

Fall 2015

## PHIL 3511

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*University of New Orleans*

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Syllabus  
The University of New Orleans  
Dept. of Philosophy

**PHIL 3511: Existentialism** (3 credits)

**SECTION 001:** LA 372, TTh, 11 - 12:15 p.m.

Contact  
Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Clarence Mark Phillips  
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**Course Webpages:** [Moodle](#) login page

Required Texts

- [1] William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study In Existential Philosophy (Anchor/Doubleday), 1962.
  - [2] Godron Marino (ed.), Basic Writings of Existentialism (Modern Library), 2004.
  - [3] Walter Kaufmann, Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre (Plume), 1975.
- (Recommended)  
Hugo Bedau - Thinking and Writing about Philosophy and/or  
Zachary Seech - Writing Philosophy Papers (both on reserve in UNO Library)

Course Description

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** A careful examination of the views of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and other thinkers associated with one of the 20th Century's most widely influential philosophies.

**COURSE OVERVIEW:** While the word "existentialism" is familiar to most people, not many of us have a clear idea about just what it means. Like a number of other philosophical terms, the meaning of "existentialism" is not only complex, but the word is used by different people in variety of ways that make that complexity even more difficult to sort out. However, unlike most other philosophical terms, the concept of existentialism is primarily used by people who are either not considered philosophers at all, or who bridge the gap between Philosophy and The Arts. In fact, almost all of those who are considered existentialists are writers of Literature, rather than Philosophy, people who use language in a way that is expressive and suggestive, rather than strictly denotative. For some, this difference is "essential," since it enables those writers to express truths about the human condition that often escape the scrutiny of more analytic minds. For others, this different approach is precisely the reason such writers are not considered philosophers in any sense beyond the metaphorical, since their work is artistic (even overtly fictional), rather than theoretical. And, after all, how much truth can there be in fiction?

Such a question, of course, is a matter for debate – one that's lasted since the

days of Plato. And it's only one of many such questions raised by these late 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers. For in addition to reviving perennial concerns about the relation between theory and practice (philosophy and its application), about the existence of God, and about the nature of the human mind, the existentialists generated new ways of asking about the meaning of life, the specter of death, and whether genuine morality was any longer possible. In the process, they developed some novel terminology of their own, including Nihilism, The Absurd, Authenticity, and The Will to Power, as well as new uses of older terms, such as Anxiety, Dread, Nothingness, The Individual, and even Existence. And this only adds to the difficulty of getting a clear idea of just what "existentialism" is. However, as grim as the topics of existentialists often are, most of the writers in this movement were not simply trying to dwell on the most depressing aspects of life. Each, in their own way, was hoping to confront those aspects of life – often overlooked, denied, or repressed – in order to find the strength (either individually or collectively) necessary to deal with them. As a result, existentialist writings have diverse connections – in fields ranging from psychology and theology to economics and politics, from how to become a genuine individual to how to create the most free and open of societies. As we'll see, these modern writers not only question what ties we have, or should have, with the past, but also what sorts of things might be possible in a future which doesn't try to shirk the challenges that face those who happen to be alive today.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- to better recognize existential issues in philosophical texts.
- to know the various subfields of philosophy and the sorts of questions dealt with by philosophers in those areas.
- to know how to form arguments.
- to know the views of the various existentialists.
- to understand the philosophical issues associated with existentialism.
- to identify key figures in the history of modern Western Thought.
- to understand the nature of philosophical argumentation.
- to present and to defend your own views regarding the above issues.
- to better read philosophical texts.
- to recognize philosophical questions.
- to define key concepts in philosophical thought.
- to write an analytical text-based argumentative essay.
- to understand the significance of existentialism in the context of the history of Western Philosophy.

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
<b>Term Paper</b>	(20%) 20 points	<b>A</b>	100 – 90 points
<b>Exam 1</b>	(40%) 40 points	<b>B</b>	89 – 80 points
<b>Exam 2</b>	(40%) 40 points	<b>C</b>	79 – 70 points
<b>Total</b>	100 points	<b>D</b>	69 – 60 points
		<b>F</b>	0 – 59 points

**READINGS:**

Students will be expected to keep up on the weekly reading assignments for the course, to have read the material ***prior*** to class, and to come to class with relevant questions about, and/or criticisms of, those readings.

**EXAMS:**

There will be 2 in-class examinations on material from the reading and class lectures, and there will be no make-up exams.

The University of New Orleans partners with Proctor U, a live, online proctoring service that allows students to complete exams from any location using a computer, webcam, and reliable internet connection.

**TERM PAPER:**

Each student will also be required to write a term paper of not less than 3,000 words on a philosophical subject of his or her choice. The paper is due on the last day of class, and will not be accepted late.

The term paper must be submitted in both hard copy and digital form (via Moodle).

**PRESENTATION:**

Each student will also be required to do a short presentation on either a particular philosopher or a particular existentialist writing.

**Grading:**

Each test will count for 40% of the overall score, and the term paper the remaining 20% – (2 x 40% per test = 80%) + (1 x 20% for term paper) = 100%. An overall score of 360 = A; 320 = B; 280 = C; 240 = D; anything less = F. Failing all tests will necessarily result in an F. In-class attendance will decide all borderline cases.

