

# Existentialism 3810 - Summer 2022 Syllabus

**Instructor: Spencer Ivy**

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Office Hours: Via Zoom, by appointment

Office Location: Somewhere amidst the buzzing vastness of Amazon's server farm

Preferred Method of Contact: Email

## COURSE MATERIALS

You must purchase four books for this course. Please have the correct translations of each as I will refer to page numbers during lecture and for reading assignments. The total cost of all four books is about \$35. For all other required readings, I will provide photocopies (although you may buy your own copies if you'd like to own the books. I will post them below as well).

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS THAT YOU MUST PURCHASE** (with hyperlinks – click the books' title - to Amazon):

1. [The Stranger](#) – Albert Camus
2. [The Myth of Sisyphus](#) – Albert Camus
3. [Existentialism is a Humanism](#) – Jean-Paul Sartre
4. [The Ethics of Ambiguity](#) – Simone de Beauvoir
5. <https://utah.kanopy.com/video/seventh-seal> (This is free, but it's here so you have it)

**Optional texts (I will provide photocopies of these readings, but if you would like to own the books, I've linked to the versions I use below)**

1. [The Portable Nietzsche](#) – Kauffman Translation
2. [Untimely Meditations](#) – Nietzsche, Hollingdale Translation
3. [The Brothers Karamazov](#) – Dostoevsky, I use the Constance Garnett Translation, although Pevear and Volokhonsky are also awesome for a bit more of a modern take. I'd steer clear of other options. Find the edition you like on amazon or at your favorite local bookstore.
4. [Fear and Trembling](#) – Kierkegaard (The Hong translation is also standard)

**Other Notable Existentialist Works that I wanted to add in to the syllabus, but that we won't have time for (if you want more fun reading, these are other great existentialist texts)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <a href="#">I and Thou</a> – Buber                | 8. <a href="#">The Trial</a> - Kafka  |
| 2. <a href="#">The Question</a> – Alleg              | 9. <a href="#">No Exit &amp; Other Plays</a> – Sartre                       |
| 3. <a href="#">The Fall</a> – Camus                  | 10. <a href="#">Nausea</a> – Sartre   |
| 4. <a href="#">Caligula</a> - Camus                  | 11. <a href="#">Phenomenology of Perception</a> – Merleau-Ponty             |
| 5. <a href="#">The Second Sex</a> - Beauvoir         | 12. <a href="#">On the Abolition of All Political Parties</a> – Simone Weil |
| 6. <a href="#">Man's Search for Meaning</a> - Frankl |   |
| 7. <a href="#">Being and Time</a> – Heidegger        |   |

## COURSE READING & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

### Part 1: What is Existentialism?

Week 1: May 19th

Intro Week – What is Existentialism & Syllabus

*Reading – The Absurd, Nagel*

Week 2: May 26

Novel Beginnings: The Stranger – Camus  
*Reading – The Whole Book*

### Part 2: God, Faith, & The Absurd

Week 3: June 2

Everything is Permissible in God's Absence – Dostoevsky

*Reading – Brother's K. Grand Inquisitor Chapter (On Canvas)*

Week 4: June 9

Abraham's Absurd Faith – Kierkegaard  
*Reading – Selections from Fear and Trembling (On Canvas)*

Week 5: June 16

The Death of God & Interposition of the Ego – Nietzsche

*Reading – Selections from Untimely Meditations & Zarathustra (On Canvas)*

Week 6: June 23

MOVIE NIGHT: The Seventh Seal – Bergman

*Reading – None, watch [the movie](#) +*

*Discussion during normal Lecture time*

**Optional Midterm (Due July 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

Week 7: June 30 **WEEK OFF**

### Part 3: The Core Texts

Week 8: July 7

The Myth of Sisyphus part 1 – Camus

*Reading – Pages 1-66*

Week 9: July 14

The Myth of Sisyphus Part 2 – Camus

*Reading - Pages 66 - 124*

Week 10: July 21

Existentialism is a Humanism – Sartre

*Reading – Pages 17-54*

Week 11: July 28

The Ethics of Ambiguity Part 1 – Beauvoir

*Reading – Pages 1-79*

Week 12: Aug 4

The Ethics of Ambiguity Part 2 – Beauvoir  
*Reading - Pages 79-173; **Optional Final***

