

## Existentialism and Contemporary Philosophy

Philosophy 321, Spring 2021

Instructor: Jeffrey A. Bell, Ph.D.

Time: 12:30-1:45pm MW, in Fayard 239

Office Hours: By appointment only, in Fayard 355C.

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Course web page:

<http://www.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/>

Click Courses link and then click on link to this course.

### Required Reading:

Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Camus, *The Stranger*

Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*

Foucault, *Knowledge/Power*

Deleuze, "Society of Control" (online)

### Course Objectives

This course will explore some of the key works of the writers that have come to be identified with the existential tradition. A common theme in these works, and one we will explore in this course, is the question of how one lives a meaningful, fulfilling life. Where does our sense of purpose in life come from? How can we be sure we have understood this purpose correctly? What if there is no purpose? These questions and other related questions will be the primary focus of the books and our classroom discussion.

### Course Requirements

There will be one midterm exam (20%), a final (30%), and two written assignments (25% each). The first written assignment is to be 4 pages long (1000 words, no less). This paper is to discuss one of the topics that will be posted online. The second written assignment (1500 words) is to be a research paper on a topic or your choosing that is relevant to the course. You may also elect to write just one paper, a 2500-word research paper on a topic of your choice. This paper will be worth 50% of your grade. In both the 1500-word and 2500-word papers **you must make notable reference to course readings and to a substantial outside source (one not required for the course, and hence the research part of the research paper)**. Papers that do not do this will not be accepted. For more details, see the paper requirements link at the moodle page for this course. I strongly recommend that you pre-approve your topics. If you use a computer word processing program, keep a copy of your work on a backup disk and back up your files regularly. Loss of a computer file will not be accepted as an excuse for not turning in your work on time. The two exams will have a section of short answer questions, a section on passage interpretations, and an essay question.

### Attendance Requirements

Class participation is an integral part of the course. Failure to attend class regularly will harm your final grade. **Note: the readings will be supplemented with lectures, and material from these lectures will appear on the exams.** Students who are not listed on the official class roll are not properly registered for the course and will not be allowed to attend class. Students bear the responsibility for ensuring that they are listed on the official class roll. Students with disabilities: If you are a qualified student with a disability seeking accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to self-identify with the Office of Student Life, Room 203, Student Union.

Student behavior/classroom decorum: Free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to benefit from the instruction is not acceptable. Examples may include routinely entering class late or departing early; use of beepers, cellular telephones, or other electronic devices; repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while others are speaking; or arguing in a way that is perceived as "crossing the civility line." In the event of a situation where a student legitimately needs to carry a beeper/cellular telephone to class, prior notice and approval of the instructor is required, and students who have such approval must use the device that vibrates instead of ringing.

Students may not bring to class any children, family members, friends, or others not registered for the course except for sign-language interpreters, note-takers, or other helpers allowed by the ADA and approved by the Office of Student Affairs. No animals are allowed in the classroom except for approved seeing-eye dogs. Eating, smoking, and chewing tobacco are prohibited in the classroom. Students may consume non-alcoholic beverages in class but must properly dispose of bottles/cans/cups.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING COVID-19 AND OTHER EMERGENCIES**

To ensure your safety through social distancing, this will be a hybrid class. On Monday each week half the class will attend on campus in Fayard Hall 238 and half will watch a live stream of the lecture. On Wednesday the roles will be reversed. It is your responsibility to be in class on the days assigned and to watch the live stream on the days assigned. Assignments will be forthcoming prior to the

first day of class. All book reviews will be submitted online. All exams and make-up exams will be given online.

In the event of a COVID-19 related emergency that causes the campus to close for any amount of time, everyone will be expected to watch the live stream both days of the week. If you have an accommodation from the Office of Accessibility Services due to a health problem that puts you at risk, you should contact me about watching the live stream on both days.

In the event of an emergency that causes power outages and/or interferes with Internet service, recordings of the lectures will be made available via links on Moodle when power and/or Internet service is restored. In the meantime, you should continue to do assigned readings.

You must wear a mask in Fayard Hall at all times and sit only in seats designated for use.

### Grading:

At the end of the semester, all students who have completed all the requirements listed above will have a certain number of points out of a hundred (e.g., possible of 20 on midterm, 30 on final, etc.). Students with a grade between 90-100 will receive an A, 80-90 a B, 70-80 a C, 60-70 a D, and below 60 an F. Incomplete (I) grades: University policy states that the grade of "I" (incomplete) will be given only for work which is of passing quality at examination time but which, because of circumstances beyond the student's control, is not complete. This means, first of all, that students may receive an "I" grade only in the case of sudden dire emergencies, such as severe and prolonged illness or injury requiring lengthy hospitalization. Students may not receive an "I" grade for prolonged absences over which they do have some control, such as incarceration or court-ordered rehabilitation for chemical dependency. Secondly, instructors may give a student an "I" grade only if the student has completed all required assignments with due dates prior to the date of the emergency, with a passing grade. In those rare and extraordinary cases in which an "I" grade is given, the instructor and student must complete an "I" Contract form in the department office and obtain the department head's approval. No "I" grades can be given after the end of the final exam period. Students who receive "I" grades must follow the procedure for removing the "I" described in the current *Southeastern General Catalogue*, or the grade will become an "F".

### Posting Grades:

During the semester grades will not be posted for this class. All graded assignments will be returned in class as soon as they are graded. The instructor is required to keep final exams on file for a year following completion of the course. Final course grades will be posted on the Peoplesoft system. Do not call the department office or the instructor's office to ask about grades—it is illegal to give such information over the phone.

### Reading Assignments

- Jan 20 Introduction
- Jan 25 Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*, pt. I  
Jan 27 *Notes from Underground*, pt. II
- Feb 1 “  
Feb 3 *Notes from Underground*, finish
- Feb 8 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, “Preface”  
and “On the Prejudices of Philosophers”  
Feb 10 “The Free Spirit”  
*Paper topics handed out.*
- Feb 15-17 No Class. Mardi Gras Holiday
- Feb 22 “The Religious Character”  
Feb 24 “Epigrams and entr’actes”
- Mar 1 “On the natural history of morals”  
Mar 3 “We scholars” and “Our virtues”
- Mar 8 “Peoples and Fatherlands” and “What is Noble?”  
*1000 word papers due.*  
*Take home midterms posted.*
- Mar 10 Camus, *The Stranger*
- Mar 15 “  
Midterms due by 11:59pm
- Mar 17 “
- Mar 22 “ finish.  
Mar 24 Wittgenstein, *Blue and Brown Books*, first half  
Blue Book.  
**Last day to drop: March 26**
- Mar 29 Second half Blue Book.  
Mar 31 First half Brown Book
- April 2-9 No Class. Spring Break.
- Apr 12 Second half Brown Book.  
Apr 14 Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, chs. 1 & 2

Apr 19 " chs. 3 & 4.  
Apr 21 " chs. 5.

Apr 26 " chs. 6 & 7.  
Apr 28 " chs. 8 & 9.

May 3 " chs. 10 & 11.  
May 5 Deleuze, "Society of Control"

*Review.*

*Papers Due.*

**Take home finals posted: due by Wednesday,  
May 12 at 6pm.**