



PHIL2038

Existential Questions

Session 2, Fully online/virtual 2020

Department of Philosophy

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Disclaimer

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Notice

As part of [Phase 3 of our return to campus plan](#), most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group learning activities on campus for the second half-year, while keeping an online version available for those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face and online activities for your unit, please go to [timetable viewer](#). To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Robert Sinnerbrink

robert.sinnerbrink@mq.edu.au

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

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, focusing on the work of philosophers such as Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, and Hannah Arendt. We investigate the way in which existentialist thinkers explored philosophical questions through philosophy as well as literature, and focus in the second half of the unit on the uptake and influence of existentialist ideas in contemporary moral and political philosophy, cognitivist theory, and broader topics such as gender, race, colonialism, and democracy.

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:

ULO1: To characterise and examine arguments and concepts in existentialist philosophy.

ULO2: To examine and appraise the history and significance of existentialism within the history of philosophy.

ULO3: To evaluate the relevance and apply existentialist approaches in broader social, cultural and political debates.

ULO4: To investigate and theorise ideas clearly, cogently, and convincingly through critical analysis and philosophical discussion.

General Assessment Information

General Assessment Information

Submission of Assessments

All assessment pieces are to be submitted via Turnitin portals that will be made available the unit's iLearn site. Written assessment pieces will be run through the Turnitin software which detects unoriginal work.

Extensions and Disruption to Studies Extensions and Penalties

All work must be submitted on time unless an extension has been granted. Requests for extensions must be made in writing BEFORE the due date and will only be considered on serious grounds. Extensions will not be given unless good reasons and appropriate evidence (e.g., medical certificates, counsellor's letters) are presented at the earliest opportunity. Please note that work due concurrently in other subjects is NOT an exceptional circumstance and does not constitute a legitimate reason for an extension.

Late Assessment Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

To obtain an extension you must submit a Disruption to Studies application. See below for details.

Disruption to Studies Policy

The University classifies a disruption as serious and unavoidable if it:

- could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student; and
- was beyond the student's control; and
- caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for effective study and/or completion of required work; and
- occurred during an event critical study period and was at least three (3) consecutive days duration, and / or
- prevented completion of a final examination.

Students with a pre-existing disability/health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such support is governed by other policies and may be sought and coordinated through Campus Wellbeing and Support Services.

How to submit a Disruption to Studies Notification

The Disruption to Studies Notification must be completed and submitted online through www.ask.mq.edu.au within five (5) working days of the commencement of the disruption.

Applying for Special Consideration

1. Log in at ask.mq
2. Click 'Special Consideration' from the 'Submit' menu on the left
3. Fill in the required fields as prompted. Once you have completed filling out the information, please click on 'Submit'.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Tutorial Participation	20%	No	Week 2- Week 12
Philosophical Essay	40%	No	Week 13
Reflective Exercise	25%	No	Week 7
Online Quizzes	15%	No	Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, 11

Tutorial Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Facilitation

Indicative Time on Task ²: 10 hours

Due: **Week 2- Week 12**

Weighting: **20%**

Students shall participate in active discussion, dialogue and debate in either on campus or online tutorial activities across the semester.

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Philosophical Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 35 hours

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **40%**

A long essay discussing, analysing, and evaluating key concepts and arguments in existentialist philosophy.

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Reflective Exercise

Assessment Type ¹: Reflective Writing

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **Week 7**

Weighting: **25%**

Students shall complete a short reflective written exercise explaining and applying ideas studied in this unit to examples of their own choosing.

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Online Quizzes

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 5 hours

Due: **Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, 11**

Weighting: **15%**

Online quizzes on weekly topics designed as an ongoing revision exercise.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- To examine and appraise the history and significance of existentialism within the history of philosophy.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

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 the reading material, lecture notes, lecture recordings, and other learning materials such as video clips, weblinks, and images. 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. PHIL2038 will be delivered using a combination of online lectures (recorded via Echo360) and online tutorial forum discussions. Lectures are organised around key texts in which fundamental concepts and arguments are introduced and explained. The weekly quizzes are designed to practise the various skills required in philosophical writing. They will be scaffolded to help students in the preparation for tackling Assessment tasks. External students will engage in these activities online via dedicated iLearn discussion forums. For lecture times and classrooms please consult the MQ Timetable website: <http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au>. This website will display up-to-date information on your classes and classroom locations.

