

Existentialism

Philosophy 303 (CRN 12245)

Fall 2013

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to existentialism as a philosophical movement critical of the predominance of Hellenic philosophy within the Western tradition. Paper assignments allow students to offer philosophical interpretations of the works we read as well as to explore the concepts of the philosophy in more depth.

This course will emphasize improvement in critical thinking and effective communication, two of Winthrop's University-Level Competencies that all graduates are to attain. To that end, several assignments will be designed to participate in our department's Critical Thinking Initiative (CTI) and our Effective Communication Initiative (ECI). These assignments along with the final research project will be so designated on the syllabus, and this year I will be especially targeting the logical rigor of student writing.

The course is worth three (3) credit hours, and it fulfills the Humanities & Arts requirement in General Education. Any subsequent changes to this syllabus will be announced in class if minor, or else distributed in writing.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES, METHODS, & ASSESSMENT MEASURES IN PHIL 303

This course is designed to achieve the following student learning outcomes. For each student learning outcome (SLO), there is a method for achieving it and an assessment procedure for measuring it.

SLO 1: Engage in reasoned inquiry and self-reflection regarding the various values, beliefs, attitudes, and habits that define the nature and quality of life.

Method: Read material thoroughly and think critically in order to make connections between the material and your own understanding of the ultimates of life.

Assessment: Students will take periodic quizzes on the reading ensure comprehension of the basic ideas. More in-depth writing assignments will gauge their understanding of intertextual nature of the ideas in the course and their implications for lived value systems.

SLO 2: Model reflective participation in a learning community by learning to communicate with others effectively in speech and writing.

Method: Share your reactions and understanding of philosophical issues with your classmates and learn to understand other perspectives by listening carefully and communicating clearly in class discussion and written assignments.

Assessment: Students are expected to display their engagement with the ideas in the course on a daily basis in class and will be judged for the quality of their participation in class discussions. Furthermore, students will be asked on occasion to lead discussion and to offer oral summaries of the daily reading. These assignments will be assessed as part of their grade in the course.

SLO 3: Recognize the constructed nature of knowledge, i.e., the way in which knowledge arises from a diversity of perspectives.

Method: Learn to identify multiple perspectives on life issues and then engage this diversity of perspectives by dialectically taking ownership of them as possible viewpoints within yourself.

Assessment: Students will apply their developing understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge through examination of the key theme of this course: human freedom. As the students come to understand the intricacies of this theme, they will be asked to explain it in written and oral forms throughout the course.

SLO 4: To understand aesthetic values, the creative process, and the interconnectedness of philosophical thought and artistic vision.

Method: Think about and discuss the relation of cinematographic artworks to various existential themes.

Assessment: Students will offer analyses of the films in this course both orally and in writing. After each film, some students will lead class discussion about it, and all students will perform a short writing exercise as a quiz about the film's connections to the philosophical texts of the course.

PHIL 303 AND UNIVERSITY-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

PHIL 303 is part of the Touchstone Program, Winthrop University's distinctive approach to general education. Thus, PHIL 303 helps students make progress toward the following University-Level Competencies.

Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems.

Winthrop University graduates reason logically, evaluate and use evidence, and solve problems. They seek out and assess relevant information from multiple viewpoints to form well-reasoned conclusions. Winthrop graduates consider the full context and consequences of their decisions and continually reexamine their own critical thinking process, including the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

Method: The course requires critical thinking about the nature of personhood and responsibility, and it involves careful reading and rigorous writing about complex philosophical positions.

Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible.

Winthrop University graduates value integrity, perceive moral dimensions, and achieve excellence. They take seriously the perspectives of others, practice ethical reasoning, and reflect on experiences. Winthrop graduates have a sense of responsibility to the broader community and contribute to the greater good.

Method: The course encourages thinking about the nature of responsibility itself and encourages students to treat this exercise as more than a conceptual one; rather, students examine the lived experience of their values.

Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively.

Winthrop University graduates communicate in a manner appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience. They create texts – including but not limited to written, oral, and visual presentations – that convey content effectively. Mindful of their voice and the impact of their communication, Winthrop graduates successfully express and exchange ideas.

Method: The course requires three papers, active class discussion, and numerous reading assignments. The instructor makes an effort to comment on the effectiveness of students' communication in all of these endeavors.

TEXTS

In Bookstore:

1. Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom (editors), *Existentialism: Basic Writings* (2nd Ed.)

Electronic Texts:

2. Nietzsche, excerpts from selected works
3. Simone de Beauvoir, "Women's Character and Situation"
4. Simone de Beauvoir, excerpts from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
5. Albert Camus, excerpts from *The Stranger*
6. Jean-Paul Sartre, excerpts from *No Exit*
7. I will also distribute some supplementary readings to help interpret the primary texts.

RECOMMENDED FILMS

1. *Babette's Feast*
2. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*
3. *Lars and the Real Girl*



EXPECTATIONS OF THE STUDENT

1. **Class Attendance:** Because this class is largely based on discussion and much of the critical "action" occurs in the classroom, your attendance is imperative. Attendance will be taken and is a factor in your class participation grade (about which see below). Absence for a valid reason given in advance is excusable but inadvisable. More than two absences will lower your grade. Fewer than two absences will raise your grade.

2. Class Participation: One principal purpose of this course is to develop the student’s skills in interpreting difficult and ancient texts, in recognizing the influence of religious thought in contemporary contexts, and finally in constructing persuasive and well-reasoned arguments about these issues. Becoming an active participant in discussion, displaying the poised “ready position” of an engaged thinker, and offering your own opinions, questions, and arguments are excellent ways to achieve the purpose of this course. Please note that the instructor understands that some personalities are congenitally disposed to more extraverted and talkative forms than others. Your participation will be judged by your seriousness of attitude as well as prolificacy in speech. This component will be worth 100 points.

3. Papers: Students will write three papers. Each paper will be worth 200 points.

4. Reading Assignments: There will be periodic reading assignments on Blackboard. All together they will be worth 300 points.

GRADING

Participation:	100 points	<u>Grading scale:</u>			
Paper 1:	200 points	930-1000:	A	900-929:	A-
Paper 2:	200 points	870-899:	B+	830-869:	B
Paper 3:	200 points	770-799:	C+	730-769:	C
<u>Assignments:</u>	<u>300 points</u>	670-699:	D+	630-669:	D
TOTAL	1000 points			0-599:	F

PLAGIARISM

Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions against plagiarism (misrepresentation of another person’s work as one’s own) stated in the Student Conduct Code. (See section V. Student Academic Misconduct of the Student Conduct Code in the Student Handbook.) If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic "F" in the course and possible expulsion. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials and the works of others, be sure to consult the instructor. Proper citation procedures are provided in all standard writing manuals. For more information, see the Student Handbook at www.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact Gena Smith, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, at 323-3290, as soon as possible. Once you have your Professor Notification Form, please tell me so that I am aware of your accommodations well before the first {test/paper/assignment}.



DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 1	Introduction to Existentialism	
Tues., Aug. 20	Common Characterizations of Existentialism	Guignon, Introduction (xiii-xxxviii)
Thurs., Aug. 22	Existentialism as Voluntarist Response to Intellectualism	Lecture Notes on Aristotle, Kant, and Philosophical Background
WEEK 2	Responsible Selfhood	
Tues., Aug. 27	Intellectualism and the Ethic of Authentic Interpersonal Relations	Camus, excerpts from <i>The Stranger</i>
Thurs., Aug. 29	Further Discussion of Camus	Camus, excerpts from <i>The Stranger</i>
WEEK 3	Kierkegaard's Critique of Modernity	
Tues., Sept. 3	Kierkegaard's Analysis of Defining Relations: Love of Another as Analogy for Faith	Introduction to Kierkegaard [Guignon, pp. 1-17]
Thurs., Sept. 5	Attempts to Begin to Understand Abraham's Faith	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preface • A Panegyric upon Abraham • Problemata: Preliminary Expetoration [Guignon, pp. 26-55]
WEEK 4	Kierkegaard: Faith and Ethics	
Tues., Sept. 10	Teleological Suspension of the Ethical & Absolute Duty	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem I [Guignon, pp. 55-66] • Problem II [Guignon, pp. 66-77]
Thurs., Sept. 12	Johannes Climacus and the Concept of Subjective Truth	<i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> [Guignon, pp. 85-92]
WEEK 5	Nietzsche and Religion	
Tues., Sept. 17	First Assignment	Kierkegaard Paper (CTI and ECI)
Thurs., Sept. 19	Nietzsche's Early Dualism: The Apollonian and Dionysian	Nietzsche Introduction [Guignon, pp. 93-118] <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> [Guignon, pp. 119-122]
WEEK 6	Nietzsche and the Übermensch	
Tues., Sept. 24	Deconstructing Accountability	<i>The Gay Science</i> [Guignon, pp. 123-163]
Thurs., Sept. 26	Nietzsche's Free Spirit	<i>The Gay Science</i> [Guignon, pp. 163-171]
WEEK 7	Critique of Sick Societies	
Tues., Oct. 1	Nietzsche's Critique of a Sick Society	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i> [Guignon, pp. 172-181]
Thurs., Oct. 3	Nietzsche on Morality	Excerpts from <i>Human, All Too Human</i> ; <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> ; <i>The AntiChrist</i> ; <i>Ecce Homo</i> ; <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
WEEK 8	Concluding Nietzsche	
Tues., Oct. 8	Final Discussion	
Thurs., Oct. 10	Second Assignment	Nietzsche Paper (CTI and ECI)

WEEK 9	Heidegger's Critique of Husserl and His Concept of Being in the World	
Tues., Oct. 15	FALL BREAK	No class
Thurs., Oct. 17	Being and Beings: The Ontological Difference	Heidegger Introduction [Guignon, pp. 183-210]
Week 10	Heidegger Critique of Modernity	
Tues., Oct. 22	Experience of Disruption as Revealing Our Situation in the World	<i>Being and Time</i> [Guignon, pp. 211-230]
Thurs., Oct. 24	Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity	<i>Being and Time</i> [Guignon, pp. 230-254]
WEEK 11	Concluding Heidegger	
Tues., Oct. 29	Final Discussion	
Thurs., Oct. 31	Third Assignment	Heidegger Assignment (CTI & ECI)
WEEK 12	Sartre	
Tues., Nov. 5	Relations to Others and Bad Faith	<i>No Exit</i> (excerpts)
Thurs., Nov. 7	Sartre's Concept of Existentialism	"The Humanism of Existentialism" [Guignon, pp. 290-308] Sartre Introduction [Guignon, pp. 255-275]
WEEK 13	Sartre's Reinterpretation of Authenticity: Radical Choice and Bad Faith	
Tues., Nov. 12	Sartre's Facticity and Freedom	<i>Being and Nothingness</i> [Guignon, pp. 309-331]
Thurs., Nov. 14	Bad Faith; Freedom and Responsibility	<i>Being and Nothingness</i> [Guignon, pp. 331-359]
WEEK 14	Simone de Beauvoir	
Tues., Nov. 19	Ethics of Ambiguity	Simone de Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity (excerpts)
Thurs., Nov. 21	Contextualized Subjectivity	"Women's Situation and Character" [electronic reading]
WEEK 15	Thanksgiving Week	
Tues., Nov. 26	Final Discussion	
Thurs., Nov. 28	Thanksgiving	No class
FINAL PAPER	Thursday, Dec. 5 11:30 AM	Final Paper (CTI & ECI)