

## Topics in the History of Philosophy: Existentialism

PHIL 4388-002 (and 5392-002)

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Williford

Meeting Time: M & W 4:00-5:20

Meeting Place: Preston Hall (PH) 302

Office and Office Hours: 305 Carlisle Hall

Tu & Th 2:00-3:30PM & by appointment

### Faculty Profile

<https://www.uta.edu/profiles/kenneth-williford>

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*Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*  
Caspar David Friedrich, 1818

### Course Description

This course is an advanced survey of existential philosophy (Existentialism), a major 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical movement with a considerable influence on the wider culture (including literature, art, film, psychoanalysis, and theology). Existentialism has roots in the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophers and writers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky as well as roots in the 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl. After considering this background, we will focus on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose work is indispensable to an understanding of Existentialism even though he himself disavowed the label, and, above all, the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, who embraced and popularized the “existentialist” moniker and systematized Existentialism in his 1943 tome, *Being and Nothingness*. Philosophical themes of focus include these: consciousness, self-consciousness, personality and personhood, the self, lived experience, negation, subjectivity vs. objectivity, temporality, freedom, responsibility, the individual vs. society, intersubjectivity, sexual ethics, embodiment, contingency, absurdity, despair, meaning, commitment, resistance, rebellion, authenticity, bad faith, suicide, and death. Along the way, we will also discuss the work of G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Henri Bergson, Karl Jaspers, José Ortega y Gasset, Alexandre Kojève, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, and Albert Camus. Throughout the course we will be discussing the historical impact of Existentialism, raising questions about its contemporary cultural and philosophical relevance, and considering its specific analyses (of consciousness, intersubjectivity, value, etc.) in the light of present-day philosophical approaches and preoccupations, both “Analytic” and “Continental”.

**Prerequisites:** No formal prerequisites, but a willingness to read difficult texts and think hard will help!

### Student Learning Outcomes

Students who attend all classes and study properly will: (1) understand and be able to articulate the main views of existential philosophers; (2) have a broad understanding and be able to discuss coherently the history of Existentialism and its influence; (3) understand and be able to communicate clearly the main arguments for and against the theses of existential philosophers; (4) demonstrate competency in oral and written communication; and (5) work effectively in an open dialogical environment.

## Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials

The following texts are all available at the UTA Bookstore.

- (1) *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger (Stambaugh translation, preferably the revised edition)
- (2) *Being and Nothingness* by Jean-Paul Sartre
- (3) *The Transcendence of the Ego* by Jean-Paul Sartre (Brown translation)
- (4) *Existentialism is a Humanism* by Jean-Paul Sartre (Macomber translation)
- (5) *Heidegger's Being and Time: An Introduction* by Paul Gerner

All other *required* reading material for this course will be provided by the instructor. The material will be posted on Blackboard; consult the Schedule below.

## Evaluation

Evaluation: Attendance, Participation, Quizzes, Two Exams, Two (3-5 page) Argumentative Papers

- (1) Attendance, participation, and quizzes (20%)
- (2) Take-home midterm exam (20%)
- (3) Final exam (20%)
- (4) 3-5 page argumentative papers (40%—20% each)

### *Attendance and Participation*

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, 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 will take attendance everyday. A student may have up to three unexcused absences without this affecting his or her grade adversely. Participation will be noted.

### *Quizzes*

There will be frequent but small quizzes over the reading material. There will be a quiz almost every week. **Quizzes will be posted on Blackboard and should be turned in on Blackboard as well.** At the end of the semester the cumulative quiz average will be combined with attendance and participation grades to yield 20% of the final grade.

### *Take-Home Midterm Exam*

Around midterm, there will be a take-home examination consisting of two essay questions and some short-answer questions. Answers will need to be typed, double-spaced, and in a 12-point font with reasonable margins. In order to answer the questions adequately, the student will need to be familiar with the reading and lecture material. It will count for 20% of the final grade. More information concerning expectations and evaluation criteria will be provided later. **The exam is to be turned in through Blackboard.**

### *Final Exam*

There will be an in-class final exam on the scheduled final exam day and time (**Wednesday, December 16 from 2:00-4:30PM in 302 Preston Hall**), so do plan accordingly. The final will contain several short answer questions and one or two essay questions. The final will be cumulative and will count for 20% of your grade. More details about the final will be given at the appropriate time.

### *Argumentative Papers*

Each student will write two 3-5-page argumentative papers. Each paper will count for 20% of your final grade. Details about my expectations for the papers will be given in class.

