

Date updated: 1/8/2025

Syllabus

The University of New Orleans

Dept. of Philosophy

PHIL 3511: Existentialism (3 credits)

SECTION P001: M/W 12:30-1:45

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Sara Bizarro
Office: LA 107
Office Hours: M-F: 3-5 pm – [By appointment on Calendly](#) (in person/on zoom)
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Required Texts

Marino, Gordon, *Basic Writings of Existentialism*, Modern Library Classics, 2004 | ISBN: 9780375759895
Marino, Gordo, *The Existentialist's Survival Guide, How to Live Authentically in an Inauthentic Age*, Harper Collins, 2018 | ISBN 9870062436009
Other recommended books: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*; Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*; Sartre, *Existentialism is Humanism*; Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*; Sartre, *No Exit*; Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Camus, *The Plague*; Camus, *The Stranger*; Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: A careful examination of the views of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and other thinkers associated with one of the 20th Century's most widely influential philosophies.

COURSE OVERVIEW: In this class, we will explore Existentialism, a philosophy that is focused on human existence, freedom, meaning, and authenticity in life. Existentialism is a philosophy that looks for meaning in our existence, in our everyday life, mostly considering that there is no external God to create meaning nor an after-life. For this reason, it focuses on our lived experience and on our ability to choose what we do with our lives. Jean-Paul Sartre said we are "condemned to be free," free to create our own meaning, which is both a good and desirable state, but also leads to anxiety and responsibility. We will read philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. We will also read works by Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. The required coursebook will be Marino's anthology, *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. It includes most of our readings, but extra readings will be provided. This class is discussion-based, and we will have several "existentialism-inspired activities." Students will be encouraged to engage critically with the ideas proposed by existentialists and to develop their own vision of a good and authentic life, as well as reflect on freedom, morality, and the human condition.

Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify key Existentialist philosophers and texts.
- Explain what is typical of the existentialist stance and how it is similar or different from other philosophical reflections.
- Describe the views of key existentialist philosophers such as Sartre, Camus, and De Beauvoir.
- Use reasoning skills to analyze and evaluate existentialist proposals.
- Discuss and contrast the views of different existentialist philosophers.

Grades

Grades will be based on a 100 percent scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
Perusall Reading Assignments	20		
Discussions	20	A	100 – 90
Quizzes	20	B	89 – 80
Midterm and Final Exams	20	C	79 – 70
Final Project	20	D	69 – 60
Total	100	F	59 – 0

*Grades over .5 will be rounded up, so 89.5 will be rounded up to 90.

LATE WORK: Reading assignments and discussions can be submitted up to 10 days. Perusall assignments have a penalty that increases gradually as more days pass, up to a maximum of 10 days. After those 10 days extensions will only be granted in extreme and documented circumstances. In most cases no extensions will be granted. Quizzes must be taken or executed on before the due date. If you have a situation that you believe is an extenuating circumstance, you can only ask for consideration with written documentation. If you encounter any unexpected circumstances make sure to document it, as extensions will not be granted without documentation.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic honesty is essential for learning, evaluating academic performance, and the entire educational function of a University. For this reason, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. The student code is available on Moodle and online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>. Each student is required to pledge that all completed work will be submitted according to the principles of academic integrity as defined in the statement on Academic Dishonesty in the UNO Student Code of Conduct.

AI USE: Any and all AI use needs to be explicitly acknowledged and detailed in a note on your work at the end of each assignment where AI was used in any way. AI can be used to research and brainstorm, but it is NOT acceptable to submit anything written by AI, that is **you** need to write all your written submissions yourself, in any written work you submit. Please note that Perusall warns me of any comment that is copy/pasted so you need to type or dictate directly on the program. Please check your work with Chat GPT Zero if you want to make sure your text is not showing up as AI-created. Anything that shows up as AI-created will need to be re-written and an oral presentation of the topic in my office will be required. You can check Chat GPT Zero here: <https://gptzero.me/>

READINGS: Students will be expected to keep up on the weekly readings, reading assignments on Perusall (more information about this on Canvas.) All required readings will be posted on Canvas. The course book is useful for the final project, but all the material is posted and there is no need to purchase any course books for this class. You will need to pay a \$5 fee to use Perusall. Readings need to be completed within 10 days of the due date, and if after the due date they have 20% penalty. After the 10 days the reading/discussion post will no longer be graded.

DISCUSSIONS: Discussions will happen also on Discussion Boards on Canvas. We will also have optional discussions with both an in-person and online component; these will not count for the grade since this is an online asynchronous class, any live events are entirely optional. All the important information will be posted on canvas.

QUIZZES: There are weekly quizzes to make sure you are following along with the material presented. Quizzes are at the end of each folder, they have 5 questions regarding the topics of the week and two attempts. Quizzes need to be taken in the week we are on with a 10 day extension and a 20% late penalty. If quizzes are missed, they will have a zero.

