



El Camino College
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD – Official

Subject:	PHIL
Course Number:	115
Descriptive Title:	Existentialism
Division:	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Department:	Philosophy
Course Disciplines:	Philosophy
Catalog Description:	This course will examine the philosophical thought of the two strands of existentialist writers: the religious existentialists such as Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Heidegger, and the atheistic existentialists such as Nietzsche, Camus, and Sartre. Issues that will be examined include authenticity, free will, responsibility for one's character and actions, the essence, possibilities and limits of human beings, and the meaning of life.
Prerequisite:	
Co-requisite:	
Recommended Preparation:	English 1 or eligibility for English 1A or qualification by appropriate assessment
Enrollment Limitation:	
Course Length:	Full Term
Hours Lecture (per week):	3
Hours Laboratory (per week):	0
Outside Study Hours:	6
Total Hours:	54
Course Units:	3
Grading Method:	Letter Grade only
Credit Status:	Credit, degree applicable
Transfer CSU:	Yes
Effective Date:	02/16/2010
Transfer UC:	Yes
Effective Date:	Fall 2010
General Education: ECC	Area 3 - Humanities
Term:	Fall 2010
Other:	
CSU GE:	Area C2 - Arts and Humanities - Humanities: Literature, Philosophy, Languages other than English
Term:	Fall 2010
Other:	
IGETC:	Area 3B - Humanities

Term:	Fall 2010
Other:	
Student Learning Outcomes:	<p>SLO #1 Differentiating Humans from Other Beings</p> <p>Students will be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of what separates the existentialist movement in philosophy from other philosophies, with particular attention to existentialist ideas as to what constitutes and differentiates a human being from other beings.</p> <p>SLO #2 The Existentialist Perspective</p> <p>Students will be able to analyze from the existentialist perspective various philosophical issues, such as authenticity, the importance of the individual, a person's relationship with society, the role of religion, and the meaning of life.</p> <p>SLO #3 Freedom and Responsibility</p> <p>Students will be able to explain the existentialist ideas of freedom and responsibility, and be able to assess how those ideas can impact their lives.</p>
Course Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the common questions, ideas and themes of Existentialism. 2. Describe the earlier historical/philosophical movements and philosophers to which Existentialism responds. 3. Differentiate the two major strands of Existentialism, Religious and Atheistic Existentialism, and identify the philosophers associated with each type. 4. Examine and analyze what it is to be an authentic person. 5. Describe and examine the dangers of following the herd or society, and explain the challenges of questioning society's ideas and values while still being a part of that society. 6. Assess and analyze the significance of living authentically in a world with others. 7. Describe and analyze the concepts of perspectivism, objective truth and subjective truth, and moral relativism. 8. Examine and discuss the dangers of reliance on inflexible rules and restrictions. 9. Assess the importance of one's non-rational or irrational sides, including one's emotions, appetites and instincts, and their relevance to authenticity. 10. Discuss and differentiate Existentialist philosophers' criticisms of religion in general and Christianity in particular. 11. Assess the impact of free will and choice on one's actions, ideas, character, and life, focusing on the degree of responsibility one has for what one does and who one is. 12. Compare and analyze the similarities and differences between men and women, and describe the influence of existentialist philosophy on raising consciousness of gender issues. 13. Describe and discuss the view of the philosophers who hold that life is absurd and evaluate their solutions to those absurdities. 14. Compare and contrast the philosophers who hold the position that life has no inherent meaning or purpose, and the impact of their position on what one does with one's life.
Major Topics	I. What is Existentialism? (3 hours, lecture)

