

**Philosophy 3168**  
**Themes in Existentialism**  
**Professor Lewis R. Gordon**  
**Time: Mondays, 3:00 PM–5:30 PM**  
**Spring 2010, in AC 107**  
**ph: 215-204-8292 / email: gordonl@temple.edu**  
Office hours (Room 648 Anderson Hall): Mondays: 10:30 AM–11:55 AM

Freedom and Angst, joy and suffering, affirmation and despair, life and decadence—these and other dimensions of the human condition will be explored through the writings of philosophers of existence in a variety of intellectual traditions such as Christianity; Judaism; Zen Buddhism; Occidental atheism; Africana thought; modern scientism; and more. From the canonical to the iconoclastic, we will see what these authors have to say on what it means to make a choice in the modern and postmodern worlds.

**Texts**

S. Kierkegaard, *“Fear and Trembling” and Repetition*. Princeton University Press. ISBN-10: 0691020264  
K. Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*. University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN-10: 0812210107  
M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics # ISBN-10: 0061627011 / # ISBN-13: 978-0061627019  
J-P Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Washington Square Press. ISBN-10: 0671867806  
S. De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. ISBN-10: 080650160X [[**Selections will be on blackboard**]]  
K. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*. University of California. ISBN-10: 0520049462  
L. Gordon, *Existentialia Africana*. Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415926440  
J. & L. Gordon, *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age*. ISBN-10: 1594515395

I haven't ordered these books in the bookstore because they are often marked up in price. You can find them at competitive prices as through the internet. I recommend this website:  
<http://www.bestwebbuys.com/index.html>

Since many of these are classic texts, you could also find bargains at the used bookstores in the city. Try Book Haven on Fairmont Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street or The Last Word Bookshop on 220 South 40<sup>th</sup> Street, not far from Walnut. Other readings will be posted on blackboard.

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**Evaluation:** two take-home examinations. The first is worth 30 percent of your grade. The second is 50 percent of your grade. The remaining 20 percent is from attendance and class participation.

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**Date Assignment**

1/24/2011	Handout syllabus, outline of course, and discussion of administration of the course. Introduction: What is Philosophy? What is existential philosophy?
1/31	Kierkegaard's critique of idealism and transcendental formalism. Reading: <i>Fear and Trembling</i> (first 50 pages)
2/07	Problematizing the relationship between the universal and the Absolute; on the teleological suspension of the ethical and existential paradoxes. Reading: <i>Fear and Trembling</i> (remainder). Getting the self out of the way: Simone Weil on affliction, decreation, and the emptying of the ego. Readings: The Simone Weil Reader, "God of Love and Affliction" and selections on prayer, patience, and decreation
2/14	Reading break (no class): Karl Jaspers, <i>Philosophy of Existence</i>
2/21	Living with reality greater than ourselves and the demands of truth and science: Karl Jaspers on science, philosophy, and religion. Reading: <i>Philosophy of Existence</i>
2/28	Theometaphysics and the problem of authenticity—Heidegger. Readings: Selections from <i>Being and Time</i> and "Letter on Humanism" in <i>Basic Writings</i> . Mid-term take-home paper

assigned and due by email attachment to the account: lewgord@gmail.com on Thursday, March 4, 2009, at 5:00 PM. Send by email attachment in MS Word or RTF or in the text of the email.

- 3/7 **Spring break**
- 3/14 Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, introduction and Part 1 and Part II
- 3/21 Embodiment, living with others, and the spirit of seriousness. Reading: *Being and Nothingness*, Part III to conclusion  
**Guest Humanities speaker: Michael Paraiso-Michau, "The Arendt Controversy: Eichmann in Jerusalem, Fifty Years After." Place and time TBA**
- 3/24 **Lewis Gordon CHAT Lecture: "Black Existence in Philosophy of Culture," 12:30 PM, Gladfelter, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor**
- 3/28 Ethical challenges—Simone de Beauvoir. Reading: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
- 4/4 Africana existential philosophy. Reading: *Existential Africana*
- 4/11 Nihilism and nihility East and West—Nishitani's Zen Buddhist existential phenomenology. Reading: *Religion and Nothingness*  
**Recommended Humanities and Jewish Studies Lecture: Jake Dorman**
- 4/18 Disaster and the end of the world. Reading: *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age*
- 4/25 Concluding discussion. Take-home papers due by email attachment to the account: lewgord@gmail.com Monday, May 2, 2009, at 5:00 PM.
- 5/2 Reception of Final examination and assessments.

