

**SYLLABUS\***  
**Philosophy 151: Existentialism**  
Spring Term 2008  
TTh 12:40 – 2:00 PM  
SPR 2355

Instructor: Professor Mark Wrathall  
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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-4:00 pm, and by appointment

Existentialism was one of the most influential, and most popular, movements in 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy. During this semester, we will explore some of the seminal texts (books, essays, and works of fiction) of this movement.

**Required Texts:**

Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, trans. Alistair Hannay (Penguin Classics, 1989).

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Vintage Publishing, 1993).

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New Directions, 2007) .

Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (Vintage, 1991).

Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Vintage, 1991).

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (Citadel, 2000).

**Recommended Text** (excerpts from this text will be required reading for the course):  
Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Routledge, 2003).

**Other secondary sources of possible interest:**

Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds.), *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Blackwell, 2006).

Hubert L. Dreyfus's "Existentialism in Film and Literature" podcast:  
[http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course\\_details.php?seriesid=1906978306](http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course_details.php?seriesid=1906978306)

**Course Requirements**

- 1) **Readings.** For the required readings, see the schedule below. The reading

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\*This syllabus is subject to change. Changes, if any, will be announced in class. Students will be held responsible for all changes.

- requirement will be quite heavy for this course, and students are expected to keep current with the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the assignment.
- 2) **Class participation.** Classroom participation is a vital part of learning; it is only by asking questions and talking through ideas that you can come to fully understand the class materials. In calculating your final grade, I will take into consideration the contribution you have made to the discussion in class, and I reserve the right to adjust your grade accordingly.
  - 3) **Term Paper.** A 5-7 page term paper will be due at 5 pm on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. I will distribute suggested paper topics, but you are encouraged to write on a topic of your own. I will require you to hand in an outline, and meet with me at least twice to discuss your paper before it is due. The outline will consist of the thesis and central argument of your paper. Your grade on the term paper will constitute 40% of your final grade. Failure to complete the term paper will result in a failing grade for the course. More details regarding these assignments will be provided during the course of the term.
  - 4) **Unit Exams and Final Exam.** There will be 2 in-class exams, one take-home exam, and one final exam administered during the term (consult schedule below for the dates of these exams). Each exam will be worth 15% of your final grade. All exams must be taken during the scheduled times. If illness or other uncontrollable circumstances prevent a student from taking the exam at the scheduled time and place, that student must notify the instructor as soon as possible to schedule a make-up. Students should be ready to document any circumstances which prevent the taking of exams. Under no circumstances may any of the exams be taken early. If you miss one of the exams, you will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Students have an obligation to their classmates and instructor to behave in such a manner as to enhance the learning environment. Please do not engage in behavior which disrupts class or otherwise detracts from the ability of your fellow students to learn. Such behaviors include arriving at class late, leaving before class is dismissed, speaking or whispering while others are speaking, reading newspapers in class, cell-phones ringing, snoring, etc.

### **Biographical Information**

Mark Wrathall received a B.A. in philosophy from Brigham Young University, an A.M. in philosophy from Boston College, a J.D. from Harvard University, and a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of California at Berkeley. Before coming to UCR, he was a teaching fellow at Stanford Law School, and taught for 11 years at Brigham Young University. He has published extensively on figures and topics relevant to the existential and phenomenological traditions in philosophy. He is currently preparing a book manuscript for publication, entitled *Unconcealment: Heidegger on Truth, Language, and History*. He is also editing *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*. Wrathall is married and is the father of four children.

## SCHEDULE

### April

- T1 Introductory Lecture – Pascal and the roots of existentialism
- Th3 Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 35-72
- T8 Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 72-105
- Th10 Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, pp. 109-65
- T15 **Exam in class**
- Th17 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pp. 3-70
- T22 Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, pp. 71-130
- Th24 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 1-38; *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 86-118
- T29 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 38-70; *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 340-80.

### May

- Th1 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 70-103; *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 380-94, 471-93.
- T6 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 103-135; *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 494-534.
- Th8 Sartre, *Nausea* pp. 135-178; *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 534-556. **Take home exam handed out.**
- T13 Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 3-28; *The Plague*, pp. 1-63. **Take home exam due.**
- Th15 Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 28-60; *The Plague*, pp. 67-164
- T20 Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 60-92; *The Plague*, pp. 167-234
- Th22 Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 93-118; *The Plague*, pp. 234-308
- T27 **Exam in class**
- Th29 de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 7-34

### June

- T3 de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, pp. 35-73
- Th5 de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, tba
  
- F9 Term paper due, 5 p.m.

Monday June 9, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.: **Final Exam**