A. The Questions, Ideas, and Themes Existentialists Have in Common

B. The Earlier Historical Movements and Philosophers Existentialism is Reacting to and Building Upon

1. The Enlightenment/Age of Reason

2. Romanticism

3. Hegel

II. Soren Kierkegaard (7 hours, lecture)

A. Subjective Truth

B. Possible Lifestyles and Their Consequences

C. The Importance of Passion in One's Life

D. The Primacy of the Individual

E. How Choices Determine Who We Are

F. The Dangers of Following the Herd/Society

G. The Limits of Science

H. Leaps of Faith

I. The Meaning of Being a Christian

III. Feodor Dostoevsky (4 hours, lecture)

A. The Burdens and Opportunities That Come with Free Will

B. The Importance of the Irrational and Non-Rational Parts of a Person

1. Lack of Authenticity

2. Lack of Humanness

3. Self-Righteous Violence

C. Criticisms of the Atheist

1. Lack of Faith

2. Lack of Meaning and Purpose

IV. Friedrich Nietzsche (8 hours, lecture)

A. The Importance of Honoring Our Human Instincts, Emotions, and Appetites

B. The Problems of Christianity, Western Morality, and Most Religions

1. Reliance on Inflexible Rules
2. Focus on the Afterlife Instead of this Life
3. Too Much Stress on Suffering, Guilt and Sin
4. The Suppression of the Instincts to be Powerful and Dominant
5. The Suppression of Desires and Emotions

C. The Necessity of Tragedy and Challenges in One's Life

D. The Will to Power

E. Creativity and Myth

F. Guilt and the Bad Conscience

G. Master Versus Slave Morality

H. Perspectivism and Moral Relativism

I. Nietzsche's Account of Religious Nihilism

J. Nietzsche's Own Brand of Nihilism

K. The Lack of Objective Truth

L. Eternal Recurrence

M. The Attributes of the Ubermensch: Sovereign Individual or Superior Person

V. Herman Hesse (3 hours, lecture)

A. Evaluation and Criticisms of Nietzsche

B. Metaphor of an Onion for the Analysis of Personhood

C. The Dangers of Being Too Independent and Free

D. The Dangers of Excessive Questioning or Condemning of Society

E. The Importance of Personal Relationships

VI. Martin Heidegger (7 hours, lecture)

A. The Aspects of a Human Being

B. Facticity Versus Existenz

C. Authenticity Versus Inauthenticity

D. The Significance of Living in a World with Others

E. The Role the Public Plays in the Life of the Individual

F. The Significance of One's Ever-Looming Impending Death

VII. Albert Camus (4 hours, lecture)

A. The Absurdities of Life

B. Solutions to the Absurdities

1. Revolt Against the Absurdities

2. Passionately Living a Long and Full Life

C. The Consequences of the Reflective and Unreflective Life

VIII. Jean-Paul Sartre (9 hours, lecture)

A. Free Will Versus Determinism

B. Radical Individual Freedom

C. Existence Precedes Essence

D. Bad Faith

E. Full Personal Responsibility

F. The Aspects of a Person

1. Being in Itself

2. Being for Oneself

3. Being for Others

4. Facticity

5. Transcendence

IX. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (3 hours, lecture)

A. Free Will Without Full Responsibility

B. The Factors that Shape, Mold, Restrict and Affect Our Freedom

1. The Environment

2. Our Bodies

- 3. Our Interests
- 4. Our Motives
- 5. Our Character
- 6. The Specific Situations in Which We Find Ourselves

C. Criticisms of Sartre's Philosophy that Man is Radically Free to Discard His Past and to Instantly Transform or Change His Character and Actions

X. Simone de Beauvoir (3 hours, lecture)

A. The Similarities Between Men and Women

- 1. Bodily Features
- 2. Transcendence
 - a. One's Possibilities
 - b. Autonomy as a Desire to Engage in Freely Chosen Projects

B. Feminism

- 1. Woman as the Other and the Lesser
- 2. Woman as an Object Rather than a Subject
- 3. Woman as Defined by Men
- 4. Woman as a Deficient Version of Man

XI. Other Writers Associated with Existentialism (3 hours, lecture)

A. Franz Kafka and the Absurd

B. Gabriel Marcel and the Lack of Freedom in Capitalistic Societies

C. Karl Jaspers

- 1. The Goal of Self-Realization Achieved Through Communication with Others
- 2. The Path to Authenticity by Broadening One's World Orientation

