

Existentialism: Philosophy, Literature and Social Justice

7.1 Module Overview									
Module Number		Module Title	Existentialism: Philosophy, Literature, and Social Justice						
Stage of Principal Programme			2	Semester	1	Duration. <i>(Weeks F/T)</i>	12	ECTS	5
Mandatory / Elective (E)	E	Hours of Learner Effort / Week	2						
Analysis of required hours of learning effort									
Teaching and Learning Modalities						✓if relevant to this module	Approx. proportion of total (hours)		
Contact Hours									
In person face-to-face						✓	24		
Synchronous									
Indirect/Non-Contact Hours									
Asynchronous									
Work Based									
Other:						✓	101		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> independent reading, engagement with VLE, research and preparation of assessments 									
Total							125		

Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	120
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.	
Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.	Qualifications & experience required
Lecturer	A minimum level 9 qualification in Philosophy or closely cognate area
	Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y
	1:120

Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution				
Continuous Assessment	40%	Proctored Exam – in person	60%	Practical Skills
Project		Proctored Exam - online		Work Based
Capstone (Y/N)?	N	If Yes, describe		

7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)	
MIMLO On completion of this module a learner will be able to:	Related MIPLO #
1. Demonstrate a critical understanding of canonical texts of existentialist philosophy in terms of their socio-cultural origins and dominant themes	2, 3

2. Show how such texts can be used to probe perennial questions about identity and belonging and social justice issues relating to gender, ethnicity, and cultural differences.	1, 3, 6, 7
3. Specify the relevance of existentialist ideas to contemporary debates about inclusivity, diversity, and equality that occur through various forms of digital media.	1, 2, 5

7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

A key aim of this module is to offer close readings of primary texts of twentieth-century existentialism and its major nineteenth-century precursors. Such writings are explored in relation to questions of personal identity and communal belonging, and the role that philosophy can play in a world that values principles and practices of equity, diversity and inclusion. Having demonstrated the ways in which writers such as de Beauvoir and Camus were influenced by their predecessors, this module will show how both of those thinkers drew upon core existentialist ideas in their endeavours to engage with feminist concerns, concepts of ethnicity and integration, and associated social justice issues.

Existentialism: Philosophy, Literature, and Social Justice explores fundamental relationships between concepts such as identity and belonging. It demonstrates the extent to which received ideas about race, ethnicity, and gender are socially constructed, potentially inhibiting, and essentially contested. By studying this module, learners will deepen their insights into the ways in which traditional assumptions about personal autonomy and societal compliance were critiqued by renowned existentialist thinkers, and will evaluate their philosophical and literary writings in relation to ideals and practices of equality, diversity, and inclusivity.

Learners begin the module by engaging with selected existentialist writings by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Classes on Sartre and Camus examine both the philosophical and literary writings of those two writers as the high point of European existentialism in the mid-twentieth century. The works of de Beauvoir are studied in relation to their relevance to various social justice issues. Particular attention will be given to the means by which writers such as de Beauvoir and Camus used their critical and creative aptitudes to promote political activism. An indicative outline of the course content is as follows:

- Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* and *Nausea*
- Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Outsider*

7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement (if applicable)

N/A

7.5 Specific module resources required (if applicable)

N/A

7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

The content of this module is covered in lectures. The lecturer demonstrates the skills of thematic exposition, textual analysis, and critique in exploring conceptual issues and facilitates the learners' efforts to cultivate these skills within individual and group settings. The lecturer will also endeavour to provide the opportunity for learners to engage in close reading of primary texts and to learn about their pertinence to 'real-world' issues.

In adhering to the principles of UDL, material will be made available via a range of sources through the VLE such as texts, videos, and podcasts. Such material will appear on the lecturer's slides that will be uploaded to Moodle in advance of every lecture.

Assessment for the module consists of a proctored written examination (60%), continuous assessment (40%).

Exam: The two-hour proctored exam allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of core concepts, theories, and texts. A mandatory question requires learners to demonstrate their awareness of the relevance of existentialist ideas to social justice issues such as equality, diversity and inclusion. (MIMLO 1, 3, 4) (60%)

Continuous Assessment: The Critical Analysis piece will involve comparative readings of texts and films in relation to their capacity to provide insights into historical and contemporary socio-cultural concerns. (MIMLO 2) (30%)

Attendance: The attendance mark, 10%, will benefit those learners who will regularly engage with in-class themes through critical dialogues with their lecturers and their peers.

