



**PHILOSOPHY 2130A (570)**  
**Existentialism**  
**Summer 2026**

Instructor: Prof. Dean Proessel  
Email: [dproesse@uwo.ca](mailto:dproesse@uwo.ca)

**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

An introduction to 19th and 20th century existentialism through a reading of philosophy and literature, with an emphasis on the concrete existence of the individual searching for a meaning to his or her life

**Prerequisite(s):**

**Antirequisite(s):**

**Extra Information:** 3 hours

**Course Weight:** 0.50

**Breadth:** Category B

**Subject Code:** PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**Department of Philosophy  
King's College**

**Philosophy 2130A: Existentialism**

Instructor: Prof. Dean Proessel  
On-Line Course: May 4 to June 12  
Email: [dproesse@uwo.ca](mailto:dproesse@uwo.ca)  
Office hours via Zoom: To be announced

### **Course Description**

This course focuses on four philosophers of the existentialist movement, including Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre. A variety of themes will be investigated; most importantly, why and how these philosophers call into question the traditional view of the subject as detached from the world in a relation that is *epistemic*, and how, in doing so, emphasis is placed on our existence as *living individuals*, that is, as always already situated *in a world* and open to *future possibilities*. These two aspects come together in the idea that human existence involves having to create meaning out of the conditions in which we find ourselves—thus giving rise to related themes including: alienation, authenticity, freedom, and being with others. Accordingly, our investigation will include questions such as: What is our relation to the world and how does the world take on meaning in our everyday lives? What is freedom? To what extent is our freedom shaped by the world and others? What might it mean to live authentically? Who is the other and what role do others play in our lives?

### **Course Objectives**

- Understand the positions of the 4 philosophers examined, and how they differ from each other.
- Understand why and how these philosophers challenge traditional dualisms, and the detached, epistemic perspective more generally.
- Understand the significance of lived experience and how perception is shaped by language, culture and forms of life.
- Examine certain key themes including, Being-in-the-world, Alienation, Freedom, Authenticity and Being-with-Others
- Develop skills of critical analysis by writing 2 papers.

### **Methodology**

You can expect two lectures each week, one at the beginning of the week, the other towards the end of the week. Lectures will consist of recorded video lectures, power point slides and textual analyses. I will also hold a zoom meeting each week.

## **Course Text**

*Existentialism: Basic Writings*, edited by Charles Guignon and Derek Pereboom

## **Course Requirements**

Paper 1: 30% (May 18)

Paper 2: 35% (June 5)

Final exam: 35% (June 15)

Specific details regarding the term paper and the final exam will be provided in the first week.

All assignments must be submitted to OWL.

## **Reading Schedule**

### **Week 1 (May 4 - 8)**

#### **Kierkegaard**

Introduction: The Legacy of Existentialism (xiii-xxxviii)

Introduction to Kierkegaard (1-17): focus on "Spheres of Existence"

"Truth as Subjectivity" from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (85-92)

*Fear and Trembling*, Preface (26 - 28)

### **Week 2: (May 11 - 15)**

*Fear and Trembling* (continued)

"Problemata: Preliminary Expectoration" (35 - 55)

"Problem I: Is There Such a Thing as a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" (55 – 65)

#### **Nietzsche**

Introduction to Nietzsche (pages 93 - 118) (recommended)

*Twilight of the Idols* (pages 176 – 181)

*The Birth of Tragedy* (pages 119 – 122)

### **Week 3 (May 18 - 22)**

*The Gay Science* (pages 123 – 171)

We will focus on sections:

- 121: Life is no argument
- 125: The madmen—on God
- 270: “You shall become who you are”
- 276: For the new year: “Amor Fati”
- 341: The Heaviest weight: the eternal recurrence
- 343: What our Cheerfulness means
- 344: To what extent even we are still pious
- 347: Believers and their need for belief
- 354: Perspectivism
- 355: On the Origin of our concept “knowledge”
- 374: Our new infinite: “perspectivism”
- 382: The great health

### **Week 4 (May 25 - 29)**

#### **Heidegger**

Introduction to Heidegger (pages 183 – 210) (recommended)

#### *Being and Time*

Introduction (pages 211 – 219)

Section 9: The theme of the Analytic of Dasein

Section 12: A Preliminary Sketch of Being-in-the-world

### **Week 5 (June 1 - 5)**

#### *Being and Time*

Section 15: The Being of Entities Encountered in the Environment

Section 16: How the Worldly Character of the Environment Announces Itself

Section 18: Involvement and Significance: The Worldhood of the World

Section 26: The Dasein-with of Others and Everyday Being-with

Section 27: Everyday Being-one’s-Self and the “They”

Section 29: Being-there as State of Mind

Section 31: Being-there as Understanding

Section 38: Falling and Thrownness

Section 40: Anxiety

## Section 41: Dasein's Being as Care

### **Sartre**

"The Humanism of Existentialism" (pages 290 - 308)

*Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*

Read the following sections:

The Origin of Negation: The Question (pages 309 – 311)

- Destruction (pages 313 – 314)
- Pierre in the café (pages 315 – 317)

### **Week 6 (June 8 - 12)**

The Origin of Nothingness (pages 318 – 328)

- Fear/Anguish (pages 324 – 327)

Patterns of Bad faith

- Woman on a date (pages 331 – 333)
- The waiter (pages 335 – 337)

Sartre continued: The Existence of Others: The Look

- Looking through the keyhole (pages 348 – 352)

**This reading list is subject to change.**

# King's University College General Course Policies 2025-2026

## **1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

### **Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [here](#).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course. Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course. For further information, please see:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

### **Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/exams/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/exams/index.html).

## **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/personal-counselling>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King’s University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>

## **GBSV Support:**

King’s is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/gender-and-sexual-violence>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western’s Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

**Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom:** King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/campus-safety-and-reporting/student-code-of-conduct>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at [here](#).

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/OriginalityReports-TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

## **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member.

Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

## **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

## **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.