

Professor: Dr. Mariana Alessandri

Office: ARHU 302 (across from elevator)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30; Thursdays 3-4pm (and by appointment; please email me to make an appointment)

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Required Texts (hard copies of the books are required)

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (SUNY) [ISBN: 9781438432762]

Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. by J.E. Crawford Finch (Dover) [ISBN: 9780486202570]

Miguel de Unamuno, *Abel Sanchez And Other Stories*, trans. by Anthony Kerrigan (Gateway) [ISBN: 9780895267078]

(All other mandatory readings will be posted on Blackboard)

Library Reserve (recommended reading): Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (MIT) [ISBN: 0262540568]

Students in this course will bravely attempt to study two distinct—albeit related—philosophical schools. Phenomenology strives to get back to the “things themselves” by analyzing our lived experience. We will spend the first part of the semester reading Heidegger’s descriptions of certain phenomena in the world, like how we interact with a classroom on the first day of class vs. on the last day. We will be able to judge whether his conclusions resound with our lived experience of those phenomena. The question we will ask of Heidegger is: “does his account line up with our account of things in the world?”

The existentialists, on the other hand, try their hand at describing the human condition. This gangly bunch does not represent a unified front; almost none of the existentialists wanted to be lumped together under that title. Instead they thought of themselves as people trying to get to the heart of what it means to exist—to live, to suffer, to be part of the world of others, to face one’s very certain death, to come up with some meaning for the space we take up every day, etc. The question we will ask of the existentialists is: “do their accounts of existence line up with our own lived experience?”

Topics include: authenticity, truth, death, despair, fear, anxiety, behavior, pessimism and optimism, meaning, identity, the absurd, religion, fate, purpose, bad faith, authenticity, and hope, to name a few.

This course has no exams and no long term papers; the idea is to be present and engaged from day to day. I am asking you to be consistent from day to day, rather than pull an all-nighter at the end of the semester. Please give this a lot of thought before staying in the course; my hope is that those who can foster the required self-discipline will be proud to have done so.

Course Goals

- To improve reading comprehension of dense passages in philosophical texts
- To be able to make sense of these passages in the larger context of the philosopher’s work
- To be able to textually defend a thesis
- To be able to comment on the philosophical importance of phenomenology and existentialism
- To improve philosophical writing by practicing weekly
- To be able to tell the stories of phenomenology and existentialism in a way that feels both familiar and academic
- To understand the main themes of the course, including the absurd, despair, anxiety, death, bad faith, and authenticity
- To practice daily self-discipline

Course Trajectory

For the first five weeks of the semester, we will do a careful reading of Division One of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, to give you a sense of what phenomenology is, keeping in mind that we could instead have read Husserl or Merleau-Ponty to get a different idea of phenomenology. Next, we will read Kierkegaard and learn how he influenced Heidegger’s Part II of *Being and Time*. After this we will move onto Sartre, who wrote *Being and Nothingness* as a kind of response/continuation of *Being and Time*. Next, we will read Unamuno in order to understand his criticism of rationality and his contribution to existentialist philosophy. Finally, Marcel will teach us about creative fidelity. All five thinkers are in some sense rejecting Descartes’ view of the world.

Text Policy

Whoever brings their text to class is welcome to be part of the classroom community. You are welcome to use electronic or paper copies, but you must bring something or you will look silly for coming to a philosophy class with no text.

The Classroom

In the classroom, I hope to form a community of learners who think together and help each other grow as philosophers. This includes reading each other’s work and commenting on it in the most positive of ways. My goal is to foster an environment of helpfulness and learning together—you are never in competition with each other but are there to help each other read, think, and write well. Together, we will figure out what these philosophers are trying to say, and whether what they say coincides

with our lived experience. To succeed in this class you need to do 3 things: 1) read every day and write every week in preparation for class discussion, 2) come to class, and 3) during class, show me that you're alive.

Summary of Requirements

Attendance	10%
Turning in Weekly Response Papers On Time	10%
Average Grade of Weekly 10 Response Papers	50%
Midterm project (due October 25)	10%
Midterm presentation (Oct 25 and 27)	10%
Final Project	10%
TOTAL	100%

Response Papers (RPs)

Class meets twice each week. You will need to bring a (minimum) 750-word typed response to class on most Tuesdays (see schedule). I hope that in Intro to Philosophy you learned how to write a thesis statement, and we will go over what a thesis statement entails in the first few weeks of class. In this upper-level course, I want to focus on text interpretation and explication. Your job in these RPs is to textually defend a thesis—either one that you make up or the one I provide in the reading schedule—in lean, solid, and strong paragraphs. Focus on **textual defense** and **clear writing**. This exercise is designed to help you 1) stay on top of the reading, 2) communicate your ideas through clear and precise writing. If you want to write like a philosopher, read published articles to see how an author constructs a thesis and defends it.

