



PHL 238

Existential Questions

S2 Online 2019

Dept of Philosophy

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Disclaimer

Macquarie University has taken all reasonable measures to ensure the information in this publication is accurate and up-to-date. However, the information may change or become out-dated as a result of change in University policies, procedures or rules. The University reserves the right to make changes to any information in this publication without notice. Users of this publication are advised to check the website version of this publication [or the relevant faculty or department] before acting on any information in this publication.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Lecturer

Robert Sinnerbrink

robert.sinnerbrink@mq.edu.au

Contact via 98509935

The Australian Hearing Hub building, Level 2 North

By appointment

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

(12cp at 100 level or above) 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 existentialist philosophy.

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

A good understanding of the relevance of 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.

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?

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
Online Quiz	15%	No	Ongoing to Week 13
Reflective Exercise	25%	No	Week 7
Philosophical Essay	40%	No	Week 13
Tutorial Participation	20%	No	Throughout Semester

Online Quiz

Due: **Ongoing to Week 13**

Weighting: **15%**

In Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 students will complete short online quizzes based on the unit readings (5 quizzes in total). Quizzes start in week 3 and continue fortnightly until week 12. Each quiz opens after the relevant lectures. Quizzes involve multiple choice options with occasional T/F options. All quizzes remain open until the end of Week 13. The quizzes cannot be accessed after that date. Each quiz will be open for an hour but should take no more than 30 minutes.

Please don't leave all the quizzes to the last minute - you should complete the quizzes throughout the semester after the relevant lecture.

Criteria: The quizzes are a key revision exercise that aim to test your understanding of the key texts, main concepts and arguments studied each week. These assessments will be evaluated on the accuracy of quiz responses to questions based on Lecture Topics and Required Readings. They are designed to encourage ongoing study and revision of the unit materials and to foster preparation for other assessment tasks (e.g. the Reflective Exercise and the Philosophical Essay).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments and concepts in existentialist

philosophy.

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

Reflective Exercise

Due: **Week 7**

Weighting: **25%**

Students will complete a 1500 word Reflective Exercise, which consists of selecting one or more of the Required Readings we shall study in Part One of the unit and applying insights or ideas from this reading to a particular example of the student's own choosing. For example, students might discuss Camus' reflections on absurdity or Heidegger's thoughts on boredom, death and care or Sartre's ideas of freedom and authenticity to a contemporary social issue or cultural debate, to a novel or a film, television series, media report, etc.. Suggestions and ideas for suitable examples will be offered but students will be encouraged to choose their own 'real world' example to which existential questions and ideas might be applied.

Criteria: the Reflective Exercise aims to show students' understanding of key ideas and concepts studied in the first part of the unit, to explain these clearly and accurately, and to show some critical and creative thinking in applying these ideas to a contemporary example (like a work of art, culutral text, media story, social issue or political debate). Students will be evaluated on the quality of their discussion and analysis of these ideas as well as the manner in which they show how it might (or might not) apply to a contemporary 'real world' example. A rubric will be made available on iLearn.

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

Philosophical Essay

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **40%**

In the Philosophical Essay, students will use the critical analyses and conceptual insights discussed over the course of the unit to respond to set questions based on the topics studied during the semester. Here you show us the critical questioning and philosophical knowledge you have learned in the course of studying the unit. This essay will be workshopped

in peer review exercises in Week 13, where students will bring a draft or sketch to class or posted online. The final version of the Essay is due at the end of Week 13. Word length: 2000 words.

Criteria: An excellent essay will demonstrate knowledge of the relevant content; a clear structure and argument; creativity, proper expression, spelling, punctuation and grammar; an easy to read presentation; proper integration and referencing of research and other sources. This assessment will be evaluated based on the criteria explained on the rubric that will be posted on iLearn.

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

Tutorial Participation

Due: **Throughout Semester**

Weighting: **20%**

Students will participate in 10 tutorials throughout the semester (for both on-campus and online students), starting in Week 2 and continuing weekly until Week 12. There will be a final tutorial in Week 13 that will be dedicated to peer review of student Essay drafts or sketches, where students give each other feedback (in class or online) about their approach to their chosen Essay topic. Weekly tutorial questions will be provided that will provide a focus and structure for tutorial discussions. These tutorial discussions, whether online or on campus, offer excellent opportunities to discuss, explore, and debate what we are learning together. Students are thus expected to engage actively in weekly discussions of the unit material in a thoughtful manner that is informed by a careful engagement with the assigned readings and lecture materials. Both lectures and tutorials are important sites of individual and group learning. Internal students are expected to come to tutorial each week having listened to the lectures, read the assigned reading, and ready to raise questions and discuss the relevant ideas with their classmates. After working through the assigned material, external/online students should spend approximately one hour each week responding to the weekly tutorial questions and contributing to the online discussion forums.

Participation will be assessed based on both the quality and quantity of students' contributions online or in tutorials, including engagement with their peers' responses. Students will be awarded

marks based on attendance/participation in either in-class or online tutorials, and for their active engagement in these in-class or online discussions, both in response to set tutorial questions and in response to their peers' contributions to class/online discussion. A marking rubric detailing the components of active engagement will be made available on iLearn.

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- 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 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.

PHL238 will be delivered using a combination of lectures (live and pre-recorded) and tutorial class discussion work. 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.

