

EXISTENTIALISM AND THE MEANING OF LIFE--PHIL 3400

INSTRUCTOR: Jim Hill

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

- Learn what existentialism is and what it can mean for practical living.
- Learn the philosophical and historical background to existentialist thought, especially the work of Plato, Augustine, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, the Enlightenment thinkers, German idealists and romanticists.
- Become acquainted with major classical existentialist thinkers: Nietzsche, Camus, Heidegger, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Buber, Jaspers, Marcel, Tillich, Bultmann, and others.
- Become acquainted with the impact of existentialism on literature, art, music, drama, dance, poetry, and film.
- Develop your own philosophical position in light of the insights gained through the careful examination and assessment of existentialist thought.
- Continue to develop your skills in critical thinking and deep probing of philosophical issues, which you will demonstrate in oral and written discourse for this course.

REQUIRED TEXTS: **Existentialism** by Robert Solomon

The Stranger by Albert Camus

After the Fall by Arthur Miller

The Courage to Be by Paul Tillich

Note: Please bring these books with you to every class meeting!

MEETING TIME: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45p. Class will begin promptly at 3:30; please be in class on time. Class will end no later than 4:45p. (Please do not prepare to leave before I dismiss class.)

CLASS DECORUM: I note and record student attendance and absence. You may have two unexcused absences only; for every additional absence, your final grade will be docked 5 points. For an excused absence, you must present to me a written excuse. You are responsible for any notes and announcements made for missed classes. You are expected to be in class and to participate in class discussion. If you must be late to class or must leave before class is over, please let me know in advance, and why you must be so. *Please turn off cell-phones right before and during class.* I expect students to give their full attention to class lectures and discussions. I will compose a class e-mail list; you must check your e-mail daily for messages from me to include outlines for the next class.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS: There are three requirements in order to do well in this course: **First:** Be in class, participate, take good notes, and stay in touch with me by making office visits and corresponding by e-mail. **Second:** Take weekly tests/short papers/class presentations that will cover readings, class notes and discussions. **Third:** Submit a final project paper on an existential theme. I will give you instructions for this final paper later in the course.

FINAL GRADE:

Your final grade will be determined on the basis of the following: (1) Your class attendance, participation, demonstrated interest and commitment to the course; (2) the average grade of your fourteen weekly tests; and (3) your final paper.

OFFICE HOURS:

By appointment or drop by. My office is upstairs in the Honors House. e-mail: jimhill@valdosta.edu. Honors House phone: 249-4894.

EXISTENTIALISM AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

General Outline and Overview of the Course

- I. Introduction AUG 18
- II. Basic themes of existentialism.
- III. Background to existentialist thought AUG 20
 - 1. Protagoras
 - 2. The Enlightenment
 - 3. German Romanticism
 - 4. Historical Events
 - 5. Immanuel Kant
 - 6. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
 - 7. Edmund Husserl
 - 8. Historical events
- IV. Atheistic existentialists
 - 1. Friedrich Nietzsche AUG 25 & 27
 - 2. Albert Camus SEPT 1 & 3 & 8
 - 3. Arthur Miller
 - 4. Martin Heidegger SEPT 9 & 15 & 17
 - 5. Jean-Paul Sartre SEPT 22 & 24
 - 6. Simone de Beauvoir SEPT 6
 - 7. Summary
- V. Interlude SEPT 30 & OCT 1
 - 1. Kafka, Dostoevsky, and others.
- VI. Religious existentialists
 - 1. Soren Kierkegaard OCT 6 & 8
 - 2. Martin Buber OCT 13 [OCT 17 & 19]
 - 3. Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers OCT 15
 - 4. Paul Tillich OCT 27 & 29
 - 5. Rudolph Bultmann OCT 3 & 5
 - 6. Saint Augustine OCT 10 & 12
- VII. Summary of the course NOV 24 & DEC 1
 - 1. What have we learned?
 - 2. How does existentialism contribute to:
 - i. the meaning of life?
 - ii. literature, art, music, dance, film?
 - iii. contemporary psychology and psychotherapy?
 - iv. the relationship between science, philosophy and religion?
 - v. contemporary ethics and moral philosophy?
 - vi. social-political philosophy?
 - vii. Postmodernism?
 - viii. Contemporary Jewish and Christian theology?