**Withdrawal Policy – Undergraduate only**

Students are responsible for initiating action to resign from the University (withdraw from all courses) or from a course on or before dates indicated in the current Important dates calendar. Students who fail to resign by the published final date for such action will be retained on the class rolls even though they may be absent for the remainder of the semester and be graded as if they were in attendance. Failure to attend classes does not constitute a resignation. Check the dates on the Registrar's website, <http://www.registrar.uno.edu>. Consult The Bulletin for charges associated w/dropping & adding courses.

**Incomplete Policy – Undergraduate only**

The grade of I means *incomplete* and is given for work of passing quality but which, because of circumstances beyond the student's control, is not complete. The issuance of the grade of I is at the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course. For all graduate and undergraduate students, a grade of I becomes a grade of F if it is not converted before the deadline for adding courses for credit (as printed in the Important Dates Calendar) of the next regular semester including summer semester.

**Repeat Policy**

When a student is permitted to repeat a course for credit, the last grade earned shall be the one which determines course acceptability for degree credit. A student who has earned a C or better in a course may not repeat that course unless, (1) the catalog description indicates that the course may be repeated for credit, or (2) the student's Dean gives prior approval for documented extenuating circumstances.

**Graduate Policies**

Graduate policies often vary from undergraduate policies. To view the applicable policies for graduate students, see the Graduate Student Handbook: <http://www.uno.edu/grad/documents/GraduateStudentHandbook2014.pdf>

**Academic Dishonesty Policy**

<http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf>

**Safety Awareness Facts and Education**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/>

**UNO Counseling Services and UNO Cares**

UNO offers care and support for students in any type of distress. Counseling Services assist students in addressing mental health concerns through assessment, short-term counseling, and career testing and counseling. Find out more at <http://www.uno.edu/counseling-services/>. First-year students often have unique concerns, and UNO Cares is designed to address those students succeed. Contact UNO Cares through <http://www.uno.edu/fye/uno-cares.aspx>.

**Emergency Procedures**

Sign up for emergency notifications via text and/or email at E2Campus Notification: <http://www.uno.edu/ehso/emergency-communications/index.aspx>. All emergency and safety procedures are explained at the Emergency Health and Safety Office: <http://www.uno.edu/ehso/>.

**Diversity at UNO**

As the most diverse public university in the state, UNO maintains a Diversity Affairs division to support the university's efforts towards creating an environment of healthy respect, tolerance, and appreciation for the people from all walks of life, and the expression of intellectual point of view and personal lifestyle. The Office of Diversity Affairs promotes these values through a wide range of programming and activities. <http://diversity.uno.edu/index.cfm>

**Learning and Support Services**

Help is within reach in the form of learning support services, including tutoring in writing and math and other supplemental instruction. Visit the Learning Resource Center, LA 334 – or: <http://www.uno.edu/lrc/>.

**Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity**

UNO is an equal opportunity employer. The Human Resource Management department has more information on UNO's compliance with federal and state regulations regarding EEOC in its Policies and Resources website: <http://www.uno.edu/human-resource-management/policies.aspx>

## **PHIL 3511 – Timeline**

(Subject to Revision)

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic/Reading</b>
1 8/20	Introduction (Syllabus & Timeline)
2 8/25&7	The Advent of Existentialism - Barrett pp. 1-65
3 9/1&3	The Sources of Existentialism - Barrett pp. 69-146
4 9/8&10	Kierkegaard - Kaufmann pp.14-18; 83-99 Barrett pp. 149-176; Marino pp. ix-xvi; 3-105
5 9/15&17	Dostoevsky - Kaufmann pp. 11-14 Marino pp. 193-254
6 9/22&24	Nietzsche - Barrett pp. 177-205; Marino pp. 111-187 Kaufmann pp. 19-22; 100-112
7 9/29&10/1	Rilke - Kaufmann pp. 113-120 Unamuno - Marino pp. 255-294
8	Review

- 10/6&8      Midterm Exam (10/8)
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- 9                      Kafka - Kaufmann pp. 121-130  
10/13&15      *Mid-semester Break (10/15)*
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- 10                      *Term Paper Preparation (10/20)*  
10/20&22      Kafka - "The Metamorphosis"
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- 11                      Jaspers - Kaufmann pp. 22-33; 131-205  
10/27&29
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- 12                      Heidegger - Barrett pp. 206-238; Marino pp. 295-336  
11/3&5              Kaufmann pp. 33-40; 206-221
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- 13                      Sartre - Barrett pp. 239-263; Marino pp. 339-409  
11/10&12              Kaufmann pp. 40-48; 222-311
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- 14                      Beauvoir - Marino pp. 411-439  
11/17&19
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- 15                      Camus - Marino pp. 437-492; The Stranger  
11/24&26      *Thanksgiving (11/26) – But To Whom & For What?*
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- 16                      Integral v. Rational Man - Barrett pp. 267-305;  
12/1&3              Kaufmann pp. 48-51

Final Exam – (12/10 – 3 pm)