## **IMPORTANT POLICIES OF MINE**

**Late Work:** All late work will be docked a full letter grade for every day that it is late.

**Laptops and Phones:** In my class I do not allow students to use laptops, smartphones, or other electronic devices without special permission. Any note taking must be done the old fashioned way. However, since recordings of all lectures and any Power Point slides used will be posted on Blackboard, students are discouraged from taking handwritten notes while in class. There is neuroscientific evidence that attempting to write while listening actually impedes understanding. Students are encouraged to listen and ask questions and write sparingly.

**Homework for Other Courses:** Students are not allowed to read for or do homework for other courses while in my class.

**Incompletes:** I will not give a student a grade of Incomplete (I), unless he or she has a compelling, and documented, reason (e.g., a medical emergency).

**Plagiarism:** No student should have any doubt about what counts as plagiarism. I will assume that every student in this class has seen this tutorial provided by the UTA library and have taken the quiz embedded in it: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. All cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Office of Student Conduct.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES & OTHER USEFUL PIECES OF INFORMATION**

**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://wweb.uta.edu/ao/fao/>).

**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 \(OSD\)](#). 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) [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364.

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. 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) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** *The University of Texas at 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 [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos). For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course 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 as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) 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.

**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 [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**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 even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be 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 enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** 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.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR):** Hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am to 3 pm Fridays and Noon to 5 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Walk In Quick Hits sessions during all open hours Mon-Thurs. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, Workshops, and advanced services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information.

#### **Library Info:**

Library Home Page	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library">http://www.uta.edu/library</a>
Subject Guides	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu">http://libguides.uta.edu</a>
Subject Librarians	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php">http://www.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php</a>
Library Tutorials	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php">http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php</a>
Connect Off- Campus	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus">http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus</a>
Ask A Librarian	<a href="http://ask.uta.edu">http://ask.uta.edu</a>

**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:** 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. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381

### **Tentative Schedule & Important Dates**

This schedule may be subject to some adjustments as the semester progresses. These will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.

BT=*Being and Time*

HBT=*Heidegger's Being and Time* (by Paul Gornier)

TE=*Transcendence of the Ego*

BN=*Being and Nothingness*

EH=*Existentialism is a Humanism*

All other readings will be posted on Blackboard.

M8/31 Introduction—What is Existentialism?

Ch. 1 of *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*, by David E. Cooper

### **UNIT ONE—Proto-Existentialism (9/2-9/9)**

W9/2 Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

The Kierkegaard selections from *Existentialism* edited by Robert Solomon

M9/7 Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881)

"The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov*

W9/9 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

The Nietzsche selections from *Existentialism* edited by Walter Kaufman

### **UNIT TWO—Heidegger (9/14-10/21)**

M9/14 HBT chs. 1-2, BT Introduction, chs. 1-2

W9/16 HBT ch. 3, BT Division One, chs. 1-2

M9/21 BT Division One, ch. 3

W9/23 HBT ch. 4, BT Division One, ch. 4

M9/28 HBT ch. 5, BT Division One, ch. 5

W9/30 HBT ch. 6, BT Division One, ch. 6

M10/5 HBT ch. 7

W10/7 BT Division Two, ch. 1

M10/12 BT Division Two, ch. 2

W10/14 BT Division Two, ch. 3

M10/19 HBT chs. 8-9

W10/21 BT Division Two, ch. 4

### **UNIT THREE—Sartre (10/26-12/2)**

M10/26 TE Introduction and pp. 1-21

W10/28 TE pp. 21-52

M11/2 BN Introduction: The Pursuit of Being  
W11/4 BN Part One, ch. 2, Bad Faith

**Wednesday, November 4 Last Day to Drop Classes (by 4:00 PM)**

M11/9 BN Part Two, ch. 1, Immediate Structures of the For-Itself, sections I-II  
W11/11 BN Part Two, ch. 1, Immediate Structures of the For-Itself, sections III-V

M11/16 BN Part Three, ch. 1, The Existence of Others, sections I-II  
W11/18 BN Part Three, ch.1, The Existence of Others, sections III-IV

M11/23 BN Part Four, ch. 1, Being and Doing: Freedom, section II, pp. 619-647  
W11/25 BN Part Four, ch. 1, Being and Doing: Freedom, section II, pp. 647-680

**Thursday, November 26 Thanksgiving Day Holiday**

M11/30 BN Part Four, ch. 1, Being and Doing: Freedom, sections II-III, pp. 680-711  
W12/2 BN Part Four, ch. 2, Doing and Having, section I

M12/7 BN Conclusion & EH, pp. 17-44  
W12/9 EH, pp. 44-72

**Wednesday, December 16 from 2:00-4:30PM in 302 Preston Hall, FINAL EXAM**