Lecture Times

Thursday 12noon to 2pm; 25a Wally's Walk - 209 Tutorial Rm

Tutorial Times

Thursday 2pm-3pm; 4 Western Rd - 310 Tutorial Rm

Friday 10am-11am, 4 Western Rd - 310 Tutorial Rm

Friday 11am-12noon, 23 Wally's Walk - 202 Tutorial Rm

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

Unit Schedule

<p>Week 1</p>	<p>Introduction to PHL238: What is Existentialism?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>“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.</p> </div> <p>Required Reading: Stephen Crowell, 'Existentialism', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>, online entry (2015): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism/</p> <p>Background Reading: Douglas Burnham and George Papandreopolous, 'Existentialism', <i>Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>, online entry: https://www.iep.utm.edu/existent/</p> <p>Recommended: Sarah Bakewell, 'Think big, be free, have sex ... 10 reasons to be an existentialist', <i>The Guardian</i>, Philosophy Books, March 4, 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/04/ten-reasons-to-be-an-existentialist</p>
<p>Week 2</p>	<p>The Absurd – Camus' challenge</p> <p>Key text: Albert Camus, <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>, chapter 1</p> <p>Background reading: Ronald Aronson, 'Albert Camus', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (2017): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/</p> <p>Recommended: 'Albert Camus', <i>The Book of Life (The School of Life)</i>: https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/albert-camus/</p>
<p>Week 3-4</p>	<p>Boredom, Death and Care – Heidegger's challenge</p> <p>Key text: extracts from Martin Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>, <i>What is Metaphysics?</i></p> <p>Background reading: Martin Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/</p>
<p>Week 5</p>	<p>The Power of Nothingness – Sartre's Challenge</p> <p>Key text: extract from Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i></p> <p>Background reading: Thomas Flynn, 'Jean-Paul Sartre,' <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sartre/</p>
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>The Authentic Body: Merleau-Ponty's challenge</p> <p>Key text: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, extracts from <i>The Phenomenology of Perception</i></p> <p>Background Reading: Ted Toadvine, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/</p>
<p>Week 7</p>	<p>The Authentic Self and the Other</p> <p>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>Phenomenology of Perception</i>)</p> <p>Background reading: Somogy Varda and Charles Guignon, 'Authenticity', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/authenticity/</p>

	"What ought I to do"? Morality, Politics and Art as existential tasks
Week 8	<p>Nature versus History – Camus' response to the Absurd</p> <p>Key texts: Albert Camus, extracts from <i>The Rebel</i>, <i>Nuptials at Tipasa</i>, <i>The Outsider</i></p> <p>Background reading: Ronald Aronson, 'Albert Camus', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> (2017): https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/</p>
Week 9	<p>De Beauvoir and Feminist Existentialism</p> <p>Key texts: Simone de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>, chapter 1; extracts from <i>The Second Sex</i></p> <p>Background reading: Debra Bergoffen, 'Simone de Beauvoir', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauvoir/</p>
Week 10	<p>Black existentialism</p> <p>Key texts: Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Black Orpheus</i>; Frantz Fanon, extracts from <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>; Lewis Gordon, extracts from <i>Existence in Black</i></p> <p>Background reading: John Dabrinksi 'Frantz Fanon', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frantz-fanon/</p>
Week 11	<p>Arendt: politics as authentic life</p> <p>Key text: Hannah Arendt, extracts from <i>The Human Condition</i></p> <p>Background reading: Maurizio Passerin D'Entreves, 'Hannah Arendt,' <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/</p>
Week 12	<p>Existentialist aesthetics</p> <p>Key texts: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, extracts from <i>Eye and Mind</i>; Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>What is Literature?</i>; Martin Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i></p> <p>Background Reading: Jean-Philippe Deranty, 'Existentialist Aesthetics', <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i>: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aesthetics-existentialist/</p>

Learning and Teaching Activities

Lectures

Lecture Two one hour lectures per week given Staff Lecturers. These will be recorded on Echo360 and available as downloadable recordings on the ilearn website for this unit. Powerpoint slides/notes will also be available via the website.

Tutorials

One one hour tutorial per week. Students will enrol in a tutorial class and engage in weekly discussion and learning activities relating to the weekly course material. Online students will participate in online tutorials. Tutorials begin in Week 2 and students are expected to attend at least 9/12 classes.

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.*)

Undergraduate 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 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

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.

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

- Philosophical Essay
- Tutorial Participation

Learning and teaching activities

- Lecture Two one hour lectures per week given Staff Lecturers. These will be recorded on Echo360 and available as downloadable recordings on the ilearn website for this unit.

Powerpoint slides/notes will also be available via the website.

- One one hour tutorial per week. Students will enrol in a tutorial class and engage in weekly discussion and learning activities relating to the weekly course material. Online students will participate in online tutorials. Tutorials begin in Week 2 and students are expected to attend at least 9/12 classes.

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

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Learning and teaching activities

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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 existentialism within the history of philosophy.

Assessment tasks

- Reflective Exercise
- Philosophical Essay
- Tutorial Participation

Learning and teaching activities

- One one hour tutorial per week. Students will enrol in a tutorial class and engage in weekly discussion and learning activities relating to the weekly course material. Online students will participate in online tutorials. Tutorials begin in Week 2 and students are expected to attend at least 9/12 classes.

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

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expected to attend at least 9/12 classes.

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.

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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.

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Learning outcomes

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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

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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

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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

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