. In book **C**, the author [short description of the book]. In the following section, I will expand on **A** by analyzing / drawing up / using two key scenes / passages from book **C**.

First, the author [describe scene, give quote, etc.]. This scene / passage means **D** [a few sentences devoted toward the interpretation]. Given this scene / passage, the existentialist idea understood as **B** is now brought into clearer focus. That is, existentialist idea **A** is not merely **B**, but also should be understood as **B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **B<sub>3</sub>**.

Second, the author [describe scene, give quote, etc.]. This scene / passage means **D** [a few sentences devoted toward the interpretation]. Given this scene / passage, the existentialist idea understood as **B** is

now brought into clearer focus. That is, existentialist idea **A** is not merely **B**, but also should be understood as **B<sub>4</sub>**, **B<sub>5</sub>**, **B<sub>6</sub>**.

### **3. Response**

Given the analysis of idea **X** in section 2, I contend that **B** for two reasons. **First**, reason **C1** + an articulation/example of reason **C1**. Second, reason **C2** + an articulation/example of reason **C2**.

### **4. Conclusion**

In this paper, I've shown that existentialism idea **A** is expanded upon through a careful reading of book **C**. In general outline, existentialist idea **A** is understood as **B**. Idea **B**, however, gets developed by the author as **B<sub>1</sub>**, **B<sub>2</sub>**, **B<sub>3</sub>**, . . . . In addition to clarifying this existentialist idea, I also argued that existentialist idea **A** is true/false because **reason 1** and **reason 2**.