Syllabus: PHIL160 – Existentialism
Section 1001, Fall Term 2005, MWF 11-11:50, Wehr Chemistry 113

An online version of this syllabus can be found at http://academic.mu.edu/phil/lufts/Teaching1.htm.

Content:
The Existentialist Movement, which was highly popular in many cultural areas in the first half of the 20th century, is arguably one of the most creative and fruitful attempts to refashion philosophy in the light of cultural crises and the imposing threat of “Nihilism.” The Existentialists were guided by the intention to continue with philosophy in the age of “the death of God,” as Nietzsche has famously termed it. With this notion Nietzsche meant to designate an epoch in Western history where absolute values and truths, guaranteed by an unquestioned belief in God or higher (not necessarily divine) authorities, had vanished or had lost their binding validity. While being anything but a unified “school,” the Existentialists introduced a plethora of original and creative concepts and ideas surrounding human nature and its concrete “existence,” not only in philosophy, but also in literature and art. In this course, we will assess the philosophical Existentialist Movement, how it came about as critique of systematic philosophy in the 19th century and how it flourished in the main existentialist thinkers in the 20th century, namely, Sartre, Heidegger, Jaspers and Ortega y Gasset. We will not treat this movement in 20th century intellectual history as a mere past episode—its somewhat clichéd nature notwithstanding—but attempt to take seriously its main ideas, intentions and the issues it addressed. These issues will be—and the course will center on these—authenticity, the concept of consciousness and subjectivity, and the human being’s role in society and history.

Learning Objectives:
At the end of the term, students will have a grasp over and a general concept of Existentialism, its main representatives, ideas, positions, theses; how these ideas have formed as critiques of traditional philosophical schools and movements, and how the Existentialists hoped to move forward in the age of “Nihilism.”

Texts:
Friedrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche (ed. Kaufmann, Penguin)
Edmund Husserl, The Essential Husserl (Indiana)
Jean-Paul Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego (Routledge)
Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings (HarperCollins)
Karl Jaspers, Basic Philosophical Writings (Humanities)
José Ortega y Gasset, History as a System (Norton)
Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton)

Helpful introductory reading: Entry “Existentialism” by Steven G. Crowell in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, online at: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/; please read this text in preparation for the Introductory Lecture. For a more extensive systematic overview, the following classic is also helpful: W. Luijpen & H. Koren, A First Introduction to Existential Phenomenology, Pittsburgh: Duquesne U Press, 1969 (still in print).
Requirements:
Two take-home exams during and one paper due at the end of the term (8-10 pages, double-spaced). Method of evaluation: Exams 25 % each, term paper 40 %, and classroom participation 10 %. Exams will consist of essay questions and will cover the reading up to that point (non-cumulative). No extra credits. The topic of the term paper will be chosen by you and it should be inspired by the reading during the semester and can stem from your classroom presentation (see below). You are required to come to talk to me during my office hours in the course of the semester (at least once!), to discuss your ideas and plans for the term paper, at the latest by Thanksgiving. The topic of the term paper should focus on a particular thinker or a particular problem/issue that one or several philosophers deal with and should go beyond the texts discussed in class. I will fill you in on more detail about the term paper as the term progresses. Classroom presentation: Starting with Sartre, every Friday a student will give a classroom presentation on the reading assigned. This presentation can serve as the building block for the term paper. Obviously, there is not enough time for every student to present, and those who volunteer for a presentation will not be privileged over others in their participation grade; however, as a chance to introduce your thoughts and ideas on a specific topic or text, you should welcome this opportunity.

Class Attendance Policy:
- Regular attendance is required and will be ascertained through signing into the roll sheet. Please try not to come late for class; excessively late arrivals will count as absences. The policy of the School of Arts and Sciences will be followed. This means: after five absences (including excused absences), your final grade will be penalized by a half grade for each two successive absences, e.g., for eight absences a B becomes a BC; on a tenth absence the BC becomes a C, etc. In addition, when you reach six absences, you will be formally warned of the possibility of a WA (withdrawal for excessive absences). The “point of no return” is eleven absences. Anybody reaching that number will receive a WA, which is final and cannot be changed to a simple W.
- Absence Policy: Absences are excused only for (a) officially sanctioned University activities and (b) unavoidable absence due to debilitating illness or personal emergencies; these absences have to be documented by an official note. There will only be make-up examinations in the case of excused absences. Students who anticipate absences of type (a) should inform me at the beginning of the term and will be excused when showing proof for their anticipated absences. Those students who miss class are required to bring themselves up to date with the class progress by obtaining class notes from another student and to catch up on missed reading on their own.
- Students with physical & learning disabilities: If anybody has any of these disabilities, please discuss these matters with me in private at the beginning of the semester so I can plan accordingly.

