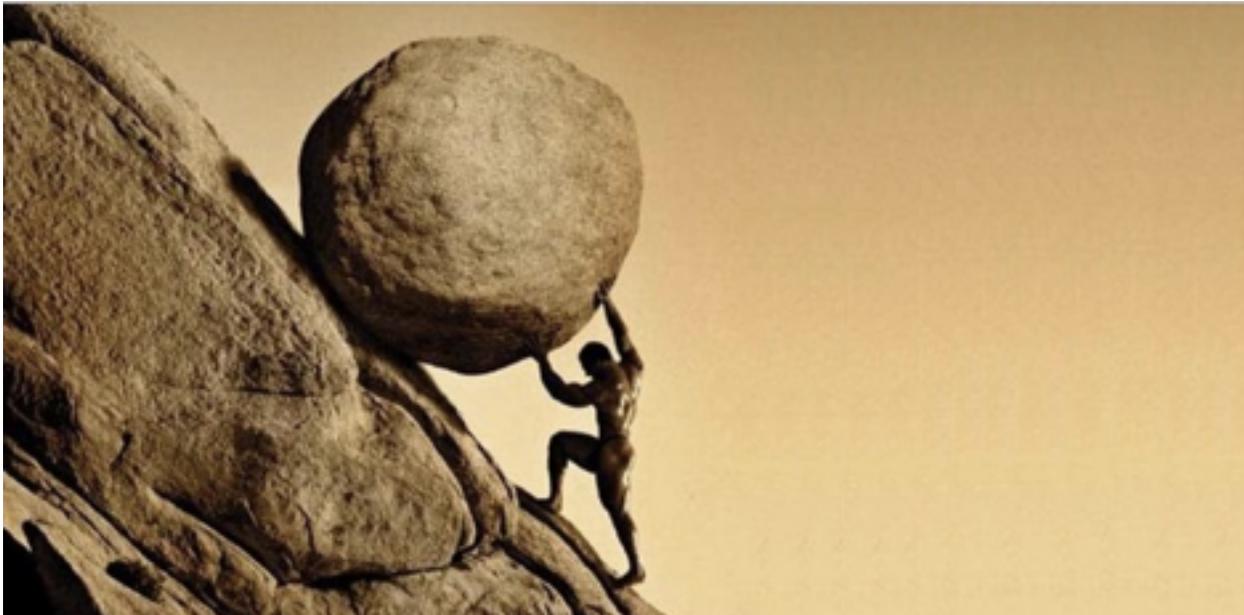


PHIL 151: EXISTENTIALISM

University of California, Riverside: Summer 2018

Instructor: Rebecca Harrison



Existentialism is a philosophical movement focused on questions concerning the meaning and significance of human life, such as: Why are we here? How can we know that what we do matters? What is the source of meaning in our lives — if there is such meaning at all? In this course, we will be reading both classic and contemporary thinkers in an attempt to appreciate the significance of these questions and to consider some of the more influential possible answers. In the process, we will consider a wide variety of topics such as the absurd, death, authenticity, freedom, embodiment, subjectivity, and our relationships to others. By the end of the course, students will have a working familiarity with classic and contemporary approaches to these topics, and hopefully a more considered and fulfilling personal viewpoint on them as well.

Required Texts:

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Simone DeBeauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*

All other readings will be provided via iLearn

Assignments and Grades:

Attendance and Participation — 15%

Oral Presentation — 15%

Weekly Reflections — 12.5% each, 50% total

Final Paper — 20%

Oral Presentation: Students are asked to choose one reading and prepare a presentation to begin our seminar discussion on that day. Presentations must be at least five minutes long (i.e. in the 700-1000 word range) but may be relatively informal, and must include at least one open-ended question intended to spur discussion. Students must submit a copy of their planned comments to the professor by 8PM *the day before* the assigned reading.

Note: If there are more students in the class than available readings, then some students may choose to do “response” presentations, by responding to another student’s opening comments. These presentations may be shorter (300-600 words) but must engage with both the reading and the main presenter’s commentary. Any students electing to do a response presentation should coordinate with the professor and the main presenter regarding how to prepare in advance.

Weekly Reflections: Students will be assigned one short (1-3 pages) paper every Thursday that will ask them to reflect on and synthesize material from the preceding week. That paper will be due on the following Monday, for four such papers in total.

Bonus Reflection Paper: I will assign one “bonus” paper at some point during the term. This paper will likely consist of a short reflection paper on an extra reading or other media (e.g., a film) students will be asked to engage with. Rather than adding additional “points” onto the

student's total grade, this "bonus" paper will replace the lowest-graded reflection paper from the term (e.g., a student who writes an A-level bonus paper, whose lowest reflection paper grade is a C, may replace the C grade with the A).

