

# Sartre & Existentialism

PHIL 4388.001 Topics in the History of Philosophy: Sartre & Existentialism  
Fall 2019

**Instructor:** Dr. Kenneth Williford

**Meeting Time:** M & W 4:00-5:20

**Meeting Place:** Preston Hall (PH) 110

**Office and Office Hours:** 305 Carlisle Hall  
Wednesdays 1:00-4:00PM & by appointment

## Faculty Profile

<https://www.uta.edu/profiles/kenneth-williford>

## Dr. Kenneth Williford

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## Department of Philosophy

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Simone de Beauvoir & Jean-Paul Sartre reading at their desks, Paris, 1964

Image location:

<http://www.gisele-freund.com/writers/>

**Description:** This course is a high-level introduction to the Existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Sartre's transition from Existential Phenomenology to Existential Marxism. Special emphasis is placed on the French reception of the work of four German-speaking philosophers (G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)) whose work deeply marked the development of Sartre's philosophy and 20<sup>th</sup> century French philosophy more generally. We cover the key backgrounds to Sartre's Existentialism, the basics of his Existential Phenomenology, with an emphasis on Sartre theory of the ego and of intersubjectivity, and the very critical reception of Sartre's Existentialism by Marxist philosophers (especially György Lukács (1885-1971), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), and Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991)), on the one hand, and by Heidegger, on the other. We then chart Sartre's path to the "Existential Marxism" of the 1960s represented in his *Search for a Method* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Along the way we discuss Sartre's political engagements and the relevant historical events.

**Other Figures** (in no particular order): Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Simone de Beauvoir, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Jean Wahl, Frantz Fanon, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Camus, Louis Althusser, Alexandre Kojève, Jean Beaufret, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, and many others!

**Topics:** Consciousness and Self-Consciousness, the Self, Temporality, Free Will, Phenomenology, Dialectical Processes (Personal and Historical), Marxism, Existentialism, Individual Liberty, Intersubjectivity, Social Responsibility, Enlightenment Values and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Counter-Enlightenment Stances, Ethical Dilemmas, Humanism and Anti-Humanism, Ontology

**Prerequisites:** No formal prerequisites, but a willingness to read difficult texts and think hard will help!

## Student "Learning Outcomes"

Students who attend all classes and study properly will: (1) understand and be able to articulate the main tenets of Sartrean Existentialism; (2) have a broad understanding of and be able to discuss coherently the history of Existentialism and critical receptions of it; (3) understand and be able to communicate clearly the

main arguments for and against the theses of philosophers discussed; (4) demonstrate competency in oral and written communication; and (5) work effectively in an open dialogical environment.

### **Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials**

The following texts should all be available at the UTA Bookstore.

- (1) *The Transcendence of the Ego* by Jean-Paul Sartre
- (2) *Existentialism is a Humanism* by Jean-Paul Sartre (Macomber translation)
- (3) *Truth and Existence* by Jean-Paul Sartre
- (4) *Search for a Method* by Jean-Paul Sartre
- (5) *What is Subjectivity?* by Jean-Paul Sartre

The instructor will provide all other required reading material for this course. The material will be posted on Canvas; consult the Schedule below.

### **Evaluation**

- (1) Attendance, participation, and quizzes (20%)
- (2) Take-home midterm exam (20%)
- (3) Final exam (20%)
- (4) 10-15 page argumentative research paper (40%)

#### *Attendance and Participation*

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I will take attendance everyday. A student may have up to three unexcused absences without this affecting his or her grade adversely. Participation will be noted.

#### *Quizzes*

There may be small quizzes over the reading material. **Quizzes will be posted on Canvas and should be turned in on Canvas as well.** At the end of the semester the cumulative quiz average will be combined with attendance and participation grades to yield 20% of the final grade.

#### *Take-Home Midterm Exam*

Around midterm, there will be a take-home examination consisting of two essay questions and some short-answer questions. Answers will need to be typed, double-spaced, and in a 12-point font with reasonable margins. In order to answer the questions adequately, the student will need to be familiar with the reading and lecture material. It will count for 20% of the final grade. More information concerning expectations and evaluation criteria will be provided later. **The exam is to be turned in through Canvas or emailed to me at williford@uta.edu.**

#### *Final Exam*

There will be an in-class final exam on the scheduled final exam day and time (**Wednesday, December 11 from 2:00-4:30PM in 110 Preston Hall**), so do plan accordingly. The final will contain several short answer

questions and one or two essay questions. The final will be cumulative and will count for 20% of your grade. More details about the final will be given at the appropriate time.

