

New Course Proposal

Submit completed form electronically

1. **Course prefix and course number:** PHL 213
2. **Course title:** Introduction to Existentialism
3. **Abbreviated title for class schedule** (30 characters or less): Existentialism
4. **Credit hours:** 4
(note: if credits are variable, list range of credits (e.g. 1-8 credits))
5. **Catalog description:** Examines major works and thinkers in the history of the existentialist philosophical and literary traditions. The central focus of this course is the human condition, or the nature of human existence. We will ask and find ways of responding to the following questions: "does human nature have an *essence*?", "what is the nature of *freedom*?", "is reality *absurd*?", "what makes life meaningful?", "what role does *death* play in the constitution of meaning?", "are humans *responsible* for their existence?"
6. **Prerequisites (to add each additional prerequisite, start a new line):**
(See attached Note for samples)

A. (course prefix, (space) and number)	or	or	or	or
B. (course prefix, (space) and number)	or	or	or	or
C. (course prefix, (space) and number)	or	or	or	or
7. **Co-requisites (including labs, if any):**

A. (course prefix, (space) and number)	or	or	or	or
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8. **Major/Class restrictions:** Please indicate any class or major restrictions:
9. **Is course repeatable?** Yes No x If Yes, list maximum credits:
10. **Labs requirements:** If course includes a lab: # of hours lecture: ; # of hours lab:
11. **Fees:** List any course fees:
12. **Grade Mode:** Graded only: Pass/No Pass only: Option: x
13. **CIP Code:** Six-digit CIP code (check with your Division Director): 38.0101
14. **Special qualifications; Is course proposed for (yes/no):**
 - A. University Studies? Yes If yes, list Strand(s) E

B. Honors? No

15. Cross-listing: List any cross-listing: and and and and

16. Strategic justification for proposed course:

A. **Rationale:** What is the overall strategic rationale for offering this course? This course augments upper-division offerings in philosophy by introducing students to one of the most influential philosophical and literary movements to emerge out of the last one hundred and fifty years of the Western intellectual tradition. Existentialism is arguably more relevant than ever, in terms of both the timeliness of its questioning, and its pervasiveness in current popular media, from television and film to video games and web-based comics. Also, proto-existentialist philosopher and provocateur Friedrich Nietzsche has been widely described as “undergraduate intoxicant,” which, coupled with the difficulty of interpreting Nietzsche and the extent to which his thought has been misunderstood and misappropriated by unscrupulous ideologues, makes structured guidance for navigating his ideas all the more important.

B. Alignment:

1. How does this course align with the unit’s mission plan? The course aligns with the mission plan by expanding offerings in the philosophy program and the Humanities and Culture division.

2. How does the course fit into the rest of the unit’s curriculum? The course fits into the Humanities and Culture curriculum by filling a gap in one of the history of philosophy’s most influential schools of thought while building connections to other programs in the unit, such as English, and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies.

C. **Enrollment:** What is the new course’s estimated enrollment each time it is offered over a three-year period? Year 1 15; Year 2 20; Year 3 25/30

D. **Resource evaluation:** What resources – faculty, equipment, lab space, etc. -- will be needed to offer this course and how will those resources be obtained?

1. *Faculty:*

- a. Who will teach the course? Dr. Justin Harmon
- b. Evaluate unit’s faculty availability and/or needs and the impact on other teaching obligations. Dr. Justin Harmon was hired in part specifically to teach this course. It will not deleteriously impact any other teaching obligations.
- c. If additional faculty members are needed, how will that need be met?
N/A

2. *Facilities:* Cite any additional need for classrooms, equipment or lab space; explain how that need(s) will be met. N/A

3. *Other:*

a. Are Hannon Library resources sufficient to meet the needs of this course?

Yes

b. Are any other resources needed to support this course? No

If so, please explain how they will be obtained.

E. External impact:

1. What is the expected effect of this course on existing programs elsewhere in the university? This course will expand opportunities for students of English and literature wanting to engage seriously with celebrated nineteenth and twentieth century European novelists and essayists.

NOTE: Please document your contact with other academic programs which may be affected by this new course and the response you received.

2. Will any of your prerequisites affect other academic programs? No

NOTE: Please document your contact with other academic programs which may be affected by this new course and the response you received.

17. Syllabus (condensed)

*(Attach an accompanying, condensed syllabus, which should include the following items. Schedules and similar details are **not** required.)*

- A. Course description (same as Catalog description, above)
- B. Learning objectives of the course
- C. Required texts
- D. Course format
- E. Other – any other relevant materials needed to explain the goals and teaching methods of this course.

Approvals:



Signature of Division Director

7-31-18

Date

4/29/16

Introduction to Existentialism (condensed) Syllabus

Justin L. Harmon (Instructor)

A. Course Description:

Examines major works and thinkers in the history of the existentialist (and proto-existentialist) philosophical and literary traditions. The central focus of this course is the human condition, or the nature of human existence. While the term "existentialism" was coined in 1940s France, it retrospectively gathered under its banner a diverse host of European writers and philosophers spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Existentialist thought is characterized by a deep suspicion of cultural traditions and systems that reduce the absolute singularity of lived human existence to prefigured religious, scientific, and technological schemes. Challenging the rationalistic and idealistic philosophies of thinkers like René Descartes and G.W.F. Hegel, existentialists deny the premise that human beings are essentially rational creatures inhabiting a well-ordered and intelligible universe. In this reading- and writing-intensive course, we will engage with existentialism as both a philosophical and literary movement in order to reflect on and respond to questions like, "what does it mean to *be*?" "does human nature have an *essence*?" what is the nature of *freedom*?" "is reality *absurd*?" "how does one find *meaning* in one's life?" what role does *death* play in the constitution of meaning?" "are humans ultimately *responsible* for their existence?" "what is the nature of our *relationship to the world* in which we find ourselves?"

B. Learning Objectives of this Course:

Upon completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Name and recognize the central figures in the history of existentialism.
- Explain the essential themes of existentialist thought.
- Distinguish the various approaches to the themes of existential philosophy as embraced by the major figures in the movement.
- Competently form, defend, and critically evaluate philosophical arguments both verbally and in writing.
- Recognize and reflect thoughtfully on existentialist themes in contemporary popular culture.

C. Required Texts:

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Cambridge UP (2006) [1843]
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*, Continuum (2003) [1880]
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Cambridge UP (2001) [1882]
Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper Collins (2008) [1977]
Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Vintage Classics (2012) [1886]
Simone De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Citadel Press (2000) [1947]
Albert Camus, *The Fall*, Vintage Books (1991) [1956]

*Other texts made available digitally