RELIGION 29
Kierkegaard and Religious Existentialism

Texts to Buy at Wheelock Books:


Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (PB)

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, Kierkegaard’s Writings, Vol. 6 (Princeton PB)

Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, Kierkegaard’s Writings, Vol. 7 (Princeton PB)


Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (Vintage Paperback)

(All other required readings are available electronically on the Blackboard site in the folder “Assigned Readings.” Additional materials for papers are either on Blackboard or Reserve. Readings in the “Assigned Readings” and “Discussion/Essay Questions” folders on Blackboard are listed in the order they are assigned in the syllabus.)

Course Objectives:
This course aims primarily at introducing you to the writings of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the Danish philosopher-theologian who has been called “the founder of existentialism.” Most of this course will involve an exploration of Kierkegaard’s major writings. Towards the end of the course, in class sessions and through student papers and presentations, we will examine Kierkegaard’s impact on religious and non-religious thinkers who are identified as existentialists.

Course Requirements:

1. A brief (2-page; 12-point, double spaced Palatino type) essay on a question about specific passages or statements in the Kierkegaard text under discussion for each class meeting. One or more questions (you should choose one) will be made available well in advance of each class (in the folder “Discussion/Essay Questions”) on Blackboard, and the brief essay is to be submitted electronically (in the Blackboard folder “DiscEssayDropBox” (as a PDF, not MSW document) no later than 8 PM the day before the relevant class meeting. The essay answers to these questions (40% of course grade) will form the basis of class discussion. There are fifteen class sessions with essay assignments (two in the Nov. 17 class). Each student is permitted not to submit an essay five times. Apart from a written Dick’s House medical excuse or equivalent dean’s excuse, there are no other exceptions. The essays will be evaluated for their comprehension of the assigned text and their insight. If a student writes more than the required ten essays, the top ten grades will be recorded.

2. Informed participation in class discussion. This participation, based on the questions distributed in advance, will form the participation grade (20% of course grade). Note: if you do not write an essay for a specific class or topic, you are still held responsible for reading that assignment and being prepared to discuss it.

3. A research paper (12 pages maximum, not including bibliography 12-point, double spaced Palatino type) and class presentation on a topic proposed by you or suggested by the instructor. Selected papers will form the basis of class discussion and presentations at the end of the course (30% of course grade for the paper; 10% for the presentation). Suggested topics (with bibliography) will be made available as the course proceeds (in the Blackboard folder “Research Paper Materials”), or students can propose their own topic of interest. A one-page paper proposal (with sample
bibliography) is due at the start of class on October 27th. The paper itself is due in the “ResEssayDropBox: folder (on Blackboard) as a PDF not a Word document by 5 PM on Saturday, November 14th.

Note: In the current schedule, there is no class meeting on Nov. 24, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. In the event that the H1N1 flu epidemic seriously disrupts our schedule, we may need to use this date for a class meeting. I hope to be able to determine what we will be doing as early as possible to allow you to make travel plans.

Note: Exceptional circumstances may require changes in this syllabus and revision of requirements and assignments.

Honor principle

You should be aware of and conform to the Dartmouth Honor Code as expressed in the ORC. This means that all research and writing should be done by you and that all references and ideas are appropriately cited [If in doubt, see http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/]. Note: there should be no prior consultation among students on the essays that form the basis of class discussion.

Accommodations for disabilities

I encourage students with disabilities, including “invisible” disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities to discuss with me after class or during my office hours appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them.

Late Policy

Essays must be submitted by 8 p.m. the evening before class. Late assignments will not be accepted.

The paper itself is due in the “ResEssayDropBox” folder as a PDF (on Blackboard) by 4:00 PM on Noon on Saturday, November 14th. Extensions without late penalty will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. documented illness). Otherwise a full letter grade will be deducted from the grade for each 24 hours of lateness.

X-Hours

The course X-hour (designated additional course meeting/discussion time) is from 4:15-5:05 PM on Wednesdays. With advance announcement,
we may use one or more of these X-hour time slots for discussions, films or visiting speakers, so please keep this hour free.

**Topics and Reading Assignments:**

**Sept. 24**
Introduction (no assigned reading).

**Sept. 29**
The Aesthetic Sphere of Existence: Viewing in class (Sept. 29) of selected portions of Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni*


**Oct. 1**
The Aesthetic Sphere of Existence (Cont’d)

**Oct. 6, 8**
The Ethical Existence Sphere


**Oct. 13**
Suspending the Ethical?

**Reading:** *Fear and Trembling*, pp. ix-81. Handouts: “Fear & Trembling Reading Guide”\(^B\) and “Fear & Trembling Questions”\(^B\) [This guide and these questions in the “Handouts” folder of BB. They are a further assist to your reading; they are not the essay questions which are also on BB.]

**Oct. 15**
Suspending the Ethical? (Cont’d.)

**Reading:** *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 82-123
Oct. 20 An anxiety

**Reading:** The Concept of Anxiety, 16-35, 41-51, 60-73

Oct. 21

***Extra Class to begin consideration of Philosophical Fragments (X-hour: Wed 4:15-5:05 pm); only the first question is due***

October 22, “Inventing” Christianity

**Reading:** Philosophical Fragments, pp. 1-3, (title page & epigraph), 9-48, 55-111; R. M. Green, “Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments: A Kantian Commentary”

October 27 Truth as Subjectivity

**Reading:** Bretall, pp. 190-194; Concluding Unscientific Postscript, pp. 28-31, 51-53; [Note all Postscript BB readings are in a single file, which includes notes]; Bretall, pp. 195-210; Postscript, pp. 133-138; Bretall, pp. 210-222; Postscript, 213-216, 224; Bretall, pp. 222-226; Postscript, pp. 251-262, 266-271, 294, 315-316; Bretall, 226 to 231.

***Note: Research Paper proposals (1 page including bibliography) due at start of class***

Oct. 29 The Religious Existence Sphere

**Reading:** Postscript, pp. 342-343, 387-411, 420-421; Bretall, pp. 231 to 252; Postscript, pp. 528-529, 533-534, 542, 555-561; Bretall, pp. 252-258.

Nov. 3 Despair and Its Remedy(ies)

**Reading:** The Sickness unto Death, pp. 1-74.

Nov. 5 Despair and Its Remedy(ies) (Cont’d.)

**Reading:** The Sickness unto Death, pp. 77-82, 87-96, 126-131.
Nov. 10       Kierkegaard and “Christendom”

Reading: “Was Bishop Mynster a ‘Witness to the Truth’?” Bretall, 426-482.

Nov. 12       Kierkegaard’s Legacy: Jewish Religious Existentialism

Reading: Martin Buber, I and Thou

***Saturday, Nov. 14, Research Papers due in the ResEssayDropBox (on Blackboard) as a PDF not a Word document by 5PM on Saturday.

Nov. 17       Kierkegaard’s Legacy: Atheistic Existentialism

Reading: Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism” B; “No Exit” and “The Flies” in Sartre, No Exit and Three Other Plays

Nov. 18       ***Extra Class to complete consideration of Sartre (X-hour: Wed 4:15-5:05 pm)***

Nov. 19, Dec. 1 Selected Student Paper Presentations