

# PHI 375: Existentialism

MW 2:35-3:25pm Trottier 0100

McGill University, Fall 2013

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Existentialism is a French philosophical and literary movement that emerged in the wake of World War II, inspired by the German school of Phenomenology—especially the work of Edmund Husserl and his student Martin Heidegger. The term "Existentialism" was coined by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who popularized it through journalism, plays, and novels. Although other thinkers associated with Existentialism sometimes resisted this label, they are united by a particular set of philosophical concerns and ideas—most centrally, the notion that human beings have no predetermined essence, and thus are condemned to be free.

This course will offer an introductory survey of some key Existentialist texts, organized around three themes: Freedom, or what it means to be a self; Ethics, or the relation between self and other; and Politics, or the relation of the self to its community and its history.

## Prerequisites

One prior course in philosophy.

## Required Texts

- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Trans. H. E. Barnes)
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Trans. J. Sachs)
- Camus, *The Outsider* (Trans. J. Laredo)

These texts will be available at *The Word* bookstore (469 Milton St.). All other texts will be made available on MyCourses.

## Evaluation

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| • Conference attendance and participation | 10% |
| • Writing assignment 1 (due Oct. 16)      | 30% |
| • Writing assignment 2 (due Nov. 25)      | 30% |
| • Take-home exam                          | 30% |

## Schedule of readings

	Introduction	Sept.	4
	Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"		9
	Continue "Existentialism is a Humanism"; Merleau-Ponty, "The Battle over Existentialism" pp. 71-3		11
<b>FREEDOM</b>	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness (BN)</i> , pp. 33-44: Negation		16
	<i>BN</i> pp. 56-69: Anguish and vertigo		18
	CONFERENCES BEGIN		20
	<i>BN</i> pp. 73-85: Anguish and bad faith		23
	NO CLASS		25
	<i>BN</i> pp. 96-112: Forms of bad faith		30
	Camus, <i>The Outsider</i>	Oct.	2
	Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , pp. 3-28: Absurdity and suicide		7
	<i>Myth of Sisyphus</i> , pp. 51-65, 119-123: Absurdity and freedom		9
	THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)		14
	<i>BN</i> pp. 619-629, 707-711: Freedom and facticity		16
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE</b>		
	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> III.3, "Freedom"		21
	Merleau-Ponty, "Freedom"		23
<b>ETHICS</b>	<i>BN</i> pp. 340-354: The look of the other		28
	<i>BN</i> pp. 354-362: The look of the other		30
	de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity (EA)</i> , pp. 35-42: Growing up	Nov.	4
	<i>EA</i> pp. 42-66: Contradictory forms of life		6
	<i>EA</i> pp. 66-73: Love, critical thought, and art		11
	<i>EA</i> pp. 73-81: The aesthetic attitude; Science, technology, and art		13
	<i>EA</i> pp. 81-96: Oppression and liberation		18
<b>POLITICS</b>	de Beauvoir, Introduction to <i>The Second Sex</i>		20
	Fanon, "The Lived Experience of the Black"		25
	<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE</b>		
	Continue "The Lived Experience of the Black"		27
	Fanon, "On Violence"	Dec.	2
	Continue "On Violence"		3