There are 10 of these RPs due, and they will all be collected and graded. Additionally, just turning in all 10 **on time** will earn you 10% toward your final grade (1 point for each RP turned in on time). Late RPs (up to 2 weeks late) will garner a grade penalty and will count as a 0 toward your “on-time” grade. You are not permitted to turn in an RP more than two weeks late. If you are going to be **absent**, email your RP to me before class.

On Thursdays, we will workshop one student's essay, and then this person has to edit their own essay due the next Thursday. Whose paper will be workshopped will be determined on a volunteer basis, but every student will have to edit/rewrite one RP once during the semester, even if they never volunteer to get their paper workshopped.

Midterm projects (due October 25)

For the midterm project, choose a work of existentialist fiction from the list I have provided on blackboard (if you want to read something off the list, I must approve it). You may work alone or in groups, and you may be as creative as you wish (examples: film, screenplay, poem, painting, sculpture, etc.). Your job is to interpret the text and draw out its existentialist themes. Everyone needs to turn in a 750-word (minimum) explanation of your project, showing how it philosophically relates to the themes of the course. You may also turn in the creative part, but you will be graded on the philosophical explanation.

Midterm presentations (October 25 and 27)

Every student will present their midterm project to the class in a 3-5 minute presentation. Your job in the presentation is to introduce the author and his or her work to the rest of the class in some way. This way we can all get a chance to learn about more authors and ideas than the ones we are able to cover together. For this presentation you can make a video, a poster, a powerpoint, etc. You can also read your poem aloud, perform a skit, sing and dance, etc. You may work in groups. Your grade will be based on your preparedness, your ability to stick to the time limit, and your creativity. Think of this project as both philosophical and creative.

Final Project (due December 11)

Your job in the final presentation is to spread existentialism around UTRGV or the Valley. What you will turn in to me will be a 1200-word narrative about what you did, why you did it, what you got out of it, what impact you had on the community, and any other relevant information. You must consult with me about your project, and I must approve it by November 29, latest.

Grading scale

A = Excellent (4.0; 90-100) – If you receive an A in this course, it means you have risen to the challenges of the course. It means that you have dedicated yourself to this class- you have been here (on time) every required class period, you have carefully done your reading for the day and brought your text and response paper to class. An A means that you have consistently been attentive and engaged in the reading material and class discussions.

B = Good (3.0; 80-90) – If you receive a B, it means that you have solidly met all of the requirements.

C = Satisfactory (2.0; 70-80) – If you receive a C, you may have met all of the requirements of this class, but have failed to do so consistently. Be very careful not to fall behind on your response papers, or you may find yourself in this category.

D = Below Average (1.0; 60-70) – If you receive a D, it means that either you were a poor community member or you performed below average on your assignments (or perhaps you failed to turn in some assignments).

F = Failure (0.0; below 60) – If you receive an F for this class, it means that either you missed too many classes, or you did not meet the requirements on this syllabus.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Course Drops

According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

Student Learning Objectives

This course may be taken to fulfill a requirement for a B.A. in Philosophy. Students who graduate with a degree in philosophy from UTPA are expected to have attained a certain level of intellectual development which is characteristic of the intense study of philosophy. As such, the goals for all philosophy classes that count towards the major in philosophy include, in addition to the particular goals for the course, the following objectives:

- P1: Be able to express well-developed critical thinking skills.
- P2: Have an awareness of the history of philosophy, expressed through knowledge of major fields, positions within those fields, and major thinkers who contributed to those fields.
- P3: Be able to exhibit evidence of well-developed oral and written communication skills.
- P4: Be able to articulate an appreciation for alternative points of view that they do not themselves hold.

Mandatory Course Evaluation Period

Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (<http://my.utrgv.edu>); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available Nov 18 – Dec 8.

