



PHL 238

Existential Questions

S1 Day 2015

Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Lecturer

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W6A 736

tba

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

12cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit studies key philosophical questions (the meaning of life and death, freedom and responsibility, politics and history) from the perspective of existentialist philosophy. The unit is organised around the most important texts in this tradition. In particular, we investigate the way in which existentialist thinkers explored philosophical questions through literature.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.

A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.

A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.

An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.

To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Introduction to Existentialism	10%	Week 3 and 4
Weekly exercises	40%	Weeks 5-12
Participation	10%	Throughout the course
Final essay	40%	Monday 15 June

Introduction to Existentialism

Due: **Week 3 and 4**

Weighting: **10%**

Tutorials are organised as workshops in which students work on and finalise their answers to questions set the previous week. After the tutorial, students have until the Monday of the following week to submit their response. Each exercise is worth 5% of the overall mark. Students receive feedback during the week, in time for the next weekly exercise. In the first two weeks, the questions relate to key concepts and ideas that form the basis of existentialist approaches.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.

Weekly exercises

Due: **Weeks 5-12**

Weighting: **40%**

In the following weeks, exercises will test and extend the understanding of key notions and arguments, provide guidelines for productive personal research, and offer opportunities to practise philosophical writing. Answers to the set questions will require small amounts of research and writing, a few sentences in the first half of the course, up to a page in the later stages of the course. The exercises will cover the different types of skills required for writing a philosophical essay.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.

Participation

Due: **Throughout the course**

Weighting: **10%**

The participation mark reflects the amount of productive involvement in the weekly workshops, in terms of preparation and active participation.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.
- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Final essay

Due: **Monday 15 June**

Weighting: **40%**

In the final essay, students have the opportunity to explore a topic related to the course content and to develop a personal response to a complex issue. Some set questions will be suggested but students will also be able to devise their own essay question. This major assignment is designed to test students ability to engage with a topic in depth, to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to develop an argument or point of view in a sustained and coherent manner. The required word length will be between 3,000 and 4,000 words.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.
- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Delivery and Resources

This unit uses an ilearn website and Echo360 lecture recordings (<https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/login/MQ/>). The website contains links to lecture notes, ilecture recordings, and other learning materials. Students will therefore require access to a computer and a good internet connection in order to access all the material, and participate in the unit effectively.

PHL238 will be delivered using a combination of lectures (live and pre-recorded) and tutorial work. Lectures are organised around key texts in which fundamental concepts and arguments are introduced and explained. Tutorials are organised as workshops in which weekly exercises are analysed and brainstormed in group discussions, to assist each student in completing timely submission of their answers. The weekly exercises are designed to practise the various skills required in philosophical writing. They will be scaffolded to help students in the preparation of the final essay. External students will conduct these workshops online via iLearn.

Lecture and Tutorial Times

There are two lectures per week:

Tuesday 2-3pm C5A 226

Friday 3-4pm E6A 108

Two tutorials are scheduled:

Tuesday 3-4pm W5C 334

Friday 4-5pm W5C 334

Weekly tutorials **will begin in WEEK 2** and will continue until Week 13.

Unit Schedule

Week 1	Introduction to PHL 238
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	“There is only one serious philosophical problem” : authentic existence, the question at the root of all philosophical inquiries
Week 2	The Absurd – Camus’ challenge Key text: Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> , chapter 1.
Week 3-4	Boredom, Death and Care – Heidegger’s challenge Key text: extracts from Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> , <i>What is Metaphysics?</i>
Week 5	The Power of Nothingness – Sartre’s Challenge Key text: extract from <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
Week 6 (only 1 lect)	The Authentic Body: Merleau-Ponty’s challenge Key text: Merleau-Ponty, extracts from <i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i>
Week 7	The Authentic Self and the Other Key texts: Heidegger, “The They” (from <i>Being and Time</i>); Sartre’s “being-for-other” (from <i>Being and Nothingness</i> and <i>No Exit</i>); Merleau-Ponty’s co-presence (from <i>Pheno of Perception</i>)
	“What ought I to do”? Morality, Politics and Art as existential tasks
Week 8	Nature versus History – Camus’ response to the Absurd Key texts: Camus, <i>Nuptials at Tipasa</i> , <i>The Outsider</i> (final page)
Week 9	De Beauvoir: freedom as duty Key texts: De Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , chapter 1; <i>The Second Sex</i> , Introduction
Week 10	Sartre: the responsibilities of literature Key text: Sartre, <i>Black Orpheus</i>
Week 11	The work of art as safeguard of truth Key text: Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i>
Week 12	The truth of painting: Cézanne as a Philosopher Key text: Merleau-Ponty, extract from <i>The Eye and the Mind</i>
Week 13	Wrap up, feedback and Essay preparation

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Final essay

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Final essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- A good understanding of the relevance of phenomenological and existentialist

approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.

- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.
- To articulate ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis, interpretation, and appropriate forms for written expression.

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Final essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in phenomenology and existentialism.
- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good understanding of the history and significance of phenomenology and existentialism within the history of philosophy.
- An ability to apply philosophical theories and concepts to other areas of social and cultural practice.

Assessment tasks

- Introduction to Existentialism
- Weekly exercises
- Participation
- Final essay