

Topics in Philosophy: Existentialism and Phenomenology

Fall, 2004

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Course Objectives

In this course you will be introduced to some of the central ideas of existentialism and phenomenology—two of the most important movements in twentieth century Continental Philosophy—as background for a close examination of one of the classics of existential phenomenology (the branch of phenomenology developed particularly by Heidegger and Sartre in mid-century in Germany and in France): Jean-Paul Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego*. We'll begin with a look at a number of classic texts by a variety of writers belonging to the existentialist tradition, proceed to an examination of at least some of the main ideas of phenomenology proper, plunge into the text of *The Transcendence of the Ego*, and then reflect on the effectiveness and plausibility of Sartre's attempted illustration of that work's central thesis concerning the non-egological character of consciousness in his well-known novel, *Nausea*.

Texts

Kaufmann, Walter, ed. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Meridian Books, 1988. (ISBN: 0452009308)

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*. Trans. Lloyd Alexander. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975. (ISBN: 0811201880)

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Trans. Robert Kirkpatrick and Forrest Williams. New York: Hill and Wang, 1991. (ISBN: 0809015455)

Sokolowski, Robert. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Cambridge U.P., 2000. (ISBN: 0521667925)

Course Requirements and Grades

E-Mail Account:

You're required to have an e-mail account. If you don't have one already, you'll need to arrange to get one by Wednesday. You can get a UNC account in any of the computer labs on campus or at Bear Logic, the computer store in the University Center. Accounts with other national or local ISPs (AOL, CompuServ, Juno, Hotmail, CTOS, etc.) are perfectly acceptable as well.

Reading Assignments:

You'll find the reading assignments in the detailed course outline at the end of the syllabus. Any changes in these assignments will be announced in class and posted on the class Web site (at <http://www.unco.edu/philosophy/current/300-007.html>) as well. Make sure that you have these done on time. Expect to spend time on the readings. They're difficult, challenging, serious texts that require prolonged study and reflection, not presentations of predigested material written for people in a hurry.

Quizzes:

Brief, unannounced quizzes will be given on the assigned readings from time to time. Under no circumstances may missed quizzes be made up.

* And, of course, by appointment.

Class Participation and Contributions to the Class's Online Forum

On most days, meetings of the course will involve a combination of lecture and discussion, and you're required both to attend class regularly and to involve yourself actively in class discussion. Contributions to the class's online forum at <http://www.unco.edu/philosophy/current/forums/>—the main venue outside class for class discussion—can help to at least some extent to make up for any unavoidable absences and can serve to enhance your overall participation grade. Your participation grade will reflect both the quantity and the quality of your contributions to our discussions.

Essays:

You'll be required to write two five to ten page essays, due on October 22 and December 7. You'll get fuller descriptions of what I'll be looking for in each of these essays well in advance of the dates on which they'll be due.

The manual of style I expect you to use for the essays is Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th Edition [New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003]. Copies are available at the Book Stop.

General Rules Regarding Submission of Work:

To receive credit for the course, you must submit both of the required essays. Zeros will be recorded for missed quizzes.

Overall Determination of Grades:

Summing up, your overall grade will be determined as follows: quizzes, 10%; essays, 30% each; class participation, 30%.

Penalty for Cheating or Plagiarism:

The penalty for cheating on the quizzes or for plagiarism (i.e., for copying either the ideas or the words of another without appropriate attribution) in your contributions to the online forum or in your essays will be denial of credit for the entire course.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services by dropping by the office in Harrison Hall 159A or by phoning the office at (970) 351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations can be arranged in a timely way.

Outline of Course Content

I. Existentialism

- A. Origins: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche; Jaspers' Assessment of Their Thought
- B. Expressions of the Existentialist Sensibility in Literature: Dostoevsky, Rilke, Kafka
- C. Ortega's Striking, Later Formulation (1941) of the New Existentialist Conception of the Human Being ("Man") from his *Toward a Philosophy of History*

II. Phenomenology

- A. The Phenomenological Movement and Its Founder, Edmund Husserl
- B. Central Ideas: Intentionality, Phenomenological Method, Transcendental Philosophy
- C. Heidegger's and Sartre's Reactions to Husserl's Idealism and His Conception of Phenomenology as "Egology"

III. Existential Phenomenology

- A. Heidegger's Analysis of Human Being-Here in *Being and Time* and Other Works
- B. Sartre's "Existentialist Theory of Consciousness" in *The Transcendence of the Ego*
- C. Sartre's Illustration of the Non-Egological Character of Consciousness in *Nausea*