Any student who has a need for special accommodations due to disabilities should speak with me as soon as possible to discuss the specific situation and contact Disability Resources and Services, located in Ritter Annex, at 215.204.1280.

There are other novels, music, and film that you should read, listen to, and view along the way, or after the class, that could enrich your understanding of this material. The following list isn't exhaustive, but it consists of works that will be a good start.

***Recommended films (not in rank order):***

Marcel Camus, *Black Orpheus* (1959)  
Lina Wertmüller, *Swept Away* (1975) and *The Seven Beauties* (1975)  
Euzhan Palcy, *Sugar Cane Alley* (1983)  
Charles Burnett, *Killer of Sheep* (1977)  
Tomas Alfredson, *Let the Right One In* (2008)  
Marlon Riggs, *Tongues Untied* (1990)  
Haile Gerima, *Bush Mama* (1967) and *Sankofa* (1993)  
Fernando Meirelles, *City of God* (2002)  
Perry Henzell, *The Harder They Come* (1962)  
James Clavell, *To Sir, With Love* (1967)  
Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather I* (1972) and *II* (1974), *The Great Gatsby* (1974), and *Apocalypse Now!* (1979)  
Rajkumar Hirani, *3 Idiots* (2009)  
Woody Allen, *Crimes and Misdemeanor* (1989)  
Spike Lee, *Jungle Fever* (1991) and *She Hate Me* (2004)  
Stephen Frears (Dir.) and Steven Knight (written by), *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002)  
Woody Allen, *Crimes and Misdemeanor* (1989)  
John Duigan, *Flirting* (1992)  
Stanley Kubrick, *Lolita* (1962) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)  
Oliver Stone, *Natural Born Killers* (1994)  
Michael Curtiz, *Casablanca* (1942)  
Percy Adlon, *Bagdad Café* (1987)

***Novels, Plays, and Biographies:***

Many, but try at some point to read:

M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*  
Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* and *Autobiography of My Mother*  
Amiri Baraka, *The Dutchman*  
Jean Genet, *Les Nègres*  
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Les Blancs*  
F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*  
A. Camus, *The Plague* and *The Stranger*  
J-P Sartre, *Nausea*  
J-P Sartre, *"The Wall" and Other Essays*  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*  
Monifa Love, *Freedom in the Dismal*  
M. Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*  
Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
M. Love, *Dreaming Underground*  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Short Stories*

***Listen to Music, especially the Blues***

*Recommended:*

*The Dinah Washington Double CD Collection*  
*Billie Holiday collection*  
*The Charles Mingus Anthology (especially Notes on Integration)*  
*Thelonius Monk Anthology*

*John Coltrane Anthology*, but especially *A Love Supreme*  
Marvin Gaye, *What's Going On* and *I Want You*  
Portishead, *Dummi*  
Bob Marley, *Survival* or one of the anthologies of most of his songs  
Peter Tosh, *I Am*  
Jonie Mitchell, *Mingus* or one of the double-cd collections of her works  
Mozart, *Don Giovanni*  
Abbie Lincoln, *Turtle's Dream*  
Max Roach and Abbie Lincoln, *We Insist*  
Glenn Hansard, *Once*  
Sinéad O'Connor (everything)  
Jimmy Hendrix (everything)  
Curtis Mayfield (everything)  
Led Zeppelin (everything)  
Me'Shell Ndegeocello, *Peace Beyond Passion* and *Bitter*  
Angie Stone (every cd)  
Nacimiento (whatever you can get your hands on)  
Public Enemy, *Fear of a Black Planet* and *20<sup>th</sup> Century Masters Collection*  
Duke Ellington, *Black and Tan Fantasy*  
Jackie Wilson collection of greatest hits  
*Bo Diddly* collection  
*Best of Burning Spear*  
*Best of Steel Pulse*  
Lucia Souza (everything)  
The Mighty Sparrow (everything)

*There are many more philosophical books, films, and music, which will be referred to in class, but you should acquire some familiarity with the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Gabriel Marcel, to name*