Philosophy 232: Intro to Existentialism [DRAFT]
UW-Milwaukee, spring 2020
TTH 9:30-10:45 Curtin 109

Instructor: Bill Bristow, Curtin 616, bristow@uwm.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays, 11-1pm (or by appointment)

Course description:
This course is an introduction to Existentialism, a philosophical and cultural movement that flourished particularly in the post-war period in Europe and the United States, but which is grounded in the writings of nineteenth century thinkers, such as Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Course objectives:
-- students will become familiar with the main themes of existentialist thought, with the main varieties of existentialist thought, with some of the tensions within existentialist thought.
-- students will improve their capacities for critical reading (interpretation and analysis), critical thinking, argument construction and analytical writing.

NB: Because this course confers general education humanities credit, we will focus particularly on fundamental skills of humanistic education and inquiry: in particular, argument analysis and construction, critical thinking, clear, argument-based expository writing and cultural literacy. These skills will be assessed in the writing that is required of students throughout the term.

Texts:
NB: The two texts below are available for purchase through campus bookstore

https://uwm.ecampus.com/

Many course readings will be made available through the course website on Canvas.

Course requirements and workload:
-- Preparation for, attendance of, and participation in class meetings.

NB: More than three unexcused absences results in a failing grade for course.
-- weekly quizzes on reading/ viewing
-- three essays (one ca 1000 words, two ca. 1500 words) (due at the end of the 4th, 9th and 15th weeks)
-- Final Examination (cumulative)

Workload: The general expectation is that students will devote two hours in reading, study, and writing outside of class for every hour in class. This amounts to a time
commitment for this course of roughly between 8 and 9 hours total per week. Of course some weeks will require less and others more. The student who devotes this much time over the course of the semester (a total of about 144 hours, including classtime) will likely do well in the course and achieve its learning goals.

**Final Grade Breakdown:**
- Attendance and participation 10%
- Weekly quizzes on reading 10%
- Four 3-4 page papers 50%
- Final examination 30%

**Course Procedures:**
- If you will need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course because of a disability, please don’t hesitate to let me know, preferably as soon as possible. In that case, you should also contact the Accessibility Resource Center at 229-6287.
- If religious observances in your faith conflict with some of the requirements of this course, I will make every effort to accommodate you, but please let me know of the conflict as soon as possible.
- Plagiarism is a serious violation of the academic honor code and can carry severe sanctions, including failure of the course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes academic misconduct, please don’t hesitate to ask.

**Schedule of Class Meetings** (subject to change):

**Week One (Jan. 21, 23): Introduction to Existentialism**

**Week Two (Jan. 28, 30): Sartre, “Existentialism as a Humanism”**
Reading: Sartre, “Existentialism as a Humanism” in *EBW*, pp. 290-308.

**Week Three (Feb. 4, 6): Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche 1**
Reading: Schopenhauer selection an excerpt from *World as Will and Representation* (made available on Canvas); Nietzsche selection an excerpt from *The Birth of Tragedy* (also made available on Canvas).

Essay #1 (3 pp.) assigned Tuesday, Feb. 4.

**Week Four (Feb. 11, 13): Friedrich Nietzsche 2**
**Reading:** From *The Gay Science*, pp. 123-171 of *EBW* (selections from *GS*, pp. 155-166 optional).

**Essay #1 (3pp.) due Saturday, Feb. 15.**

**Week Five** (Feb. 18, 20): Leo Tolstoy’s *A Confession*
**Reading:** Leo Tolstoy’s *A Confession* (made available on D2L).

**Week Six** (Feb. 25, 27): Søren Kierkegaard 1
**Reading:** From *Fear and Trembling*, in *EBW*, pp. 26-66.
**NB:** Problem II, *EBW*, pp. 66-77, is optional

**Week Seven** (March 3, 5): Søren Kierkegaard 2
**Reading:** From *The Sickness Unto Death*, in *EBW*, pp. 78-84; and from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 85-92.

**Essay #2 (ca. 1500 words) assigned Thursday**

**Week Eight** (March 10, 12): Ingmar Bergman’s film *The Seventh Seal*

Week of March 16, Spring Break, no classes.

**Week Nine** (March 24, 26): Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 1
**Reading:** From *Being and Nothingness*, in *EBW*, pp. 309-328.

**Essay #2 (ca. 1500 words) due Saturday**

Week of March 21

**Week Ten** (March 31, April 2): Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 2
**Reading:** From *Being and Nothingness*, in *EBW*, pp. 328-362.

**Week Eleven** (April 7, 9): Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
**Reading:** From *The Second Sex* (selections online).

**Week Twelve:** (April 14, 16): Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
**Reading:** de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
[NB: I've integrated the shortened Thanksgiving week (Nov. 24, 25) into Week/Section Twelve, to give us all a breather and a chance to catch up and reload for the final push. There are no new assignments for Thanksgiving week, except that I do assign the final essay, to give you a chance to get started on it. Therefore I count the last two weeks of the semester as Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen (rather than as Fourteen and Fifteen).]

Essay #3 (ca. 1500 words) assigned Friday

**Week Thirteen** (April 21, 23): Albert Camus, *The Stranger*
   **Reading:** *The Stranger*

**Week Fourteen** (April 28, 30): Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
   **Reading:** From *The Myth of Sisyphus* (selections online)

**Week Fifteen** (May 5, 7): Jean-Luc Godard’s film *Breathless*

   **Essay #3 due Monday**

   **Final Examination:** TBA