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American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

Philosophy & Religion Department

RELS411

Religious Existentialism

3 Credit Hours

Eight-Week Course

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Instructor Information

Course Description (Catalog)

This course is a study of the set of philosophical ideals that emphasizes the existence of the human being, the lack of meaning and purpose in life, and the solitude of human existence. The course will cover the existentialist philosophy and its leading historical proponents.

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Course Scope

Existentialism was considered by many to be one of the more important philosophical schools of the twentieth century, and thinkers both philosophical and theological thought that religion and religious ideas had to take account of this area of belief (or disbelief, or unbelief, depending upon your definitions). However, the term *Existentialism* is in many ways an umbrella term, encompassing a range of possibilities. As Oaklander states in the preface to the text for the course, “the subject matter of existentialism is the individual qua individual and thus to offer a definition of it would take us away from its subject matter.” (p. ix)

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Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand the complexity in Existentialism as a philosophy;
2. Relate the concepts of Existentialist thought to religious and theological contexts;
3. Identify key figures in the Existentialist stream of thought; and
4. Recognize some areas of difficulty in reconciling Existentialism with religion in general, as well as with some particular religions.

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Course Delivery Method

This B.A. in Religious Studies course delivered via distance learning will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be made available to each student. **Online assignments are due by the date listed in the Educator classroom** and are described in the Evaluation Procedures section below.

While Distance Learning provides some flexibility in when you choose to conduct your studies, you are expected to follow the syllabus and turn in your assignments on time and on schedule. As a general rule we should interact weekly, primarily using email or other on-line means. If necessary, you may arrange to call me to talk one-on-one. Of course, you are always welcome to email me at any time throughout the course with any questions, problems or comments you may have.

Real learning takes place as you *carefully process* the information through higher order

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thinking skills such as comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (it is not simply taking in information from outside sources - a book, teacher, web site, field experience, etc). Your performance in this class will be based on your demonstration of your learning, not by simply repeating back basic facts (your knowledge of the facts will become clear as you demonstrate higher order thinking skills). In all you that do in this class, you should always remember to use higher order thinking skills, as described below:

- 1) Comprehension: demonstrates the ability to grasp meaning, explain, and restate ideas,
- 2) Application: demonstrates the ability to use learned material in new situations,
- 3) Analysis: demonstrates the ability to separate material into component parts and show relationships between parts,
- 4) Synthesis: demonstrates the ability to put together the separate ideas to form a new whole, to establish new relationships, and
- 5) Evaluation: demonstrates the ability to judge the worth of material against stated criteria.

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Course Materials

Required Text

Marino, Gordon, ed. *Basic Writings of Existentialism*. Modern Library Classics, 2004

Wartenberg, Thomas E. *Existentialism: A Beginner's Guides*. Oneworld, 2008

Software Requirements

Microsoft Office (MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint)

Adobe Acrobat Reader ([Click here for free download](#))

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Evaluation Procedures

Four Reflection Papers	15% each =	60%
Research Paper		30%
Discussion Board		10%

1. Reflection Papers – These four assignments are 3-4 page papers that deal with particular philosophers during the week. They should address the base text, outside

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sources, and should also involve your personal reaction or ideas that arise from topics in the course. These will be due at the end of the weeks two through five.

2. Research Paper – Write a 10-12 page paper (3000-3500 words) that highlights a major figure, event, or idea in Existentialism. This should involve research beyond the required readings for the class. Topics should be approved by the instructor; these papers are due at the end of week eight.
3. There will be Discussion Board areas for general interaction and introduction. These will also be areas for discussing issues in the news, and issues that involve more personal opinion – some issues can be controversial, so remember to observe proper netiquette.

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Course Online

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>	<u>Reading(s)</u>	<u>Assignment(s)</u>
1	Introduction	Wartenberg, Intro. + Chapter 1 Marino, Intro.	Discussion Board
2	Kierkegaard	Wartenberg, Chapter 2 Marino - Kierkegaard Lessons: Kierkegaard	Reflection Paper 1 Discussion Board
3	Nietzsche	Wartenberg, Chapter 3 Marino - Nietzsche Lessons: Nietzsche	Reflection Paper 2 Discussion Board
4	Heidegger	Wartenberg, Chapter 4 Marino - Heidegger Lessons: Heidegger	Discussion Board
5	Sartre	Wartenberg, Chapter 5 Marino - Sartre Lessons: Sartre	Reflection Paper 3 Discussion Board
6	De Beauvoir & Camus	Wartenberg, Chapter 6 Marino – Simone de Beauvoir + Albert Camus Lessons: De Beauvoir and Camus	Reflection Paper 4 Discussion Board
7	Tillich & Buber	Wartenberg, Chapter 7 Lessons: Tillich and Buber	Discussion Board

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8	Conclusions	Wartenberg, Chapter 8 + 9 Readings folder (beginners)	Research Paper Due
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NETIQUETTE

Online universities promote the advance of knowledge through positive and constructive debate--both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting--basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the fun and excitement of learning that does not include descent to personal attacks, or student attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Educator classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.
- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and--especially--satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

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Academic Services

ONLINE LIBRARY RESEARCH CENTER & LEARNING RESOURCES

The Online Library Resource Center is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Center provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to orc@apus.edu.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors’ publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Turnitin.com:** Turnitin.com is a tool to improve student research skills that also detect plagiarism. Turnitin.com provides resources on developing topics and assignments that encourage and guide students in producing papers that are intellectually honest, original in thought, and clear in expression. This tool helps ensure a culture of adherence to the University's standards for intellectual honesty. Turnitin.com also reviews students' papers for matches with Internet materials

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- and with thousands of student papers in its database, and returns an Originality Report to instructors and/or students.
- **Smarthinking:** Students have access to 10 free hours of tutoring service per year through [Smarthinking](#). Tutoring is available in the following subjects: math (basic math through advanced calculus), science (biology, chemistry, and physics), accounting, statistics, economics, Spanish, writing, grammar, and more. Additional information is located in the Online Research Center. From the ORC home page, click on either the “Writing Center” or “Tutoring Center” and then click “Smarthinking.” All login information is available.

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Web links

- Virtual Religion Index
- <http://virtualreligion.net/vri/>
- The Virtual Religion Index analyzes and highlights important content of religion-related websites to speed research. Hyperlinks are provided not only to homepages but to major directories & documents within.
- Religion Online
- <http://www.religion-online.org/>
- More than 5,200 articles and chapters. Topics include Old and New Testament, Theology, Ethics, History and Sociology of Religion, Communication and Cultural Studies, Pastoral Care, Counseling, Homiletics, Worship, Missions and Religious Education.
- Finding God in Cyberspace
- <http://sim74.kenrickparish.com/contents.htm>
- A Guide to Religious Studies on the Internet.
- Adherents.com
- <http://www.adherents.com/>
- Adherents.com is a growing collection of over 40,000 adherent statistics and religious geography citations: references to published membership/adherent statistics and congregation statistics for over 4,200 religions, churches, denominations, religious bodies, faith groups, tribes, cultures, movements, ultimate concerns, etc.
- Internet Sacred Text Archive
- <http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>
- An archive of electronic texts about religion, mythology, legends and folklore,

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and occult and esoteric topics. Texts are presented in English translation and, in some cases, in the original language.

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