



~ *EXISTENTIALISM* ~



Course Information for Students & Parents
Second Trimester, 2014-2015
Mr. Grunner

Course Description

In his 1945 speech «Existentialism is a Humanism», French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre suggested “most people who use the word *existentialism* would be at a loss to explain what it means.” So, what exactly *is* existentialism? According to Gordon Marino, it is a ‘much more personal form of philosophizing,’ one that ‘does not dodge the fact that there is something disturbing going on in the basement of our cozy middle-class world.’ In this class, we’ll explore together the central themes and ideas of Existentialism, coming to see how this particular brand of philosophical thought celebrates and empowers the concrete single individual. Our readings will include texts by both philosophers (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir) and literary writers (Kafka, Rilke, Camus, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Ellison).

Course Texts:

Gordon Marino (ed), *The Basic Writings of Existentialism*. (Modern Library)
Thomas R. Flynn, *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford)

Other readings will be provided electronically and in handout form.

Class Sessions:

One 60-minute (B-Day) and one 80-minute (E-Day) session per cycle.

Methodology:

- Class discussion
- Short lectures

Expectations of Students:

READING:

You must do the reading. There is no excuse. I will do my best to make it manageable but in terms of complexity these texts may be *some of the most challenging you've encountered yet*. Some may find it incomprehensible at first, or even at last. Our job is to do our best to pursue this writing open-mindedly yet rigorously in a spirit of collaboration and good humor.

DISCUSSION FORMAT:

The substance of class discussion shall rest on the shoulders of the students—the crippling guilt that follows lengthy periods of silence shall serve as punishment enough. I will direct conversation, occasionally make (in)decipherable scribbles on the board, and sit and converse when appropriate. **Everyone** is expected to participate.

QUIZZES:

That said, I reserve the right to quiz you unannounced. Rather than constitute a strict grade percentage, these will factor impressionistically into my evaluation of your efforts in the class.

PAPERS AND REPORTS:

All students shall produce three (3) **Response** papers (1-2 pages) through the course of the trimester. As a critical reflection on a given thinker or a particular text, they will be due at the start of the class during which the text/thinker in question is to be discussed. on a subject of the writer's choosing are due by *color cycle* (see syllabus). These reflections will be assessed for their brilliance in organization, argument, and writing ability.

All students will produce a **Final essay** (5-7 pages). Specific details regarding format, topic, etc. to follow in time.

*All assigned writing will be collected in class on the date due. If you are late without a pre-arranged excuse, you will be marked down on your paper.

GRADING DISTRIBUTION:

Participation	30%
3 Response Papers	30%
1 Final Essay	40%

Teacher Availability:

Wednesdays 3-4 PM. Appointments can be made via e-mail or by signing up on my desk schedule.

Teacher Contact Information:

E-MAIL ADDRESS: dgrunner@regis.org
DEPARTMENT: Theology