### *Argumentative Research Papers*

Each student will write a 10-15-page argumentative research paper. The paper will count for 40% of your final grade. The first half of the paper, a tentative outline of the entire paper, an abstract, and a tentative bibliography will be due near midterm. The final version will be due at the end of exam week. Part of the grade will depend on how well feedback on the first half of the paper was used for the final version. More details about my expectations for the papers will be given in class. **It is important that you begin thinking about a paper topic now. I will be expecting paper topic proposals by the fourth week of class. You might start by looking through the books and studying the topics mentioned in the reading schedule. You should also talk to me as soon as possible about possible topics.**

### **IMPORTANT POLICIES OF MINE**

**Late Work:** All late work will be docked a full letter grade for every day that it is late.

**Incompletes:** I will not give a student a grade of Incomplete (I), unless he or she has a compelling, and documented, reason (e.g., a medical emergency).

**Plagiarism:** No student should have any doubt about what counts as plagiarism. I will assume that every student in this class has seen this tutorial provided by the UTA library and have taken the quiz embedded in it: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. All cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Office of Student Conduct.

**And please put your phones and computers away during class unless you are looking at class texts on them!**

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES & OTHER USEFUL PIECES OF INFORMATION**

**Attendance:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I will follow the policy outlined above. However, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients "begin attendance in a course." UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result

of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Disability Accommodations:** UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364.

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos). For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the

Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR):** Hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am to 3 pm Fridays and Noon to 5 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Walk In Quick Hits sessions during all open hours Mon-Thurs. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, Workshops, and advanced services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information.

#### Library Info:

Library Home Page	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library">http://www.uta.edu/library</a>
Subject Guides	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu">http://libguides.uta.edu</a>
Subject Librarians	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php">http://www.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php</a>
Library Tutorials	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php">http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php</a>
Connect Off- Campus	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus">http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus</a>
Ask A Librarian	<a href="http://ask.uta.edu">http://ask.uta.edu</a>

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the

University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**Emergency Phone Numbers:** In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381

### **Tentative Schedule & Important Dates**

This schedule may be subject to some adjustments as the semester progresses. These will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.

W8/21 Introduction: Course Overview—20<sup>th</sup> Sartre and Existentialism from 20,000 ft

M8/26 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, IV.A: “Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” and IV.B: “Freedom of self-consciousness: Stoicism, Scepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness” (provided on Canvas)

W8/28 Jean Wahl, “Commentary on a Passage from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*” and Merleau-Ponty, “Hegel’s Existentialism” (provided on Canvas)

M9/2 Labor Day Holiday, No Class

W9/4 Marx, “Estranged Labor” (provided on Canvas)

M9/9 Marx, “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole” (provided on Canvas)

W9/11 Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Part I

M9/16 Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, Part II and Conclusion

W9/18 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “The Other’s Existence”, III.1.i-ii, pp. 307-321

M9/23 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “The Other’s Existence”, III.1.iii, pp. 322-347

W9/25 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “The Other’s Existence”, III.1.iv, pp. 347-366

M9/30 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “The Other’s Existence”, III.1.iii, pp. 366-408

W10/2 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “Concrete Relations with the Other”, III.3.i, pp. 479-501 (**Approximate date Midterm Assigned**)

M10/7 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “Concrete Relations with the Other”, III.3.ii, pp. 501-543

W10/9 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, “Concrete Relations with the Other”, III.3.iii, pp. 543-566

M10/14 Sartre, "A More Precise Characterization of Existentialism" (provided on Canvas); *Existentialism is a Humanism*; "Cartesian Freedom" (provided on Canvas) **(Approximate date Midterm Due)**

W10/16 Simone de Beauvoir, "An Existentialist Looks at Americans" and "What is Existentialism?" (provided on Canvas; Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (provided on Canvas) pp. 214-238

M10/21 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (provided on Canvas) pp. 238-265

W10/23 Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" (provided on Canvas)

M10/28 Sartre, *Truth and Existence*, pp. 1-42

W10/30 Sartre, *Truth and Existence*, pp. 42-82

M11/4 Lukács, "Existentialism"; Lefebvre "Retrospections"; Marcuse, "Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*" (provided on Canvas)

W11/6 Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution"

M11/11 Simone de Beauvoir "Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartreanism" (provided on Canvas) pp. 197-226

W11/13 Simone de Beauvoir "Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartreanism" (provided on Canvas) pp. 226-257

M11/18 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, pp. 1-43

W11/20 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, pp. 43-84

M11/25 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, pp. 85-130

W11/27 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class

M12/2 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, pp. 130-181

W12/4 Sartre, *What is Subjectivity?* pp. 3-32

**FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 11 from 2:00-4:30PM in 110 Preston Hall**

**Papers due at the end of exam week.**