Expectations of Student Preparation and Participation:
- Reading assignments and preparation: The reading assignment per session is limited; however, this means that I expect you to come to class having prepared the texts carefully and thoroughly (this implies underlining and making excerpts) and that you are able to talk meaningfully about the text and raise questions of your own. I will take the liberty to call on students randomly. An approximate preparation time for each class is a minimum of one hour. The reading for the next session, if not clear from the course schedule (below), will be announced at the end of the previous class.
- Classroom participation is an integral part this course. However, I also count participation in the discussion group on “Desire2Learn” (D2L) as part of class participation. The discussion group on D2L serves several functions: I will use this medium extensively to post reading assignments and other items (e.g., reading suggestions or technical matters). If I feel there is a point that was misunderstood or not made clear in class, I will address it afterwards on D2L. Most importantly, however, D2L gives you a chance to discuss issues together, to indicate “muddy points” and voice questions, concerns etc. I encourage you to use this medium to become clear about problems by discussing them amongst each other and with me in this manner. This is a helpful tool especially for those who might feel shy in class or did not get to say what they wanted to for whichever reason. I urge you to remain objective, polite and non-judgmental in your postings, especially when commenting on a fellow student’s remarks. This is how you get to D2L: Go to http://d2l.mu.edu and log on, there you will find the course you are attending with me. Click on it and then go to “Discussions,” where you will have the opportunity to post or reply to messages.
Statement on Academic Integrity:
Marquette University promotes academic integrity and in turn does not tolerate academic misconduct or dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarizing or the illegitimate use of materials during a quiz or examination, etc. Any misconduct of these types will be reported immediately to the Department Chair and can result in a penalty of the grade of F. (See also Marquette’s College of Arts and Sciences Policy on Academic Dishonesty.)

Other Particulars:
• Introduction Card: Please design, and hand in at your earliest convenience, an introduction card on a regular sheet of paper that contains the following items: your name, section number of the course, campus address, phone number, email address, year in school, major, related courses taken, and what you hope to learn in this course. You are also welcome to add your hobbies or any other personal information about yourself that you are willing to share. Most importantly, please also place a picture of yourself onto the sheet. This introduction card is for my eyes only and will help me in getting to know you better and in memorizing your names. It is in your own interest that you help me in getting to know you personally (e.g., when grading you for participation).
• Office hours: Email is not a very good way to discuss problems. If you have questions or feel the need to talk about issues, I encourage you to see me during office hours or schedule an appointment. If you are not vocal about possible problems, there is no way I can help you overcoming obstacles. You are also welcome to come in groups for review.
• All written assignments are expected to be written in College level English, grammatically as well as stylistically. I encourage students who are not native speakers or who feel insecure about their writing skills to attend a writing class; in addition, a free tutoring class is available from the Office of Student Educational Services. In order to take advantage of this service, you need to sign up in AMU 317 or you can call the Office for more detail at 288-3270. Please consult the grade diagram regarding my expectations for grading, as well as my guidelines and tips for good writing (or red flags for what should be avoided), posted on my homepage (see link on p. 1). I simply will not tolerate inadequate writing. Regarding content, I do not expect you to agree with me; I respect other opinions, they just have to be well-argued for. Any interpretation is okay if you can make the case.

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

August 29: First Day of Class
August 31: Introductory Lecture

Two Godfathers of the Existentialist Movement:
I. Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosophizing in the Age of God’s Death
   Sept. 5: Labor Day – no class
   Sept. 7: Nietzsche, *The Madman*, pp. 95-96

II. Edmund Husserl: The Phenomenological Method
   Sept. 14: Husserl cont.
   Sept. 16: Husserl cont.
The First Confirmed Existentialist: Jean-Paul Sartre
Sept. 19: Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego I*, pp. 31-60
Sept. 21: Sartre cont.
Sept. 23: Sartre cont.   Presenter: __________
Sept. 26: Sartre *The Transcendence of the Ego II*, pp. 60-106
Sept. 28: Sartre cont.
Sept. 30: **No class (Dr. Luft at conference)**

October 3: Sartre cont.
Oct. 5: Sartre cont.

In Search for Authentic Existence: Martin Heidegger
Oct. 14: Heidegger cont.   Presenter: __________
Oct. 21: **No class (Midterm Break)**

Oct. 26: Heidegger cont.
Oct. 28: Heidegger cont.   Presenter: __________

Existence and Transcendence: Karl Jaspers
Oct. 31: Jaspers, *The New Perspective*, pp. 61-120
November 2: Jaspers cont.
Nov. 4; Jaspers cont.   Presenter: __________
Nov. 7: Jaspers cont.
Nov. 9: Jaspers cont.
Nov. 11: Jaspers cont.   Presenter: __________

Existence as Historical: José Ortega y Gasset
Nov. 14: Ortega, *History as a System*, pp. 165-233
Nov. 16: Ortega cont.
Nov. 18: Ortega cont.   Presenter: __________

Nov. 21: Ortega cont.
Nov. 23-25: **No class (Thanksgiving Break)**

Nov. 28: Ortega cont.
Nov. 30: Ortega cont.
December 2: Ortega cont., 2nd Exam (due Dec. 9). Presenter: __________

A Metacritique of Existentialism: Richard Rorty
Dec. 5: Rorty, Chapter VIII, pp. 357-394
Dec. 7: Rorty cont.
Dec. 9: Rorty cont.   Presenter: __________

Dec. 12: **Papers due**