

Western University
Philosophy 2557G
Existentialism

Winter Term 2016
Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 &
Fridays 10:30-11:30
Classroom: UCC 58

Instructor: Prof. Helen Fielding
Office Hours: TBA Lawson Hall 3256
661-2111 ex. 84548
Email: hfieldin@uwo.ca

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, 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 and Friedrich Nietzsche along with contemporary thinkers to explore how we 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. Ultimately 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.

This course will enable students to:

- Understand the fundamentals of the existentialist tradition
- Learn how to apply an existentialist approach

k

Two times during the semester each student will post a discussion question on the class forum. The question must be posted by the end of the day on Thursday. The student who posted the question will lead a small group discussion around the question in the Friday class. Students will be graded on the question, on leading the small group, and on participation in small groups across the semester. This entails keeping up with the readings each week.

In conformity with departmental policy, all written work must be submitted to *turnitin.com*.

Late papers will be penalized 2 percentage points per day late.

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

which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations of students. (B)5()-3(6.9