

PHILO 228 Existentialism:

Professor Rachel C. Falkenstern – Spring 2016

This course examines major themes of the (somewhat loose) philosophical movement known as existentialism: facticity, authenticity, absurdity, existence, essence, being, nothingness. We compare different treatments of these themes by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus, keeping in mind their various relationships with the philosophical legacies of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel. We spend the most time with the French, reading both their philosophical and literary works (indeed, they overlap). Considerations of other authors (such as, but not limited to, Schopenhauer, Marx, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Du Bois, Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, or Gordon) are welcome but not required.

The course focuses on two areas, embodied subjectivity and ethics, considered in light of tensions between human freedom and the above themes. We watch films, and possibly read additional literary works, to experience, illustrate, and better understand these themes and ideas. Throughout the course, we acknowledge the strength and joy found in recognizing and attempting to transcend our limits, taking responsibility for ourselves and for others, facing the anguish these things entail, and making life meaningful.

Readings

All readings are on Hunter Library's Course Reserves (ERes) via the Library's website, so no book is required. However, the readings **must be brought to class with you every day, either printed, on an e-reader or tablet, or as books.**

A bibliography is handed out the first week of class, if you have or would like to obtain the readings. They may include but are not limited to: Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*; de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*; Sartre, *No Exit* and a few selections from *Being and Nothingness*.

Prerequisites

English 120 or equivalent **and** *at least one philosophy course*

Evaluation and Workload

Your semester grade is based on a combination of: 1) attendance, participation, and preparation; 2) frequent homework assignments asking for short answers or responses to that week's reading(s) or topics; 3) a paper at the end of the semester.