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PHIL 105.01: Introduction to Existentialism

David Sherman

University of Montana, Missoula, david.sherman@umontana.edu

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EXISTENTIALISM
PHIL 105, SECTION 01 (32888)
JEANNETTE RANKIN HALL, ROOM 202
TR 11:10-12:30
SPRING SEMESTER 2002

Professor: David Sherman
Office: LA 153, ext. 2607
E-Mail: dsherman@selway.umt.edu
Office Hrs: T:12:30-1:30; R 2-3:30 & by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A philosophical and literary movement, existentialism was a reaction to the ascendancy of the scientific paradigm in the modern world, or, to be more precise, "scientism," namely, the universalization of this paradigm. Around the 1600's, science overthrew Christian dogma as that against which all human endeavors were measured, and, concurrently, philosophy increasingly came to see itself in scientific terms. This led to the "objectification" of the world, as is evidenced in Descartes' inauguration of modern philosophy. Ultimately, however, it was Hegel's rationalistic philosophy in the early 1800's that was the proximate cause of existentialism. Hegel's grand, all-encompassing "system," which culminated in "Absolute Knowing," seemingly left nothing out. What became increasingly insignificant in this "totalizing" movement from Descartes to Hegel, however, was the very object of the enlightenment's supposed concern, namely, "the individual."

Although a varied bunch, then, what the existentialists shared was a concern with the fate of the individual in the modern world. We shall begin the course with two short novels and an essay by Camus, which will help frame many of the philosophical issues in the course. We shall then consider the philosophical works of the two most important existential philosophers of the 19th century, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as well as a short literary extract and essay by Dostoyevsky. We shall conclude the course by considering the two most important existential philosophers of the 20th century, Heidegger and Sartre.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Charles Guignon and Derk Pereboom (Eds), *Existentialism: Basic Writings*, Hackett
Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, Random House/Vintage
Albert Camus, *The Fall*, Random House/Vintage
FAC-PAC: Excerpts from: Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*
 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*
 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*
 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

While the readings are difficult, you are only required to read, roughly, 30-40 pages a week. Therefore, carefully read the assigned text both before and after class, and bring the text to class.

Your grade is based on three exams of equal weight. The tests are scheduled for February 28, April 9, and May 15, but I reserve the right to reschedule the first two tests (with one week notice) if we do not move through the materials at a corresponding speed. Unless evidence of emergency or serious illness is provided, make-up tests will not be arranged.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Page numbers refer to *Existentialism: Basic Writings*

WEEK:	READINGS:
Jan 29 Jan 31	Introduction to Existentialism Camus, <i>The Stranger</i>
Feb 5 Feb 7	Camus, <i>The Fall</i> Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
Feb 12 Feb 14	Hegel (19-25) Hegel (FAC-PAC)
Feb 19 Feb 21	Kierkegaard (26-55) Kierkegaard (55-77)
Feb 26 Feb 28	Kierkegaard (78-92) FIRST EXAM
Mar 5 Mar 7	Nietzsche (119-142) Nietzsche (142-148)
Mar 12 Mar 14	Nietzsche (148-160) Nietzsche (160-171)
Mar 19 Mar 21	SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK
Mar 26 Mar 28	Nietzsche (172-181) Nietzsche (FAC-PAC)
Apr 2 Apr 4	Nietzsche (FAC-PAC) Dostoyevsky, <i>Notes from the Underground</i> (FAC-PAC)
Apr 9 Apr 11	Dostoyevsky, <i>The Grand Inquisitor</i> (FAC-PAC) SECOND EXAM
Apr 16 Apr 18	From Husserl to Heidegger Heidegger (211-219)
Apr 23 Apr 25	Heidegger (219-246) Heidegger (246-254)
Apr 30 May 1	Sartre (290-309) Sartre (309-328)
May 6 May 8	Sartre (328-348) Sartre (348-362)
May 15	THIRD EXAM