D. Viktor Frankl and Logotherapy

- 1. A Therapy Aimed at the Future
- 2. A Therapy to Find Meaning in Life

Total Lecture Hours: 54

Total Laboratory Hours:	0
Total Hours:	54
Primary Method of Evaluation	1) Substantial writing assignments
Typical Assignment Using Primary Method of Evaluation:	<p>Existentialism Authenticity Exercise: Pick a traditional or conservative issue which you strongly believe (which others may disagree with), such as abortion, capital punishment, gay marriage, legalization of drugs.</p> <p>Address the following in a three- to four-page essay:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What are the reasons someone might disagree with your view and take the opposite position? Try to take their perspective and point of view. 2) Do you think you would feel the way you do on this issue if you had grown up in a different family or in a different place or country? If not, what does this tell you about your belief? 3) Is your view in any way better than the contrary view, or is it just your view due to your upbringing? 4) Are you willing to seriously consider changing your view? Why or why not? 5) Will you now be more tolerant of others' views on this topic? Why or why not? 6) Have you learned anything (about yourself or otherwise) from this exercise, and if so, what?
Critical Thinking Assignment 1:	<p>Existentialism Comparison: Compare and contrast the views of two philosophers we have studied regarding authenticity and inauthenticity. In a two- to three-page essay, give your opinion as to which viewpoint you like best and your reasons why. Examine the viewpoint of each of the two philosophers you have chose, and list the similarities and differences between them. For example, what does each philosopher mean by authenticity? Since the philosophers you choose may not have used the words authenticity and inauthenticity, you need to explain the meaning of whatever words they use. For example, Sartre uses the concept of bad faith in place of inauthenticity.</p>
Critical Thinking Assignment 2:	<p>Meaning of Life Assignment: Imagine you have died at the age of 75. Identify specific ways you would want to be able to describe your life. Pretend your parents have already died, and there is nobody to judge you and how you have lived your life. Assume that once you are dead, you will not hear other people's reactions to your death. You will not hear or ever know what others said or thought about you, nor will you care because you will be gone from existence forever.</p> <p>In a three- to five-page essay, address the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What does the significance of your death mean for living your life? 2) What kind of life would you have chosen to have lived? 3) What will you have experienced, what will you have done with your life, what will you

	<p>have accomplished in your time on earth and what types of relationships will you have had?</p> <p>4) Lastly, what you have learned about yourself as a result of this exercise?</p>
Other Evaluation Methods:	Essay Exams, Multiple Choice, Objective Exam, Other (specify), Term or Other Papers, Written Homework
Instructional Methods:	Discussion, Lecture, Multimedia presentations
If other:	
Work Outside of Class:	Answer questions, Problem solving activity, Required reading, Study, Written work (such as essay/composition/report/analysis/research)
If Other:	
Up-To-Date Representative Textbooks:	<p>Kevin Aho, <u>Existentialism</u>, 2nd ed., Polity Press, 2020.</p> <p>Jonathan Webber, <u>Rethinking Existentialism</u>, Oxford University Press, 2018.</p> <p>Sarah Bakewell, <u>At the Existentialist Cafe</u>, Other Press, 2016.</p> <p>Robert Solomon, <u>Existentialism</u>, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2005. Discipline Standard</p> <p>Charles Guignon, Derk Pereboom, <u>Existentialism, Basic Writings</u>, 2nd ed., Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2001. Discipline Standard</p> <p>Linda E. Patrik, <u>Existential Literature, An Introduction</u>, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001. Discipline Standard</p>
Alternative Textbooks:	
Required Supplementary Readings:	
Other Required Materials:	
Requisite:	
Category:	
Requisite course:	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
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Requisite course:	English 1 or
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	This course involves reading college level textbooks, developing written reports, and answering essay questions. A student's success in this class will be enhanced if they have these skills. ENGL 1 - Summarize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize college-level texts. ENGL 1 - Write a well-reasoned, well-supported expository essay that demonstrates application of the academic writing process.
Requisite:	eligibility for English 1A or qualification by appropriate assessment
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s). If applicable	This course involves reading college level textbooks, writing assignments, and answering essay questions. A student's success in this class will be enhanced if they have these skills.
Enrollment Limitations and Category:	
Enrollment Limitations Impact:	
Course Created by:	Randall Firestone
Date:	10/05/2009
Board Approval Date:	02/16/2010
Last Reviewed and/or Revised by:	Randall Firestone
Last Board Approval Date:	01/19/2021