

Existentialism

CTY Course Syllabus

WEEK ONE:

Day One (Monday):

Morning:

- Introductions: Who are you? Where do you hail from? Where are you going?
- Discussion & signing of Honor Code; establish other classroom rules together
- Brainstorming: Myths & Misconceptions of Existentialism
- Read aloud Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus" and discuss as a class

Afternoon:

- Read selection from Plato's *The Republic* (The Cave Analogy) to students
- Creative Activity: draw Plato's cave

Study Hall:

- Read Plato's *Euthyphro*
- Begin reading Descartes' *Meditations* (First and Second)

Day Two (Tuesday):

Morning:

- Discuss Plato's *Euthyphro* as a class
- Group project: summarize the main arguments in one Cartesian meditation to classmates

Afternoon:

- Discussion of *Meditations* and metaphysical consequences of radical skepticism
- Read Kierkegaard: "Dread and Freedom"

Study Hall:

- Read "Rotation of Crops" from *Either/Or*
- Begin reading Kierkegaard selections from *Fear & Trembling* if time permits

Day Three (Wednesday):

Morning:

- Guest Lecture (by TA): Biography of Kierkegaard and introduction to elements of his philosophical thought
- Guided discussion (lead by TA) of "Dread and Freedom" selection
- Class Discussion of "Rotation of Crops" – the aesthetic mode of existence and the evil of boredom
- Creative Activity: Design poster listing own rules to avoid committing an evil act

Afternoon:

- Presentation of poster projects from morning session
- Continue reading selections from *Fear & Trembling*

Study Hall:

- Continue reading selections from *Fear & Trembling*

Day Four (Thursday):

Morning:

- Complete readings selections from *Fear & Trembling*
- Activity: Exchange and respond to peers' questions about *Fear & Trembling*
- Discussion of *Fear & Trembling* via presentation of student questions and responses

Afternoon:

- Finish discussing *Fear & Trembling* via student questions and responses
- Workshop: How to write a philosophical essay

Study Hall:

- Begin preparations for in-class mock trial "People v. Abraham"

Day Five (Friday):

Morning:

- Complete preparations for in-class mock trial
- Activity: "The Trial of Abraham"
- Reflective response to "The Trial of Abraham" exercise

Afternoon:

- Film: Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*

Day Six (Sunday):

Study Hall:

- Begin reading Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*

WEEK TWO

Day Seven (Monday):

Morning:

- Discussion of Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* and its relation to Kierkegaard's thought
- Essay: Discuss how Antonius Block relates to or exemplifies the ideas expressed in *Fear & Trembling*

Afternoon:

- Lecture: biography of Nietzsche and brief introduction to philosophical themes
- Activity: Read Preface to *Beyond Good & Evil* (photocopies), discuss in partners, and share interpretations with class; discuss as introduction to Nietzsche's style and ideas

Study Hall:

- Continue reading *The Gay Science*

Day Eight (Tuesday):

Morning:

- Complete readings of *The Gay Science*
- Activity: assign individual aphorisms from *The Gay Science* to students: prepare an exegesis on one, and two critical questions on the other
- Begin presenting exegeses and critical questions in lieu of more organized class discussion of *The Gay Science*

Afternoon:

- Continue presenting and discussing exegeses and questions from *The Gay Science*

Study Hall:

- Mid-Session Instructor-Student Check-in
- Continue presenting and discussing exegeses and questions from *The Gay Science*

Day Nine (Wednesday):

Morning:

- Continue presenting and discussing exegeses and questions from *The Gay Science*
- Read and discuss selections from Nietzsche on the Eternal Recurrence (lead by TA)

Afternoon:

- Complete discussion of the Eternal Recurrence
- Read Sartre's play *No Exit* aloud as a class

Study Hall:

- Finish reading Sartre's *No Exit*
- Read Camus' *The Stranger*

Day Ten (Thursday):

Morning:

- Continue reading *The Stranger*
- Discuss *No Exit*

Afternoon:

- Essay: "Will the devaluation of all values caused by the metaphorical death of God lead to a "healthier" state of existence, as Nietzsche suggests, or does this lead to uncertainty and confusion given the absence of a foundation for our beliefs?"

Study Hall:

- Complete readings of *The Stranger*
- Creative activity: Design a poster depicting your own version of hell (relate to Sartre's proclamation that "hell is other people" in *No Exit*).

Day Eleven (Friday):

Morning:

- Present "hell" poster projects
- Discuss Camus' *The Stranger*
- Lecture: Biography and introduction to Heidegger's philosophy

Afternoon: Graveyard Field Trip

- Phenomenological observations on walk to and from graveyard: what can we learn about people by observing their everyday existence?
- Read and discuss selections from Heidegger's *Being and Time* in groups to find passages reinforcing existentialist themes: death / finitude; authenticity; individuality and being-with-others; anxiety and angst
- Creative activity: Examine epitaphs on tombstones in graveyard, reflect on what this tells us about an individual, and consider what you would want others to know about you based on the epitaph that you would write for yourself

Day Twelve (Sunday):

Study Hall:

- Read Sartre's essay "The Humanism of Existentialism"

WEEK THREE

Day Thirteen (Monday):

Morning: Philosopher's Café at Mandy's Coffee Shop

- Work on questions about Sartre's "The Humanism of Existentialism" in groups

Afternoon:

- Discuss responses to questions on "The Humanism of Existentialism" as a class

Study Hall:

- Read Fanon: "The Fact of Blackness" (from *Black Skin, White Masks*)

Day Fourteen (Tuesday):

Morning:

- "Art Gallery" Activity: Examine contemporary works of art and discuss how they exemplify the philosophical ideas about the look / the gaze in Fanon and Sartre.
- Finish reading Fanon selection
- Activity: design a question for the next essay assignment based on student interests and unanswered questions from the course

Afternoon:

- Final essay assignment: student-written essay questions

Study Hall:

- Read selections from Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*

Day Fifteen (Wednesday):

Morning:

- Discussion about Fanon and Beauvoir

Afternoon:

- Discussion of Beauvoir continued
- Assign students topics and groups for final poster projects

Study Hall:

- Begin working on final poster projects – research

Day Sixteen (Thursday):

Morning:

- Instructor and Teaching Assistant evaluations (SPE's)
- Final Poster Projects: Students are responsible for making posters treating various brainstormed existentialist themes and key thinkers

Afternoon:

- Student "Conference": present final poster projects to the class

Study Hall:

- Existentialist film: view Hitchcock's *Rope*

Day Seventeen (Friday):

Morning:

- Finish presenting student poster projects
- Graduation ceremony: Play class CD and hand out portfolios of student work
- Goodbyes and photos; exchange contact information