Philosophy Department

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE
1200 Academy St. Kalamazoo, MI 49006

EXISTENTIALISM

WINTER, 1999

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais
Humphrey House #202
Phone # 337-7076
Offices Hours:
1) Mon. 2:00 - 3:45
2) Tue. 10:30 - 11:30
3) By Appointment.

TEXTS:


3. Husserl, Edmund Cartesian Meditations (Excerpts)

SECONDARY LITERATURE:

1. Dreyfus, Hubert: Being In The World: A Commentary on Division One of Being and Time.


FILMS:

1. Babette's Feast.
2. The Hairdresser's Husband.
3. The Conversation.
4. Ikuru (To Live).
6. The Passenger.
7. The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

**COURSE GOALS:**

To introduce students to existentialism as a critique of traditional Western philosophy (See detailed course description after reading schedule).

**EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, fidelity to an academic journal, two midterm examinations and a final paper.

Class Participation Seminar presentations and discussion 40%
Midterm examinations 2 @ 15% each 30%
Journal Required though ungraded 10%
Final Paper 10-15 pages 20%

**POLICIES:**

Open, respectful and critical discussion is the life-blood of this course. Journals prepare participants for classroom deliberation, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. Journals will be collected every three weeks, and the final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

**SCHEDULE OF READING**

**HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION: EXISTENTIALISM AS A CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY.**

TUE, JAN 5TH: COURSE MECHANICS
WEEK ONE

THURS, JAN 7TH: THE VOLUNTARIST CRITIQUE OF INTELLECTUALISM & THE EXISTENTIALISM ETHIC OF AUTHENTIC INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS:

2. Handout.

KIERKEGAARD'S ANALYSIS OF DEFINING RELATIONS: LOVE OF ANOTHER AS ANALOGY FOR FAITH

TUE. JAN 12TH: THE DEMANDS OF PSEUDONYMOUS AUTHORSHIP UPON THE READER:

WEEK TWO


THURS. JAN 14TH: JOHANNES DE SILENTIO'S ADMIRATION OF ABRAHAM.


TUE. JAN 19TH: KNIGHTS OF FAITH; KNIGHTS OF RESIGNATION.

WEEK THREE

1. FILM #1: Babette's Feast.

THURS. JAN 21ST: THE TELEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION OF THE ETHICAL & RELIGIOUS ABSOLUTION.

1. Discussion of Babette's Feast.

2. "Problem 1" & "Problem 2" (Guignon, pp. 48-70).

TUE. JAN 26TH: ANTI-CLIMACUS'S DEFINITION OF THE SELF AND JOHANNES CLIMACUS'S CONCEPT OF SUBJECTIVE TRUTH.

WEEK FOUR

1. Sickness Unto Death (Guignon, pp. 70-77).

2. Concluding Unscientific Postscript (Guignon, pp. 77-85).

3. FILM #2: The Hairdresser's Husband (Evening film).

4. Midterm Assignment #1.

NIETZSCHE'S EARLY DUALISM AND HIS LATER CONCEPT OF THE WILL TO POWER:

THURS. JAN 28TH: THE APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN

1. Discussion of The Hairdresser's Husband.

3. The Birth of Tragedy (Guignon pp. 111-115).

TUES, FEB 2ND: THE OVERMAN                        WEEK FIVE

1. The Gay Science (Guignon, pp. 115-164).

2. Twilight of the Idols (Guignon, pp. 164-175).


HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF BEING IN THE WORLD: CARE, CONSCIENCE AND AUTHENTICITY

THURS. FEB 4TH: THE EXPERIENCE OF DISRUPTION REVEALS OUR SITUATION.

1. FILM #3: The Conversation.

2. Handout.

TUE. FEB 9H: HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF TRANSCENDENTAL REFLECTION.

WEEK SIX

1. Heidegger Introduction (Guignon, pp. 175-203).

2. Being and Time (Guignon, pp. 203-247).

THURS, FEB 11TH: HEIDEGGER'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY.

1. Being and Time (Continued).

2. Olafson, "Inside and Outside" & "Perception as Presence."

3. Discussion of The Conversation.

TUES, FEB 16TH: HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY.

WEEK SEVEN

1. Olafson, "Presence and Absence" & "Individuation."

2. FILM #4: Ikuru.

THURS, FEB 18TH: HEIDEGGER'S ACCOUNT OF THE "CONCRETE SITUATION."

1. Olafson, "Polarity and Agency," "Bodies" & "The entity each of us is."
TUE, FEB 23RD: KEEPING TRACK OF TIME.     WEEK EIGHT

1. FILM #5: Nobody's Fool.
2. Midterm Assignment #2.

THURS, FEB. 25TH: KEEPING TRACK OF TIME (CONT).

1. Discussion of Nobody's Fool.

TUE, MARCH 2ND: FACTICITY AND FREEDOM: SARTRE'S INTERPRETATION OF Being and Time.     WEEK NINE

1. FILM #6: The Passenger.

THURS, MARCH 4TH: SARTRE'S CONCEPT OF EXISTENTIALISM.

2. The Humanism of Existentialism (Guignon, pp. 268-287).
3. Discussion of The Passenger.

TUE, MARCH 9TH: BAD FAITH, FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY. WEEK TEN

1. Discussion of The Passenger.

THURS, MARCH 11TH: REVIEW & COURSE EVALUATIONS

FINALS WEEK:

EXTENDED COURSE DESCRIPTION

EXISTENTIALISM, SUMMER 1996

THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTIC INTERSUBJECTIVITY

In this course, we will examine the works of several "existentialist" philosophers: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre. These philosophers attempt to unseat traditional, "teleological" and "cognitivist" conceptions of human subjectivity. From the
Ancient Greeks we inherit the idea that the self is a "rational," "thinking," or "cognitive" being defined by an inherent purpose or telos. According to this conception, the drama of human life is played out in a thinking being's appraisal of its beliefs. Knowledge, not will -- truth, not passion -- assume center stage here. Against this "intellectualist" view of the self, existentialists emphasize another strand of Western civilization: our "Judeo-Christian" inheritance. Accordingly they emphasize the role of choice, decisions or "volition" in human life. For the existentialists, the drama of human life is less a matter of truth than will. Accordingly, they view desire, emotions, choice and chance in a decidedly more favorable light than traditional intellectualist philosophers.

Existentialism is generally associated -- particularly in the minds of North-American readers -- with the image of a solitary individual confronting questions of a distinctively personal nature. Against the widespread enthusiasm for existentialism as promoting "individualism" or the idea that human life is essentially isolated or private, I will argue that the existentialist we read are concerned less with "individuality" than with the quality of our ethical relations to others. Throughout the course, we will be concerned with how such philosophers conceptualize our "bonds" with others.

We will compare and contrast how such philosophers view the role of emotion, desire and choice in interpersonal relations. More specifically, we will survey their efforts to reconstellate traditional philosophical dichotomies between thought/being, body/mind, rationality/irrationality and feeling/reason.