

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25

PHILOSOP 2557F
Existentialism

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

N/A

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the prerequisites for this course or have special permission to take the course without the prerequisites. [Student Responsibility for Course Selection](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Existentialists define who we are through what we do and how we live our lives. We cannot turn to external sources such as religion, morals, or public opinion to tell us what to do, or how to find meaning. That is our task in life. This does not mean we are not responsible for others, for the environment, or for ourselves. But there is no formula for how to accomplish this responsibility, which can be both terrifying and freeing. In this course we will turn to classic existentialists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Fanon and Martin Heidegger, who raise these fundamental existential questions. We will also read works from a few contemporary thinkers who existentially explore our ecological relations as well as the limits of freedom such as racialization, sexuality and gender. We will explore how to find meaning in our everyday existence, which is marked by the paradox of seeming to have limitless choice at the same time as there is external pressure to succeed and conform. We learn from these thinkers that there are no absolute truths, yet that does not mean that all truths are relative, that there is no right or wrong. Our responsibility is to find our own path in a world we share with others.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will enable students to:

- Understand the fundamentals of the existentialist tradition
- Learn how to apply an existentialist approach
- Think about the ways we are responsible for the decisions we make and do not make
- Develop reading, questioning and critical writing skills
- Improve oral communication skills

TEXTS

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Citadel Press, 1962, 2000). In bookstore.
- Other readings will be made available on OWL Brightspace.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Evaluation

Text Analysis	20%	(4-5 double-spaced pages)
Final Essay	25%	(6-7 double-spaced pages)
Forum Participation	15%	
Final exam	40%	

Participation: During the second hour of the Thursday Class, we will break the class into small groups. Everyone will sign up to be responsible for leading a small group discussion twice over the semester. On your designated week, you will come to class with a question that you can of course modify during the discussion. You will have 15 minutes to discuss your question with 3 or 4 other classmates. After class you will post your question and a 200-word synopsis of your group's conclusion to your question on the Owl Forum under the designated week. You will post your synopsis within 48 hours after the end of class. Questions should be open questions that invite discussion. Each of the two posted questions and synopses are worth 5%. Another 5% is reserved for participation in group discussions.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

- Late papers will be penalized 2 percentage points per day late.
- The grade for any missed assignments worth less than 10% will be added to the final exam.

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html> . It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No electronic aids (including smart phones and smart watches) will be permitted for the exam.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Absences at Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

SUPPORT SERVICES

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

THIS OUTLINE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE, GIVEN SUFFICIENT PRIOR NOTICE