Lectures:

Monday 9am-11am (Echo360 Online Lecture Recordings will be posted on Monday mornings)

Tutorials:

Weekly online tutorial classes will be conducted commencing from Week 2. Week 1 will be an Introductory session where students introduce themselves to each other and we discuss any issues relevant to studying this unit. Weekly Tutorial Discussion Questions will be posted after the lecture recordings have been posted. Students are required to respond to the Tutorial Discussion Questions and engage each other in discussion responding to issues raised in these responses.

N.B.: Weekly tutorials will begin in **WEEK 2** and will continue until **Week 12** (Week 13 tutorial will be an online peer review session for the Essay).

Unit Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to PHIL238: What is Existentialism?

“There is only one serious philosophical problem” (Camus): the question of the meaning of existence, to live an authentic life; the question at the root of all philosophical inquiries.

Required Reading: Stephen Crowell, 'Existentialism', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, online entry (2015): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/>

Background Reading: Douglas Burnham and George Papandreopolous, 'Existentialism', Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, online entry: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/existent/>

Recommended: Sarah Bakewell, 'Think big, be free, have sex ... 10 reasons to be an existentialist', The Guardian, Philosophy Books, March 4, 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/04/ten-reasons-to-be-an-existentialist>

Week 2 The Absurd – Camus' challenge

Required Reading: Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, chapter 1

Background reading: Ronald Aronson, 'Albert Camus', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/>

Recommended: 'Albert Camus', *The Book of Life (The School of Life)*: <https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/albert-camus/>

Weeks 3 to 4 Boredom, Death and Care – Heidegger's challenge

Required Reading: extracts from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, What is Metaphysics?

Background reading: Martin Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/>

Week 5 The Power of Nothingness – Sartre's Challenge

Required Reading: extract from Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Background reading: Thomas Flynn, 'Jean-Paul Sartre', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sartre/>

Week 6 The Authentic Body: Merleau-Ponty's challenge

Required Reading: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, extracts from *The Phenomenology of Perception*

Background Reading: Ted Toadvine, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/>

Week 7 The Authentic Self and the Other

Required Reading: Heidegger, "The They" (from *Being and Time*); Sartre's "being-for-other" (from *Being and Nothingness* and *No Exit*); Merleau-Ponty's concept of co-presence (from his *Phenomenology of Perception*)

Background reading: Somogy Varda and Charles Guignon, 'Authenticity', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/>

“What ought I to do”? Morality, Politics and Art as Existential Tasks

Week 8 Nature versus History – Camus’ response to the Absurd

Required Reading: Albert Camus, extracts from The Rebel, Nuptials at Tipasa, The Outsider

Background reading: Ronald Aronson, 'Albert Camus', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/>

Week 9 De Beauvoir and Feminist Existentialism

Required Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity, chapter 1; extracts from The Second Sex

Background reading: Debra Bergoffen, 'Simone de Beauvoir', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauvoir/>

Week 10 Black existentialism

Required Reading: Jean-Paul Sartre, Black Orpheus; Frantz Fanon, extracts from Black Skin, White Masks; Lewis Gordon, extracts from Existence in Black

Background reading: John Dabrinksi 'Frantz Fanon', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frantz-fanon/>

Week 11 Arendt: politics as authentic life

Required Reading: Hannah Arendt, extracts from The Human Condition

Background reading: Maurizio Passerin D'Entreves, 'Hannah Arendt', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/>

Week 12 Existentialist aesthetics

Required Reading: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, extracts from Eye and Mind; Jean-Paul Sartre, What is Literature?, Martin Heidegger, The Origin of the Work of Art

Background Reading: Jean-Philippe Deranty, 'Existentialist Aesthetics', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-existentialist/>

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/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/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@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 help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

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

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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