

TUTORIAL, "LIVING AN AUTHENTIC LIFE," AUTUMN, 2003

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Socrates taught that the unexamined life is not worth living. This tutorial will put this bit of classical wisdom to the test. Focusing on Existentialist thinkers Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Martin Buber, we shall seek to identify the qualities that make a human life authentic. Although these writers are alike in their Existentialist approaches, they differ widely in their ethical, metaphysical, and spiritual conclusions. Kierkegaard writes as a Christian searching for the "stages on life's way." Nietzsche rejects the Christian God, calls himself a "nihilist," and celebrates the dynamics of human vitality. Sartre pictures human beings as cosmically abandoned and tries "to draw the full conclusions from a consistently atheistic position." Camus embraces agnosticism and asks human beings to bear the burdens of their absurd existence truthfully. Buber, from his liberal Jewish perspective, explores the ways and modes of interpersonal dialogue.

The Readings:

Kaufmann (ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian
Kierkegaard, *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (Bretall, ed.), Princeton
Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader* (Hollingdale, ed.), Penguin
Sartre, *No Exit*, (Stuart Gilbert, trans.), Vintage
Camus, *The Plague* (Stuart Gilbert, trans.), Modern Library
Buber, *I and Thou* (Kaufmann, trans.), Scribners

The Schedule:

Kierkegaard

August 28: Orientation followed by discussion of Bretall's *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, "Introduction" (pp. xvii-xxvi) and "The Journals" (pp. 1-18).

September 2: The Esthetic Stage, "Diary of the Seducer," pp. 36-80, in Bretall.

September 4: The Ethical Stage, "Works of Love," pp. 281-306, in Bretall.

September 9: The Religious Stage, "The Tame Geese," p. 433, and "Fear and Trembling," pp. 116-125, in Bretall.

September 11: The Religious Stage, "Fear and Trembling," pp. 125-134, and "One Lives Only Once," pp. 458-460, and "My Task," pp. 465-467, in Bretall.

September 16: The first essay is due. In class, certain members of the class will “present” their essays.

Nietzsche

September 18: Nietzsche, *On Philosophy and Philosophers*: p. 18, #7; pp. 20-1, #10; p. 24, #13; p. 30, #3; p. 34, #7; pp. 37-38, #12; pp. 42-3, #16; pp. 43-7, #17; pp. 47-48, #18-19; pp. 48-9, #20; pp. 54-5, #26-27; p. 57, #30; pp. 58–60, #32; p. 63, #36, in Hollingdale.

September 23: Nietzsche, *On Morality*, pp. 71-2, #43; pp. 72-3, #45; pp. 75-6, #48; p. 77, #50; pp. 77-9, #51; p. 85, #59; pp. 91-2, #67; p. 93, #70; pp. 93-4, #71; p. 95, #72; pp. 95-6, #73; p. 100-1, #80-81; p. 102, #83; p. 103, #86; pp. 106-109, #90; pp. 109-116, #91; pp. 116-119, #92, in Hollingdale.

September 25: Nietzsche, *On Psychology and Religion*, pp. 156-7, #130-131; p. 162, #142; pp. 163-4, #143; pp. 164-5, #144; p. 172, #149; pp. 177-8, #157; pp. 180-193, #160-165, in Hollingdale.

September 30: Nietzsche, *On Nihilism, Superman, and Eternity Recurrence*, pp. 197-8, #166; p. 199, #171; pp. 200-1, #173; pp. 202-3, #176; pp. 205, #179; pp. 207-8, #182-183; pp. 208-10, #185; pp. 210-212, #186-187; pp. 220-21, #195-196; p. 230, #207; p. 231, #209; pp. 232-242, #210-224; pp. 246-7, #227-8, in Hollingdale.

October 2: The second essay is due. Again, certain members of the class will present their essays.

Sartre

October 7: “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in Kaufmann.

October 9: “No Exit,” in *No Exit*.

October 14: “The Wall,” in Kaufmann.

October 16: “The Flies,” in *No Exit*.

October 26: “The Flies,” in *No Exit*.

October 30: Third essay is due. Students will present their essays.

Camus

November 4: *The Plague*, pp. 3-77.

November 6: *Ibid.*, pp. 77-156.

November 11: Ibid., pp. 157-234.

November 13: Ibid., pp. 235-308.

November 18: Fourth essay is due. Students will present.

Buber

November 20: *I and Thou*, pp. 53-92.

November 25: Ibid., pp. 92-129.

December 2: Ibid., pp. 129-168.

December 4: Fifth essay is due. Students will present.

December 9 & 11: Students will discuss their semester research.

The Requirements:

1. You are expected to come on time (8:30 A.M.) to all meetings of the tutorial. If illness or some justifiable contingency keeps you away, I would appreciate being informed--if possible, ahead of time.
2. If you are to benefit from and creatively contribute to this group exploration of the authentic life, you must read the materials carefully and thoughtfully and come ready to converse.
3. There will be five short papers, one on each of the five philosophers we study.
4. From time to time, you will be asked to make oral presentations on the material under study.
5. You are to conduct a semester-long study of the life of one of the authors we are studying. Preparing for this, early in the semester you should confer with a member of the Burling Library staff about how best to obtain biographical materials. Your assignment is to make a critical judgment about whether the thinker you have chosen to study lived up to his own ideals. You are welcome to discuss this study-in-process with me at any time during the semester. In the last week of the semester, you will discuss your findings with the other members of the tutorial. You are also to submit to me for my inspection and evaluation the bibliography and outline of a research paper you might have written on this topic. I am not asking you to write a paper, but you are free to do so. I would read your paper thoroughly and discuss your findings with you, at our mutual leisure, during the second semester.
6. In case you are interested in the distaff side of Existentialism (you will notice that all five authors are male), you might be interested in studying Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical biography of Sartre entitled--logically enough--*Sartre*. De Beauvoir was Sartre's mistress and long-time companion. Together they created a "family" in Paris and produced a body of literature that gave Existentialism its historical actuality. In any case, de Beauvoir's observations on Sartre are very useful for assessing the authenticity of her more famous partner.