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS DUE Aug 12**

**Lectures will be recorded on Zoom, Thursdays at 5pm in CTIHB 459.** You may attend remotely via zoom, in person, or just watch the recorded versions anytime you like. There is no attendance requirement, but showing up can earn you points (see course assignments for details)

**OPTIONAL EXISTENTIALISM READING GROUP:** If there is interest, I will run a reading group for those students who want to dig that much deeper into existentialism that is relevant to our current lived experience. Our text will be [Gravity and Grace](#) by Simone Weil. Camus called Weil 'the most illuminating intellect of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,' and in this work, she contends with faith and materialism through Christian Mysticism. *This reading group is not graded or an official part of the course.* We will read about 50 pages every 2 weeks, and discuss biweekly after class. Reading group discussions are not recorded, but available to in person and zoom students.

## COURSE GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

To earn a 100% in the course, you must earn 100 total points. There are MANY ways to do this and you may 'choose your own grading adventure.' You may earn points by completing any of the tasks outlined below. Choose to complete assignments in whatever combination works best for you. All assignments will be graded, so you may not earn full points for just completion. **There are no due dates: you may complete any assignment at any time. HOWEVER, although you may submit them for full credit at any time during the semester, you may only earn up to 50 points from assignments scheduled before the midterm.**

### **Attendance: Up to ~65 points (Contingent on class cancellations/accommodations)**

#### *Zoom Attendance: 2 (+3) points*

- You may attend lectures via zoom with your camera off for a total of 2 points. If you have your camera on during class, you will earn a full 5 points.

#### *In Person Attendance: 5 points*

- You may show up to class in person. If you do, you will earn the full 5 points.

### **Exams: Up to 100 points**

#### *How My Exams Work*

- One week before the exam is due, you will receive a handout with 4 prompts. Each of the prompts is about a paragraph worth of questions on a particular topic. You will be required to answer 3 of the 4 prompts. All three prompts must be answered for the test to be graded. You may email me any questions you have about the exam – both logistics and content.

#### *Midterm Exam: 50 points*

#### *Final Exam: 50 points*

### **Discussion Board: Up to 130 points** (10 points possible per board)

- *Ask a Question About the Reading: up to 3 points (Once per board)*
  - o Up to 3 points for a well formulated question that expresses a genuine problem with the reading. Good questions earning all five points will be able to stimulate a discussion (think in the vicinity of 100+ words)
  - o Up to 2 EXTRA points for a well formulated response to an answer from another student. The more robust and well-formulated your response, the more points you will earn.
- *Answer a Question: up to 5 points (Once per board)*
  - o For a full 5 points, answer your classmate's question like a professor would – with clarity and a full grasp of the reading & concepts in play. A good response will stimulate further conversation.

### **Reading Write-Up: Up to 130 points**

- Write a 300-500 word summary of a week's reading and the lessons you've learned from it in the context of that week's lecture. Full points will be awarded to papers that are more than 300 words, though not exceeding 500, and that express a strong grasp of that week's course content.

### **Extra Credit: Up to 50 points (variable based on project) (You can do as many of these as are approved)**

*Pitch me a creative project. Some ideas from past classes can include producing philosophical works of art (songs/paintings/drawings), a ~10-15 page paper, or a performance piece. The world is your oyster here, get creative, pitch your idea, and I'll work with you to make it viable.*

**Points translate to grades as follows:**

<b>95 and above</b>	<b>= A</b>
<b>90-94</b>	<b>= A-</b>
<b>88-89</b>	<b>= B+</b>
<b>84-87</b>	<b>= B</b>
<b>80-83</b>	<b>= B-</b>
<b>78-79</b>	<b>= C+</b>
<b>74-77</b>	<b>= C</b>
<b>70-73</b>	<b>= C-</b>
<b>etc.</b>	
<b>Below 60</b>	<b>= E</b>

ah, ze weekénd

she is beautiful, no?

