

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY (2011-2012)

PHILOSOPHY 375: EXISTENTIALISM

MWF 12:30-13:30 (2 lectures plus one conference per week)

Instructor: Professor Buckley
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to some of the major themes and thinkers associated with "existentialism." It begins with an analysis of Kierkegaard's claim that "Truth is subjectivity," moves to a discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy and its emphasis on personal creativity, Sartre's view of freedom and responsibility, and Camus' depiction of the "absurdity" of existence. The course concludes with a study of Buber's I and Thou - an existentialist text which responds to the issues of "solipsism" and "atheism" raised by the other authors studied in the course. Along with reference to art, music and film which can be linked to "existentialist" themes, some literary works are read which may include: Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich"; Antoine de St. Exupéry's The Little Prince; Kafka's The Trial.

PRIMARY TEXTS:

Bretall, Robert, ed. A Kierkegaard Anthology. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
Buber, Martin. I and Thou. Trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Scribner's, 1970.
Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. London: Penguin, 1975.
Kafka, Franz. The Trial. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
Kaufmann, Walter, ed. The Portable Nietzsche. New York: Viking Press, 1961.
de Saint-Exupéry, Antoine. The Little Prince. Trans. K. Woods. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971
Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness. NY: Washington Sq., 1956.
Sartre, Jean-Paul. Existentialism is a Humanism. Trans. P. Mairet. London: Methuen, 1973.
Tolstoy, Leo. The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Short Stories. New York: North American Library, 1960.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- One short essay = 10%
- One longer written assignment = 40%
- Final Exam = 35%
- Participation in conferences = 15%

- *McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity/ for more information).*
- *In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change."*