

## ENGL 4399: Senior Seminar: Existentialism, or, The Projects of Our Lives Spring 2017

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**Office Hours:** TR 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., and by appointment  
**Section Information:** ENGL 4399-001  
**Place and Time of Class Meetings:** 201 Carlisle Hall / TR 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

### Course Description

According to Walter Kaufmann, "Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy"; although embodying "a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in past," it has only since the mid-nineteenth century "hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation." Kaufmann believes that the core of existentialism is comprised of "[t]he refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life." But when all schools of thought are overthrown, what remains for the individual confronted with the sensation of being "abandoned" in a possibly meaningless world and plagued with the manifold problems that attend daily life, if not doubt intensifying into anxiety and then anxiety intensifying into dread? Maybe, for those strong enough and honest enough to weather the maelstrom intact, what remains is precisely nothing (or *no-thing*) at all but the seemingly paradoxical freedom and necessity to think and act—not in ways that confirm for ourselves that what we *are* (our "existence") is what we *must be* (our "essence," whether determined by God, nature, or society), but in ways that unsettle what we *have been*—because what we *always are*, from birth until death, is a *continuing, future-oriented project* constituted by successive choices for which we alone are responsible. As Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote, rather than our essence preceding our existence, our existence precedes our essence: "Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives of himself only after he exists, just as he wills himself to be after being thrown into existence, man is nothing other than what he makes of himself." The goal of this course will be to consider, then, what "existentialism" has meant, what it means now, and, perhaps most importantly, what it might yet mean for each of us in the ongoing projects that are our lives; to do so, we will engage in exploratory study of the varied existentialisms—both philosophical and literary—of, among others, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Kafka, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- employ proper grammar, punctuation, spelling in writing
- employ standard MLA or APA guidelines for formatting assignments and citations
- write with clarity to communicate effectively with scholars interested in critical theory
- respond critically to course material, using synthesis and analysis
- assimilate existing information to formulate new ideas
- express ideas or arguments in oral form
- develop active listening skills including paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas expressed in class
- develop methods and strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts
- evaluate an oral, visual, or written argument for sound or faulty (fallacious) reasoning
- compare and contrast major themes, issues, or topics in more than one text
- respond critically to the writing of others in primary and secondary sources
- create and edit documents using word processing or other computer programs
- explain the major themes and/or philosophical tenets of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Kafka, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir

### Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials

- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. 1947. Translated by Bernard Frechtman, Philosophical Library/Open Road, 2015. [ISBN: 978-1480442801]
- Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. 1942. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage, 1991. [ISBN: 978-0679733737]
- Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. 1925. Translated by Mike Mitchell, Oxford UP, 2009. [ISBN: 978-0199238293]
- Kaufmann, Walter, editor. *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*. 1956. Plume, 1975. [ISBN: 978-0452009301]
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*. 1883-85. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics, 1961. [ISBN: 978-0140441185]
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*. 1889/1895. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics, 1990. [ISBN: 978-0140445145]
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*. 1938. Translated by Lloyd Alexander, New Directions, 2013. [ISBN: 978-0811220309]

## Major Assignments

The major assignments for 4399 are as follows: a shorter discussion facilitation (20 minutes); a longer discussion facilitation (40 minutes); a position paper (approximately 4-5 pages); and a course project (approximately 20-25 pages). A separate handout describes these assignments in detail.

## Grading Policy

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Shorter Discussion Facilitation	10%
Longer Discussion Facilitation	15%
Position Paper	25%
Course Project	50%

*A grade of "Incomplete" will be assigned only under documented cases of extreme medical, family, or personal emergency; in all cases, the incomplete must be resolved by the start of the next 15-week semester or else the grade will be changed automatically to an "F."*

## Attendance Policy

At UT Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. **As the instructor of this section, I require attendance and active participation.** You are allowed **four** absences without penalty; each subsequent absence will result in a **1% deduction from your final course grade**. A sign-in sheet will be distributed at the start of class: if you are in the classroom by the time the sheet makes its way back to me, you are counted present; if you arrive by 10:00 a.m., you will be allowed to sign the sheet but counted as late (half-absence); if you arrive later than 10:00 a.m., you will be counted as absent.

However, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients "begin attendance in a course." UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

## Schedule of Assignments

1/17	Introduction to the course
1/19	Kierkegaard, "The First Existentialist," Preface and Sections 1 through 5 [found in Kaufmann, <i>Existentialism</i> , pp. 83-105]
1/24	Kierkegaard, "The First Existentialist," Sections 6 and 7 [found in Kaufmann, <i>Existentialism</i> , pp. 105-120]
1/26	Rilke, "The Notes of Malte Laurids Brigge" [found in Kaufmann, <i>Existentialism</i> , pp. 134-141] Ortega, "Man Has No Nature" [found in Kaufmann, <i>Existentialism</i> , pp. 152-157]
1/31	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "Zarathustra's Prologue" through "Of the New Idol," pp. 39-78
2/2	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "Of the Flies of the Market-place" through "Of the Bestowing Virtue," pp. 78-104
2/7	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "The Child with the Mirror" through "The Funeral Song," pp. 107-136
2/9	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "Of Self-Overcoming" through "The stillest Hour," pp. 136-169
2/14	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "The Wanderer" through "The Home-Coming," pp. 173-205
2/16	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "Of the Three Evil Things" through "The Seven Seals," pp. 205-247
2/21	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "The Honey Offering" through "The Last Supper," pp. 251-296
2/23	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , "Of the Higher Man" through "The Sign," pp. 296-336
2/28	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , "Foreword" through "What the Germans Lack," pp. 31-77
3/2	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , "Expeditions of an Untimely Man" through "The Hammer Speaks," pp. 78-122

- 3/7 Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, sections 1 through 38, pp. 123-162
- 3/9 Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, sections 39 through 62, pp. 163-199
- 3/14 Spring break
- 3/16 Spring break
- 3/21 Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" (excluding the "Postscript") [found in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pp. 242-257]
- 3/23 Heidegger, the "Postscript" to "What Is Metaphysics?" [found in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pp. 257-264]
- 3/28 Kafka, *The Trial*, "The Arrest" through "The First Hearing," pp. 5-39
- 3/30 Kafka, *The Trial*, "In the Empty Conference Hall · The Student · The Offices" through "The Lawyer · The Factory-Owner · The Painter," pp. 40-118
- 4/4 Kafka, *The Trial*, "Block, the Corn Merchant · The Dismissal of the Lawyer" through "The End," pp. 119-165
- 4/6 Sartre, *Nausea*, "Editor's Note" through "Tuesday," pp. 1-103
- 4/11 Sartre, *Nausea*, "Wednesday" through "One Hour Later," pp. 103-178
- 4/13 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, "An Absurd Reasoning"
- 4/18 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, "The Absurd Man"
- 4/20 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, "Absurd Creation"
- 4/25 Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism" [found in Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, pp. 345-369]
- 4/27 Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, "Ambiguity and Freedom"
- 5/2 Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, "Personal Freedom and Others"
- 5/4 Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity" and "Conclusion"

The course project must be emailed to me no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

### Miscellaneous Policies

**Classroom Decorum:** I treat students with utmost respect and courtesy; when teaching, conferencing, and grading, you and your work will have my full attention. In return, I ask the same from all of you: Please turn off and put away all smartphones, books from other classes, etc. You may use a laptop or tablet for the purposes of our course so long as you are mindful enough not to disturb the students around you.

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code in their courses by having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>.

**Library & Research Assistance:** University-level research requires university-level sources. Contact the Library for personalized help in navigating research resources and locating the sources you need.

- **Librarian:** Your librarian is **Diane Shepelwich**, [dianec@uta.edu](mailto:dianec@uta.edu). If you need help getting started with your research or have questions along the way, contact Diane for personalized assistance.
- **Research Coach:** Research Coaches are UT Arlington students trained to help you frame your research questions, develop search strategies, understand citation styles, and select and evaluate relevant resources, <http://libguides.uta.edu/researchcoach>.
- **Library Staff:** Find library staff at the Service Zone, Central Library first floor, or at the branch libraries, by phone at 817-272-3395, by text at 817-727-8395, email at [AskUs@uta.edu](mailto:AskUs@uta.edu), or chat on the library's homepage, <http://library.uta.edu/>.
- **Research Consultation:** To set an appointment with your librarian or research coach, visit <http://library.uta.edu/form/appointment-request-form>.
- **Research Guides:** For a list of useful guides to help you start your research, visit: <http://libguides.uta.edu/>.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, will assist you with any writing assignment while you are a student at UT Arlington. You may schedule appointments by calling 817-272-2601, by following directions listed at [www.uta.edu/owl/appointments](http://www.uta.edu/owl/appointments), or by visiting the Writing Center. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as tutors become available. Writing Center tutors are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; tutors will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you learn to solve your grammatical and organizational problems.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](#), [major-based learning centers](#), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](#), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

**Disability Accommodations:** UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a **letter certified** by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) online ([www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability)) or via phone 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability). Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) ([www.uta.edu/caps](http://www.uta.edu/caps)) / 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** UT Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/eos](http://www.uta.edu/eos).

**Title IX Policy:** UT Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](mailto:jmhood@uta.edu).

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aoi/faq/>).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" are directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students' anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law and aggregate results are posted online. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** for semester-long courses, a period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**Emergency Phone Numbers:** [Optional but strongly recommended] In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at 817-272-3003 (non-campus phone), 2-3003 (campus phone). You may also dial 911. The non-emergency number is 817-272-3381.