and yet, she can never be yours

for when you feel zat she will stay with you  
forever

alas, she is already gone~



**This is an Existentialist Crab who  
has helped fill the otherwise  
empty space on this part of the  
syllabus.**

**Thanks Existentialist Crab.**

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

1. **The Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in

an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

2. **Addressing Sexual Misconduct.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) 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, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).
3. **Drop/Withdrawal.** Last day to Add/Drop this class: Friday Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>. Last day to withdraw from this class: Oct 21<sup>st</sup>
4. **University Policies and Procedures:**
  400. Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)
  401. Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>(Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.)
  402. **General Education Statement:** This course contributes to the University of Utah's Quantitative Reasoning requirement. For such courses, academic units must identify three essential learning outcomes (ELOs) that are relevant to university general education objectives. The ELOs for this course are: Inquiry and Analysis, Quantitative Literacy and Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning.
5. **Academic Misconduct:** "Academic Misconduct" includes, but is not limited to cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information, as defined further below. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct." – **DON'T CHEAT. I TAKE CHEATING VERY SERIOUSLY AND WILL FAIL YOU IF YOU DO.**

## COURSE POLICIES

Attendance & Punctuality: According to University policy, “**Instructors must communicate any particular attendance requirements of the course to students in writing on or before the first class meeting**” (PPM, Policy 6-100III-O)]. Attendance is not mandatory, but may still earn you points. See the Grading Section to learn more.

*All students who come to class are required to **socially distance and wear masks** for the duration of their time on campus. I will be policing this and helping ensure maximal safety for all of our colleagues and classmates.*

Food & Drink: If you bring drinks to class, please tidy up and be respectful of your classmates. **Eating is not allowed in class.**

Electronic Devices in Class: You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes on the lecture in class. Otherwise, no electronic devices may be used in class. If you use your laptop or tablet to check Facebook etc., play games or engage in other non-class activities you will be asked to turn those applications off. Repeat offenders will be asked to leave class.

Canvas: All information about this class will be posted on Canvas. Please consult the class Canvas page regularly. Your Canvas activity for each class is logged automatically. The system detects every time you log on and records how long you visited for. Your participation through Canvas is measured this way.

Zoom: If you are using zoom, please be respectful. Mute your mic by default and use the “Raise Hand” feature before unmuting.

*Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements and in the Calendar.*

## Optional Reading Group: Simone Weil's [Gravity and Grace](#)

Simone's Gravity and Grace is a series of aphorisms and essays that I have broken up into 5 parts. We will discuss each part of the collection every 2 weeks or so. The schedule is below:

**June 2<sup>nd</sup> : Introduction**

**June 16<sup>th</sup> : Gravity & Grace – Necessity and Obedience (pgs 1-51)**

**July 7<sup>th</sup> : Illusions – Contradiction (pgs 51-104)**

**July 21<sup>st</sup> : The Distance b/w Necessary and Good – Metaxu (pgs 104-148)**

**August 4<sup>th</sup> : Beauty – The End (pgs 148-End)**

### **WHEN?**

Reading group discussions will occur on *Thursday evenings after the regular lecture* has ended. I will not record them and they will be totally informal. This is NOT for a grade.

### **WHAT?**

We will discuss the book, its existentialist themes, and the relevance of its lessons for our respective walks of life.

### **HOW?**

I will help guide the reading group with some topical questions and explanations when necessary, but mostly I will let the discussion flow naturally. I will do my best not to lecture or dominate the group. The idea is to share and hear everyone's opinions, ideas, and interpretations of the novel. So for this group, don't think of me as your professor, but as a colleague. Basically, it's not my goal to *teach* Weil's work to you, but to discuss and learn it together.

### **Minor Details**

*I will continue to read and run the reading group as long as at least 2 or 3 of yall keep up with it as well. Everyone in the class is invited and encouraged to take part. If you would like to include someone in the reading group that is not in the class, please ask for my permission first.*