Final Paper: Students will be asked to write one longer paper as a "capstone" to the class, due by midnight on the Friday following the last day of class. Details of this assignment will be announced at the end of Week 4.

Late/Missing Assignments

It is strongly in your interest to turn in assignments on time. You will lose 1 letter grade on an assignment for every day that it is late (so, e.g., a B assignment handed in a day late will receive a C). That said, it is always better to turn in an assignment late -- even if you can only hope to get a D at best -- than not to turn in an assignment at all. Late assignments will *not* be accepted more than one week past their original due date. For obvious reasons, no oral presentations will be accepted "late."

Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty:

In short: don't do it. Make sure you are aware of what "plagiarism" is. Basically, it involves presenting someone else's ideas as your own. This includes cases in which you are clearly "ripping off" someone else's paper, or a book or website (including e.g. SparkNotes), but it also includes cases in which you repeat something an author said or something your instructor said without properly attributing it (i.e., putting quotes around it and giving a citation for it), or presenting an idea you got from an outside source "in your own words" without attribution. You will be required to submit your paper to **SafeAssign** through iLearn, which automatically catches copies -- or even modified copies -- of other work (including the work of other students in the class). Students found to be plagiarizing, or students found to be cheating on an exam, will *at least* receive a **0** for that assignment, and possibly fail the course. Familiarize yourself with UCR's Academic Integrity Policies & Procedures: <http://www.conduct.ucr.edu/learnpolicies/academicintegrity.html>

Schedule of Readings

Week 1		The Absurd, Death, and Authenticity
M	Introduction; Thomas Nagel	“The Absurd”
T	Nietzsche	<i>The Gay Science</i> [selections]
W	Heidegger	<i>Being and Time</i> [selections]
Th	Camus	“The Myth of Sisyphus” [selections]
Week 2		“Bad Faith,” Others, and Meaning
M	Sartre	<i>Being and Nothingness</i> pp. 707-711; pp. 86-112
T	Sartre	<i>Being and Nothingness</i> pp. 340-352
W	[no class]	[July 4th]
Th	Sartre	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> pp. 17-54
Week 3		Embodiment, Intersubjectivity, and Freedom
M	Merleau-Ponty	<i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. 100-105; 139-148
T	Merleau-Ponty	<i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. 361-383
W	Merleau-Ponty	<i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. 458-467
Th	Merleau-Ponty	<i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. 467-483
Week 4		Ambiguity, Freedom and Others
M	DeBeauvoir	<i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , pp. 7-34
T	DeBeauvoir	<i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , pp. 35-73
W	DeBeauvoir	<i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , pp. 74-115
Th	DeBeauvoir	<i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , pp. 115-135
Week 5		Authenticity, Recognition, & The Contemporary World
M	Taylor	<i>The Ethics of Authenticity</i> , pp. 1-30
T	Taylor	<i>The Ethics of Authenticity</i> , pp. 31-54
W	Taylor	<i>The Ethics of Authenticity</i> , pp. 55-91
Th	TBA	

**The assigned readings or the schedule may be adjusted at any time during the course. Check your email regularly and keep an eye on announcements in iLearn for any changes.*

Note: It is **extremely important** that you do the readings in a timely fashion, and that you regularly attend lecture and your discussion section. As you will discover, the texts we are going to cover are interesting and rewarding, but generally quite difficult. It is very unlikely you will be able to succeed in the course (and unlikely that you will enjoy it!) without keeping on top of the readings and coming to class with questions in hand. In order to read well, a number of things are necessary: **(1)** a place where you can concentrate, **(2)** a significant amount of time (these works are best read slowly and deliberately rather than in a short glances), **(3)** a pen or pencil so that you can read *actively* – argue with the author, struggle to understand, to question, to respond – and to do this you must underline, write in the margins, make notes. Putting in the time to prepare for class adequately will make for a more interesting and fulfilling class for everyone!

Other Etiquette Issues:

Do not behave in any way that distracts from or disturbs the classroom environment. This includes late arrival to and early departure from class, speaking or whispering while others are speaking, using laptops for purposes other than those related to the class (e.g. facebook), texting, cell phones ringing, etc. (You may either be on the internet or your phone, OR you may be in my class, but not both). I reserve the right to ask any student engaged in distracting behaviors to leave the classroom, and repeated interruptions may result in failure of the course.

Biographical Information:

Rebecca Harrison is a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy at UC Riverside. She received her MA from Georgia State University in 2012. She is currently working on a dissertation that argues for thinking of Merleau-Ponty as a certain kind of realist, and considers some interesting consequences that result. Before coming to Riverside in 2012, she had lived in Atlanta, New York, Pittsburgh, and New Orleans. She likes coffee and craft beer, is a middling-at-best musician (piano, guitar, and voice) and has been vegetarian for nearly 20 years. She has two dogs and a cat, and is happy to show you pictures of them if you ask nicely.