7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module

MIMLOs	Technique(s)	Weighting
1-4	Exam	60%
2	PowerPoint presentation using various digital media sources.	30%
N/A	Attendance	10%

7.8 Sample Assessment Materials

Continuous Assessment Topic:

Films such as *The Seventh Seal*, *Winter Light*, *Taxi Driver*, *Irrational Man*, *Knight of Cups*, and *A Hidden Life* can be seen to engage with some of the core themes of the existentialist writings that feature on this course. Critically evaluate how two of the aforementioned films deal with two of the following issues: personal identity, death, anxiety, absurdity, freedom, responsibility, rebellion, and social justice by relating them to at least one of the texts that you have read from this module.

Your reflective piece should be 800-1000 words in length. Please note that you are required to offer a thematic analysis rather than a plot summary of the films and text(s) in question.

Sample Exam Questions

- Drawing upon your knowledge of *The Outsider*, outline how Camus's views about freedom, contingency, and absurdity relate to the questions about ethnic identity, justice and belonging that are posed by that text.
- Based upon your reading of *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, write an argument in favour of the view that de Beauvoir's existentialist philosophy can provide a basis for the championing of social justice issues such as equality and freedom.

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

Indicative Core Reading:

Banti, Anna, *Artemisia* (London: Hope Road, 2020)

Beauvoir, Simone de, *She Came to Stay* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006)

—, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Citadel Press, 1986)

—, 'What is Existentialism?' in Simone de Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005)

Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (London: Penguin, 2005)

—, *The Outsider* (London: Penguin, 2005)

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* (London: Blackwell, 2000)

Kierkegaard, Søren, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992)

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense' in Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishers, 1976)

—, *The Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 2007)

—, *Nausea* (London: Penguin, 2000)

Indicative Other Reading:

Bauer, Nancy, *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, and Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

Bakewell, Sarah, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2016)

Barrett, William, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existentialist Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1958)

Beauvoir, Simone de, *Letters to Sartre* (London: Vintage, 1992)

—, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (London: Penguin, 1963)

—, *The Prime of Life* (London: Penguin, 1965)

Cooper, David, *Existentialism: A Reconstruction*, 2nd edn (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999)

Danto, Arthur C., *Sartre* (London: Fontana, 1975)

Flynn, Thomas R., *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Frank, Joseph, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in his Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010)

Gardiner, Patrick, *Kierkegaard: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Garrard, May D., *Artemisia Gentileschi and Feminism in Early Modern Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2020)

Golomb, Jacob, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Guignon, Charles B. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Hollingdale, R. J., *Nietzsche: The Man and his Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Inwood, Michael, *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Judaken, Jonathan, *Race after Sartre: Antiracism, Africana Existentialism, Postcolonialism* (New York: SUNY, 2008)

Kaplan, Alice, *Looking for the Outsider: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Kaufmann, Walter, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: New York American Library, 1975)

Kirkpatrick, Kate, *Becoming Beauvoir: A Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Leak, Andrew, *Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006)

Maart, Rozena, and Dey, Sayan (eds.), *Black Existentialism and Decolonizing Knowledge: Writings of Lewis R. Gordon* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023)

Macquarrie, John, *Existentialism* (London: Hutchinson, 1972)

Mulhall, Stephen, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Murdoch, Iris, 'The Existentialist Hero', 'The Existentialist Political Myth' and 'Existentialists and Mystics' in *Existentialists and Mystics* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997)

O'Brien, Mahon, *Heidegger's Life and Thought: A Tarnished Legacy* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020)

Olsen, Robert, *An Introduction to Existentialism* (Dover: Constable, 1962)

Polt, Richard, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999)

Safranski, Rüdiger, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998)

Simons, Margaret A., *Beauvoir and The Second Sex: Feminism, Race, and the Origins of Existentialism* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001)

Steiner, George, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

Tanner, Michael, *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Todd, Oliver, *Albert Camus: A Life* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers Inc., 2000)

Warnock, Mary, *The Philosophy of Sartre* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1975)

Whitmarsh, Anne, *Simone de Beauvoir and the Limits of Commitment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

Relevant Websites:

Stanford University, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

BBC In Our Time Podcast Page: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl>