

Point Loma Nazarene University
EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE
PHL 331
FALL 2015
MW 11:00-12:15

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:45-2:45 or by appointment

PLNU MISSION:

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will engage in the disciplined practice of asking questions about God, the world, and of themselves, including questions for which there may be no easy answers. (Learning, Growing)
2. Students will differentiate among interrelated movements or figures in the history of philosophy. (Learning)
3. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of human reasoning or experience to provide an adequate account of significant issues that relates to our human condition, the world, ethics and Christian life. (Learning, Growing, Serving)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop and widen an openness toward the pursuit of wisdom, all the while living in the tension that comes with this pursuit.
2. To examine the philosophical impacts of the body and mortality.
3. To examine what it means for us to be human in light of what we have our being in or for.
4. To examine significant texts in the history of philosophy.
5. To contrast essentialist assumptions with existential critiques.
6. To nurture creative and reflective thinking by reading significant primary texts within the western philosophical tradition.
7. To encounter significant and influential figures in the western philosophical tradition in order to reflect upon the nature of that tradition itself.
8. To introduce several philosophical issues found in the western philosophical tradition as they address finitude, thrownness, relationality, and the transcendent.
9. To wrestle, and I mean wrestle, with these issues as they relate to our lives as we consider how we can be ethical in light of our limitations and our dependence upon the source of ethicality itself.

ACADEMIC ACCOMODATIONS:

All students are expected to meet the minimum standards for this course as set forth by the instructor. Students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should first discuss options and services with the Academic Support Center (ASC) during the first two weeks of the semester. The ASC, in turn, will contact professors with official notification and suggested classroom accommodations, as required by federal law. Approved documentation must be provided by the student and placed on file in the ASC prior to the beginning of the semester.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:

The School of Theology and Christian Ministries is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people often use language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the School strongly urges students to join faculty and staff in avoiding any sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions and in writing.

TEXTBOOKS:

- *Søren Kierkegaard. *Sickness Unto Death*. Princeton, ISBN# 0-691-02028-0
- * Gordon Marino (Editor). *Basic Writings of Existentialism*, ISBN-# 13: 978-0375759895
- *Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, Vintage, Matthew Ward translation, ISBN #978-0679720201
- *Jacques Derrida. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, ISBN-#13: 978-080473275 -Optional
- *Cormack McCarthy, *The Road*, Vintage, ISBN #978-0-307-38789-9
- *Reading Packet to be purchased from Pat Jafry

PROCEDURE/REQUIREMENTS:

1. We will be reading from some of the most significant **texts** in the history of western thought. It is vitally important that you become acquainted with the material in order that you get a feel for not simply what the writer says, but *how* she or he makes you think. I want you to be thoughtful and critical of what each of the thinkers writes, as well as of what I say in class. A significant portion of your grade will be based upon the amount of reading you do. You will be asked to give a report each day on your reading progress (scale of 0-10). For example, an 8.5 means that you read carefully and thought about carefully 85% of the assigned reading for that day.
2. Regular and punctual **attendance** is required for the full benefit of this class. If you are late it is your responsibility to see me after class in order that your attendance may be recorded. Any three tardies will be recorded as one absence. Due to the nature of this class in particular, dialogue will be very important. Dialogue tends to spawn new ideas and creativity, so discussion will be important. Therefore, *each* student will be expected to enter into class discussion. The extent to which this occurs (as well as the quality), along with attendance will be considered in your final grade. *You cannot pass the class* if you miss more than 6 class sessions. See the catalogue.
3. Throughout the term each of you will do two **in-class presentations**. If it is the first day discussing a figure, there should be a brief and general philosophical introduction to the figure covered during that session. Otherwise the presentation should cover the specific

reading for the day. The presentation should mainly be an outline of the text. You should reference 8-10 significant portions of the text to be covered in class. You must provide a detailed outline and bibliography for each member of the class.

4. There will be 3 **Take-Home Exams/essays** due throughout the semester. Each of the exams will cover the material just prior to the reception of the exam (including the material covered on the day of the reception of the exam). I will e-mail you an essay prompt and you will have a week to respond. You absolutely may not use outside sources for the exams. You may study together and I encourage you to do so. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in either zero credit for the assignment and a full grade reduction for the class or (more likely) failure of the course all together (this is up to my discretion). Both will result in a letter to the Provost to be placed in your academic record.