EXAMS: There are two exams that need to be taken with Respondus Lockdown Browser. They are open book and consist of several multiple-choice questions that may or may not have appeared in the previous quizzes and one long-form essay question. Possible essay questions will be shared in advance so the students can prepare.

FINAL PROJECT: The final project can be an essay, a film, a piece of music, or a painting. Any artistic project should be accompanied with an explanation of how the project is inspired by Wittgenstein. There are many artists that were inspired by Wittgenstein to create art, and examples will be posted throughout the course.

CONTENT NOTICE/TRIGGER WARNING: This is a philosophy class, there are topics that may be problematic for some students, for instance, questioning if reality exists, discussing arguments for the existence of God, discussing solipsism (the idea that I alone exist) and questions about life, death, and suicide may be discussed as well. Please be advised that I am not a mental health professional and anything in the class that affects you should be discussed directly with the professionals that support you and I cannot give mental health advice to students.

Course Policies

INCOMPLETES: Incompletes are only granted in extreme and documented extenuating circumstances and must be discussed and arranged well before the last class meeting. If a student asks for an incomplete at the end of the course, it will be denied, unless there are extreme and documented medical or other severe circumstances. If your situation is not documented, you need to find a way to officially confirm the reason why you are asking for an incomplete.

WITHDRAWALS: Check the academic calendar for withdrawal dates. You do not need to tell me anything, you can withdraw within the University rules. I understand that life happens and sometimes it is not the right time to take a class. You can always return to it the following semester.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodation. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: Please remember that both the Library and Learning Resource Center are available to assist all students regarding writing and research.

PHIL 3500 – Online - Spring 2025 Timeline

(subject to revision, test dates and Exam dates TBA)

DAY	TOPIC/READING
Week 1	<p>What is Existentialism? Hegel and Kierkegaard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief introduction to existentialism. Hegel and Kierkegaard. • Required Readings: <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism, 7-23</i> <i>Selections from Fear and Trembling</i> • Can't Get Enough? Read <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism, Problema II, 24-39</i>
Week 2	

	<p>Kierkegaard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kierkegaard as the first existentialist. • The teleological suspension of the ethical. • The concept of anxiety • Kierkegaard as the first existentialist. • Required Reading: <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, From the Sickness Unto Death, A and B, p.41-57 • Can't Get Enough? <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, From the Sickness Unto Death, C. <i>Either/Or</i>, Selections from Part 1 and Part 2
<p>Week 3 & 4</p>	<p>Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consciousness and self-awareness in Dostoyevsky's <i>Notes from the Underground</i> • Death and authenticity in Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych." • Required Reading: Dostoyevsky, <i>Notes From the Underground</i>, Part 1. Tolstoy, "Death of Ivan Ilych." • Can't Get Enough? <i>Notes From the Underground</i>, Part 2 <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>, "The Grand Inquisitor."
<p>Week 5 & 6</p>	<p>Nietzsche</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master and Slave Morality • The Death of God • On the Genealogy of Morals • Required Reading: Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals. <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, Nietzsche, The Gay Science, First Essay, p.111-144 • Can't Get Enough? <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Second Essay, 145-192
<p>Week 7</p>	<p>Husserl & Heidegger</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husserl's Phenomenology • Heidegger's Being in Time • Required Reading: Heidegger, "Exposition of the Task of a Preparatory Analysis of Dasein." <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, Heidegger, Being and Time, "The Possible Being-a-Whole of Da-sein and Being Toward-Death, p. 299-336

	Mid-Term Exam
Week 8	<p>Sartre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sartre’s being-in-itself and being-for-itself. • Bad Faith • Self-Negation, the Other • Required Reading: <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism, Sartre, Being and Nothingness, “Self-Negation.”</i> • Can’t Get Enough? <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism, Sartre, Being and Nothingness, “The Encounter with the Other”, p. 391-409</i>
Week 9	<p>Sartre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absurdity and Radical Freedom. • Required Reading: <i>Sartre, Nausea</i>
Week 10	<p>Sartre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence precedes Essence. • Freedom and personal responsibility. • Creating meaning through authentic action. • Required Reading: <i>Sartre, Existentialism is Humanism (selections)</i>
Week 11	<p>De Beauvoir</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ethics of Ambiguity • Required Reading: <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism, De Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity, “Ambiguity”, p. 413-439</i>
Week 12	<p>De Beauvoir</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women as the “Other” • The construction of femininity. • Shaping women’s identity through personal choice.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required Reading: Simone De Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>, "Author's Introduction." • Can't Get Enough? Simone De Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>
Week 13	<p>Camus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alienation and Death. • Authenticity. • Required Reading: Camus, <i>The Stranger</i>
Week 14	<p>Camus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absurdism and meaning. • Embracing the absurd and life. • Required Reading: <i>Basic Writings of Existentialism</i>, Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>, "An Absurd Reasoning" and "The Myth of Sisyphus," p 441-494
Week 15	Presentations
Exam	Final Exam