Calendar of Activities

Sept 1	Last day to add or register for Fall classes
Sept 2	Last day to withdraw (drop all classes) for a 80% refund
Sept 5	Labor Day Holiday, no classes
Sept 14	Census day (last day to drop without it appearing on the transcript)
Nov 17	Last day to drop (DR grade) a class or withdraw (grade of W)
Nov 18 - Dec 8	Online course evaluations available
Nov 24 - Nov 25	Thanksgiving Holiday, no classes
Dec 8	Study Day, no classes
Dec 9 – Dec 15	Final Exams

	Date	Readings to be completed in time for class discussion. Textually defend the theses provided or make up your own.
Phenomenology	8.30	Sisyphus
	9.1	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> (BT) Intro I pp. 1-12 (Sections 1-4 including 4) There is a world of difference between Being and being for Heidegger, and it hinges on the idea that some objects exist and others don't.
	9.6	Heidegger, BT Intro II pp. 13-35 (sections 5-8) Aristotle's description of humans as "rational animals" does not suit us, argues Heidegger. RP1 due
	9.8	Heidegger, BT, sections 9-13 <i>Dasein</i> is a term that Heidegger uses to prevent other, more familiar concepts from entering the discussion. OR: "Average everydayness" is a familiar mode of "being-in-the-world," for Heidegger.
	9.13	Heidegger, BT, sections 15-16 "Present to hand" is a different mode of being from "ready to hand," for Heidegger, and neither one describes the human condition. RP2 due
	9.15	Heidegger, BT sections 25-27 Averageness, leveling down, and publicness are concepts that Heidegger employs to describe the behaviors and attitudes of "the they."
	9.20	Heidegger, BT sections 34-38 "Falling prey" is not rare, nor is it a fall from on high, for Heidegger. It is a familiar way for Dasein to be inauthentic. RP3 due
	9.22	Heidegger, BT sections 39-40 (focus on 40) For Heidegger, <i>anxiety</i> is a technical term. He writes that "that about which one has anxiety is being-in-the-world as such," which runs contrary to the way we tend to think about anxiety today.
	9.27	Heidegger, BT sections 45-53 Authentic being-toward-death cannot be any more than a momentary experience, for Heidegger. RP4 due
Existentialism	9.29	Kierkegaard, <i>The Concept of Anxiety</i> , 60-62 (anxiety) (Blackboard) Heidegger's concept of anxiety is different from Haufniensis', though it is clear that he borrowed much of Kierkegaard's thought on the issue.
	10.4	Kierkegaard, <i>Sickness unto Death</i> 13-21 (despair) (Blackboard) For Anti-Climacus, it is sickness, not thinking, that makes humans superior to animals. RP5 due
	10.6	Kierkegaard, <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> 193-4, 196-204 (Blackboard) Contrary to the history of philosophy, Climacus believes that subjectivity is higher than objectivity.
	10.11	Kierkegaard, <i>Works of Love: "Love Hopes all Things"</i> 246-263 (Blackboard) For Kierkegaard, hope is related to possibility through expectation. RP6 due
	10.13	Sartre, BN xiv-lvi (Reading 1, Blackboard) Sartre applies the phenomenological belief that "consciousness is consciousness of something" to consciousness itself, calling it "non-positional or non-thetic consciousness."
	10.18	Sartre, BN 3-21 (Reading 2, Blackboard) Contrary to the history of philosophy, Sartre believes that nothingness, not being, is at the center of existence. RP7 due
	10.20	Sartre, BN 47-62 (Reading 3, Blackboard) Sartre calls <i>bad faith</i> a project, wherein I flee from myself. (Read ahead: <i>San Manuel Bueno, Martir</i>)
	10.25	Presentations (All midterm projects due)
	10.27	Presentations
	11.1	Sartre, BN 252-277 I need another subject to validate my subjectivity, says Sartre. Therefore, I need humans to be subjects, not objects. (Reading 4, Blackboard) RP8 due
	11.3	Sartre, BN 361-379 Sartre says that in relations with others, I am always trying to free myself from them while trying to enslave the other. This is one reason he believes that "hell is other people." (Reading 5, Blackboard)
	11.8	Unamuno, <i>San Manuel Bueno, Martir</i> Unamuno seems to agree with Marx that religion is the opiate of the people. (or disagree with this claim!) RP9 due
	11.10	Unamuno, TSL, chapter 6 Unamuno believes that faith and reason need one another, but they always need to be in conflict.
	11.15	Unamuno, TSL, chapter 8 Unamuno seems to have changed his beliefs about faith and religion from the time he wrote <i>Tragic Sense of Life</i> (1913) to the time he wrote <i>San Manuel Bueno, Martir</i> (1930) (or not!) RP10 due
	11.17	Unamuno, TSL chapter 9 Unamuno believes that faith is not a matter of belief but of hope.
11.22	Marcel, reading TBA (Blackboard)	
11.24	No class; Thanksgiving	
11.29	Marcel, reading TBA(Blackboard)	
12.1	Marcel, reading TBA (Blackboard)	
12.6	Last day of class; discuss final projects (Final projects due on Dec 11 on Blackboard)	