

The University of Western Ontario
Brescia University College

Forerunners of Existentialism

Philosophy 2553G

Dr. Dennis Hudecki

Mon: 12:30-2:30
Wed: 1:30-2:30

Winter, 2017
Room BR 185

Course Description:

What is it to be the individual that I am? Does life have a meaning above and beyond the meaning I give it? Should I believe in God? How much freedom do I have in determining the course of my life? What is truth and how do I go about finding it?

Questions about meaning, freedom and truth are not new in philosophy. But what is distinctive about existentialism is that it raises these questions in ways especially designed to engage the reader personally--as, according to most existentialists, the single individual he or she really is. Existentialists, among other things, ask us to reevaluate our views about science. Several existentialists see misunderstandings of it, or misuses of it, as a cause of poor and shallow understandings of the self.

Existentialism is the philosophical doctrine that emphasizes the importance of developing oneself into a full human being through free, individual choices, inwardness, reasoning, courage and self-honesty. The existentialist movement is relatively new in philosophy. It criticizes other modern philosophies and psychologies (e.g., communitarianism, evolutionary psychology, scientific humanism, radical empiricism, behaviourism, and speculative rationalism) for treating life's most important questions in inappropriate ways--ways that are not fully relevant and complex enough to do justice to the questions being addressed. Many modern approaches to life, as found in philosophy and the social sciences, existentialism says, tend to reduce the self into categories too narrow or too abstract. The mistakes are not always intellectual; the continued use of faulty categories to understand oneself may also be an evasion from the true, full self that each of us is. Existentialism, by contrast, attempts to address itself to the scientifically non-answerable but all-important issues that each person faces as they confront life's ultimate questions.

Existentialism has had an extraordinarily broad influence outside of philosophy. Its distinctive themes can be found throughout music (including rock music), literature, film and the other arts, as well as in psychology, political theory and theology. As we study the philosophic fundamentals of the movement, we will keep an eye on its wider presence in our culture.

The writers that we will study are Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Dostoevsky proclaims and celebrates human freedom, as messy and unproductive as it is. Kierkegaard, flying in the face of an age that is love with objective knowledge, asserts that "truth is subjectivity"--not objectivity. Nietzsche attempts to expose what he thinks is the false foundation upon which religion, morality, and much of western culture, rest.

Evaluation:

class participation -----	10%
one essay (due April 5) -----	25%
mid-term test (March 1) -----	30%
final exam-----	35%

Course Materials:

Students must buy the Philosophy 2553G course package from the UWO bookstore.

Office Hours:

The easiest way for you to contact me is right after every class, in the classroom. I make myself available at that time for as long as needed. Furthermore, I will especially try to be in my office at Brescia on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:30. Still, to make sure, you should phone ahead to make sure I am there. My office is in the portable complex that is located behind the Merici Lounge. You may have to ring the doorbell to get in. Please feel free to drop into my office anytime, or by appointment at a mutually acceptable time. You can also communicate with me by phone or voice-mail (tel: 519-432-8353, ext. 28245), or you can reach me via email at: <dhudecki@uwo.ca>. Please put something like "Philosophy 2553G" in the subject heading of any email you send me. Otherwise I may inadvertently delete it without reading it. (Please be warned that, because of the number of students I have, I may be slow in answering your e-mail.) Please do not hesitate to come in and see me regarding course matters or other matters. Feel free to visit if you want to philosophize about any issue--course-related or not! Regardless of why you are there, it will be my duty and my pleasure to try to help.

Course Outcomes**At the end of the course, students will:**

- be better acquainted with the some of the most important writings of Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and will be better able to reflect deeply upon them better able to discuss and write about them;
- be better able to articulate what existentialism is by calling attention to some of its main themes;
- will better understand how the existentialist concept of "the individual" runs directly against some forms of group or identity politics;
- be better able to identify and appreciate the existentialist themes that often appear in contemporary literature, movies, music and the other arts;
- better understand how Kierkegaard and Nietzsche can be seen as forming the roots of existentialism;
- have thought about in depth the philosophical issues raised by early existentialist thinkers regarding the meaning of life, including ethical and religious issues and issues pertaining to the purpose of art;
- be better able to find within themselves and give expression to the philosophical questions that are most personally important to them as individuals;
- have an understanding of the importance of inwardness or self-knowledge in order to live a happy, purposeful life;
- have a better understanding of the role that rational argumentation plays in the search for truth;
- be better able to articulate and defend their philosophical views in both written and spoken form
- have a better appreciation of the discipline of philosophy.

2016-17 BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation for illness will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Minor ailments typically treated by over-the-counter medications will not normally be accommodated. Documentation shall be submitted as soon as possible to the student's Academic Advisor indicating the period of illness and when the student should be able to resume academic responsibilities. Students must submit their documentation along with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are **not** grounds for academic accommodation. A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded from: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg117.html> The student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full policy on requesting accommodation due to illness can be viewed at:

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

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg130.html>)

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

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.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg113.html>

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar. If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

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.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision

from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Student Academic Appeals under Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg112.html>)

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisite(s). Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at <http://brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar-services/> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for information including a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.