Detailed Course Outline

We'll follow this schedule closely. If anything, you should get *ahead* in your reading. *Don't get behind.*

Aug.	M	23	Preliminaries: Existentialism, Phenomenology, and Existential Phenomenology.	
	W	25	Kierkegaard (Kaufmann, Chapter 3)	
	F	27	Nietzsche (Kaufmann, Chapter 4)	
	M	30	Jaspers (Kaufmann, §2 of Chapter 8)	<i>Add Deadline</i>
Sept.	W	1	Dostoevsky (Kaufmann, Chapter 2)	
	F	3	Rilke (Kaufmann, Chapter 5)	<i>Drop Deadline</i>
	M	6	<i>no class</i>	<i>Labor Day</i>
	W	8	Kafka (Kaufmann, Chapter 6)	
	F	10	Ortega (Kaufmann, Chapter 7)	
	M	13	Phenomenology—the movement (Sokolowski, §1 of the Appendix on Husserl and the Introduction)	
	W	15	Intentionality and phenomenological analysis (Sokolowski, Chapters 1-2)	
	F	17	Themes of phenomenological analysis; an initial definition (Sokolowski, Chapters 3-4)	
	M	20	Perception, memory, and imagination (Sokolowski, Chapter 5)	
	W	22	Words, pictures, and symbols (Sokolowski, Chapter 6)	
	F	24	Categorial intentions and categorial objects (Sokolowski, Chapter 7)	
	M	27	Phenomenology and the self (Sokolowski, Chapter 8)	
	W	29	Temporality (Sokolowski, Chapter 9)	
Oct.	F	1	The life world and intersubjectivity (Sokolowski, Chapter 10)	
	M	4	Reason, truth, and evidence (Sokolowski, Chapter 11)	
	W	6	Eidetic intuition (Sokolowski, Chapters 12)	
	F	8	Phenomenology defined and phenomenology at present (Sokolowski, Chapters 13-14)	
	M	11	Heidegger (Sokolowski, Appendix §2; Kaufmann, Chapter 9, introductory material and §1)	
	W	13	“What Is Metaphysics?” (Kaufmann, Chapter 9, §2)	
	F	15	“The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics” (Kaufmann, Chapter 9, §2)	<i>Withdrawal Deadline</i>
	M	18	Sartre (Sokolowski, Appendix §3, Kaufmann, Chapter 10, introductory material and §1)	
	W	20	“Self-Deception,” from <i>Being and Nothingness</i> (Kaufmann, Chapter 10, §2)	
	F	22	“Existentialism is a Humanism” (Kaufmann, Chapter 10, §4)	<i>First Paper Due</i>
	M	25	Transition to the central investigations (Ortega once more: Kaufmann, Chapter 7)	
	W	27	Heidegger on truth (<i>aletheia</i>) and the open (“On the Essence of Truth”)	
	F	29	Sartre on consciousness (<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , first reading: entire book)	
Nov.	M	1	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , opening paragraph and part i. A: Errors in Kant and Husserl	
	W	3	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part i. B: Errors in Descartes’s understanding of the <i>cogito</i>	
	F	5	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part i. C: Errors in the psychology of the “self-love” moralists	
	M	8	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part ii. opening paragraphs and A: Constitution of the ego: states	
	W	10	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part ii. B: Constitution of the ego: actions	
	F	12	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part ii. C: Constitution of the ego: qualities	
	M	15	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part ii. D: The ego as the pole of actions, states, and qualities	
	W	17	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , part ii. E: The I and consciousness in the <i>cogito</i>	
	F	19	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , conclusions, remark 1: What consciousness “really” is	
	M	22	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , conclusions, remark 2: The way out of solipsism	
	W	24	<i>The Transcendence of the Ego</i> , conclusions, remark 3: Phenomenology and politics	
	F	26	<i>no class</i>	<i>Thanksgiving Vacation</i>
	M	29	<i>Nausea</i> , first third (up to “I’d be better off writing a novel on the Marquis de Rollebon.”)	
Dec.	W	1	<i>Nausea</i> , second third (up to “By March 1, at the latest, I will definitely be installed in Paris.”)	
	F	3	<i>Nausea</i> , final third (to the end)	
	T	7	Final Class Period: 1:30-4:00	<i>Second Paper Due</i>