5. There will be a **final paper** due at noon in my box on *The Road*. It will be reflective and related to the reading from Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. It will be 7-9 pages, typed, double spaced. Theses must be approved by me in advance. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in either zero credit for the assignment and a full grade reduction for the class or (more likely) failure of the course all together (this is up to my discretion). Both will result in a letter to the Provost to be placed in your academic record.

6. I would like for you to watch 4 **films** this semester. I will provide a list of approved films, and you must watch films only from this list for the fulfillment of this assignment. I would like for you to watch films you have not seen before. Your typed response can be anywhere from a paragraph to a page or so. The response should include a characterization of the existentialist themes in the film and the date you watched the film.

7. The **grades** are based on all of these mentioned assignments. All outside assignments are due at the beginning of class. Any late assignments will be reduced a full letter grade per class day and will not be accepted at all after one week (if it's due Thursday it can not be turned in any later than the following Thursday). Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in either zero credit for the assignment and a full grade reduction for the class or (more likely) failure of the course all together (this is up to my discretion). Both will result in a letter to the Provost to be placed in your academic record.

Presentations	16% (8% each)
Reading	15%
Take-Home Exam #1	15%
Take-Home Exam #2	15%
Take-Home Exam #3	15%
Movie Response (I-IV)	8% (2% each)
<u>FinalPaper</u>	<u>16%</u>
Total	100%

100-94% A	79-77% C+	63-60% D-
93-90% A-	76-74% C	59-0% F
89-87% B+	73-70% C-	
86-84% B	69-67% D+	
83-80% B-	66-64% D	

FILMS WITH EXISTENTIAL THEMES:

- *Gattica*
- *Boyhood*
- *Inception*
- *Brazil*
- *Snowpiercer*
- *Birdman*
- *The Truman Show*
- *Midnight in Paris*
- *Moon*
- *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
- *Melancholia*
- *Shawshank Redemption*
- *Being John Malcovich*
- *Donnie Darko*
- *American Beauty*
- *Looper*
- *Finding a Friend for the End of the World*
- *127 Hours*
- *The Matrix*
- *Garden State*
- *Wit*
- *I ♥Huckabees*
- *Crimes and Misdemeanors*
- *Pulp Fiction*
- *Before Sunrise*
- *Pan's Labyrinth*
- *Blade Runner*
- *Straight Story*
- *The Tree of Life*
- *Toy Story 3*
- *Memento*
- *Thin Red Line*
- *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*
- *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- *True Grit* (2010 version)
- *Donnie Darko*
- *Groundhog Day*
- *Zelig*
- *Little Miss Sunshine*
- *Adaptation*
- *eXistenZ*

SCHEDULE GUIDELINE:

- 9/1 Introduction to the course Flight from Death Video
9/2 Flight from Death finish and discuss
9/9 *Sickness Unto Death* pp. 1-42*
9/14 *SUD* pp. 42-74* **Film I response due**
9/16 *SUD* pp. 77-100*
9/21 *SUD* pp. 100-131*
9/23 *Basic Writings of Existentialism (BWOE)* Dostoyevsky pp. 231-254*
9/28 *BWOE* Nietzsche pp. 111-145* **Film II response due**
9/30 *BWOE* Nietzsche pp. 145-187*
10/5 *BWOE* Heidegger pp. 299-319
10/7 *BWOE* Heidegger pp. 319-336* **Exam I due**
10/12 *BWOE* Camus pp. 477-492*
10/14 Attend Wiley *Lecture(s)* and write a paragraph response
10/19 *The Stranger* Camus pp. 3-71* **Wiley response due**
10/21 *The Stranger* Camus pp. 72-123*
10/26 *BWOE* Sartre pp. 341-367* **Film III response due**
10/28 *BWOE* DeBeauvoir pp. 413-436*
11/2 *Totality and Infinity* (packet) Levinas pp. 194-204*
11/4 *T and I* (packet) Levinas pp. 204-219* **Exam II due**
11/9 *BWOE* Ellison pp. 490-505*
11/11 *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (book or packet) Derrida pp. 1-13*
11/16 *Selected Writings...Sarah Kofman* (packet) Derrida pp. 1-34* **Film IV response due**
11/18 *Selected Writings...Sarah Kofman* (packet) Kofman pp.237-246*
11/23 *The Road* McCarthy pp. 3-137*
11/30 *The Road* McCarthy pp. 138-287* **Exam III due**
12/2 *Works of Love* Kierkegaard pp. 34-57*
12/7 *Works of Love* Kierkegaard pp. 58-72 and pp.231-246*
12/9 Flex day
12/14 **Final Paper Due** (Monday of finals, Noon, Heather's box, Smee #200)