

Philosophy 177A: Existentialism

Summer 2023

(last updated: 08/30/2023)

Instructor: Jungsuk Lee

Email: jslee@humnet.ucla.edu

Lecture Time: MW 10:45am-12:50pm

(Zoom: <https://ucla.zoom.us/j/99903206738>)

Office Hours: Th 10am-12pm

(Zoom: <https://ucla.zoom.us/j/96898696580>)

TA: Jacob (Yung Hsi) Chen

Email: jc177@g.ucla.edu

Discussion Section Time:

1A: M 3:30pm-4:20pm

1B: W 1:30pm-2:20pm

(Zoom:

Office Hours: F 1pm-3pm

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Course Description: It is familiar advice to be oneself or be truthful to oneself—i.e., to lead one's life *authentically*. However, this notion of authenticity as an ethical ideal seems to be quite elusive. To grasp it better, we will study the philosophical views of some central figures from the Existentialist tradition in which the notion grew and evolved. The views we will explore are those of Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. In examining different senses they assign to the notion of authenticity, our aim is to get clearer on the following issues: (1) what does it mean to live authentically/inauthentically? (2) To what extent does the ideal of authenticity have normative authority over our life, i.e. tell us how we ought to be living? (3) What insight might our reflection on authenticity be able to offer as to socio-political issues such as oppression and systemic injustice?

Course Requirements:

- Midterm paper – 40%

4-5 page double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 12 pt. font.

Paper prompts will be distributed no later than the end of week 3.

- Final paper – 50%

5-6 page double-spaced pages (with the same formatting as above).

Paper prompts will be distributed no later than the end of week 5.

- Section participation – 6%

- Reading responses – 4%

Students should submit four RRs in total. Submitting each makes up 1 pt—not graded for quality, but should be written in good faith.

Late Assignment Policy: Paper submitted late will be penalized by 3% per day (all grades will be assigned numerically on a 100-point scale). When there's a *legitimate* reason, one can request an extension, but it has to be requested no later than 48 hours before the due date (unexpected emergency is an exception to this).

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious offense that will be dealt with in accordance with university policy, which you are expected to be familiar with. For information about

academic integrity at UCLA, see the Dean of Student's Site on Academic Integrity:

<https://deanofstudents.ucla.edu/academic-integrity>

If you are in doubt about what needs to be cited or what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me or the TA *before* you turn your paper in.

Zoom and Remote Learning: This course will take place remotely, via Zoom (both the lecture portion and the discussion section). All sessions of the lecture and section will occur synchronously, and it is expected that you will attend them live, in real time. However, I may choose to record the lectures and make them available to students who must miss class for legitimate reasons. If so, the recording will not include any video of people. So even if you have your camera on and you ask a question during lecture, only your audio, not your video, will show up on the recording.

From the instructor's side, seeing a decent number of students' faces really makes a difference and helps. So please turn on your camera if you are comfortable doing so.

Readings: All required and optional readings will be available on Bruinlearn. Below is the list of required readings:

Guignon, C. & Pereboom, D. (eds.) 2001. *Existentialism: Basic Writings* (2nd edition). Hackett.

Many of the readings are difficult, both because they deal with difficult topics and because they employ unfamiliar technical language (thoroughly understanding writings by each of these philosophers itself is a full-time job). So be prepared to be puzzled by them, but don't give up! Due to the nature of the readings, attending lectures and sections and taking advantage of office hours is absolutely crucial for your success in this course: there we will do our best to demystify things.

Schedule of Readings:

* = required; ** = optional

Week 1: Introduction / Kierkegaard

Class 1

No required reading

Course Introduction: setting up the context and laying out the three main question

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Two**

Plato, *Phaedo* (excerpted)**

Cooper, *Existentialism* (excerpted)**

Aho, *Existentialism* (excerpted)**

Korsgaard, *The Source of Normativity*, Introduction**

Class 2

Fear and Trembling, Preface*, Preliminary Expectoration*, "Problema I", Problema 2*

Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality"*** (excerpted);

Week 2: Kierkegaard

Class 3

Fear and Trembling, continued

The Sickness Unto Death, Part One* (excerpted)

Ebels-Duggan, "Beyond Words"***

Class 4

Fear and Trembling, continued

The Sickness Unto Death, Part One*

Week 3: Kierkegaard/Heidegger

Class 5

The Sickness Unto Death, continued

Concluding Unscientific Postscript: the subjective truth, inwardness; truth is subjectivity*

Class 6

Being and Time, Introduction*, Division One: Analysis of *Dasein* (excerpts)*

Excerpts from Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World****

Week 4: Heidegger

Class 7

Being and Time, Division One: Analysis of *Dasein* (excerpted), continued

Class 8

Being and Time, Division One: Analysis of *Dasein* (excerpted), continued

Week 5: Heidegger

Class 9

Labor Day

Class 10

Being and Time, Division Two: *Dasein* and Temporality (excerpted)*

Week 6: Sartre

Class 11

Sartre, selections from *Being and Nothingness* (ch. 3, 4, 5, 6)*

Class 12

Sartre, selections from *Being and Nothingness*, continued

Concluding discussion/Q&A (for the final)

Accommodations: Please email me if you require special accommodations due to learning disabilities, religious practices, physical requirements, medical needs, mental health issues, or *any other* reasons (also refer to “**resources**” below).

Resources:

The Center for Accessible Education (CAE)¹:

<https://www.cae.ucla.edu/> or (310) 825-1501.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):

<https://www.caps.ucla.edu/> or (310) 825-0768

CARE: Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Misconduct:

<https://careprogram.ucla.edu/> or (310) 206-2465 (24 Hour Crisis Counseling (888) 200-6665)

UCLA Writing Programs:

<http://www.wp.ucla.edu/>

Professor Jim Pryor's writing tips for philosophers:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

¹ If you are already registered with CAE, please request your Letter of Accommodation on the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Please note that the CAE does not send accommodation letters to instructors--you must request that I and the TA view the letter in the online Faculty Portal. Once you have requested your accommodations via the Student Portal, please notify me and the TA immediately so we can view your letter.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website, visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact them by phone.