

## **Human Existence (PHIL 107) Syllabus SPRING 2008**

Phil 107-01 MWF 2:00 – 2:50 HOLT 352  
Phil 107-02 MW 4:00 – 5:15 HOLT 352

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### **THEME**

In thinking about human existence it is tempting to begin by trying to pinpoint what makes humans differ from other animals. This is not easy to do, especially as our knowledge of the rest of the animal kingdom increases, but we will begin by discussing a few of the usual suspects: consciousness, language, and freedom. All of these will be approached by considering the following question: what is the nature of human action?

After we study some contemporary theories of action, we'll be focusing on love, politics, art, and tragedy, and how issues of freedom and innovation are active in each.

Toward the end of the semester we will consider what contemporary or post-modern theories regarding the "post-human" and the "end of history" might mean for what we have been studying. If history has ended, in the sense that we have arrived at a social, political, and economic system (capitalism and democracy) for which there are no compelling or attractive alternatives, are we no longer capable of the kinds of transformations love, art, and politics force us to undergo? How does one live "the eternal Sunday of life"? Does this mean we have ceased to be human? Should this upset us?

### **GE FULFILLMENT**

Successful completion of this course will fulfill your area C3 requirement for the general education program at CSU Chico. Among the five goals that the general education program tries to meet, this course will, in particular:

1. improve your reading and writing skills and your ability to access, evaluate, and apply information;
2. instill efficient, effective learning skills that will keep you on a path of perpetual intellectual curiosity;
3. and enhance your general knowledge and attitudes, to give you a well informed, integrated, and coherent picture of the universe and humanity.

(Language adapted from Executive Memorandum 99-05, revised 5-18-05, outlining the goals of the GE program at CSU Chico).

As part of area C3 of the general education program, you are expected to demonstrate as a result of taking this course:

1. knowledge of major philosophical or religious traditions, perspectives, or communities or major figures or issues in the humanities;
2. understanding, appreciation, interpretation, and critical engagement of worldviews, institutions, symbol systems, and ethics in the context of history and culture; and
3. knowledge of major philosophical, religious, literary, or artistic figures or issues, in historical context.

(Language adapted from Executive Memorandum 99-05, revised 5-18-05, outlining the goals of the GE program at CSU Chico).

**That these goals are met will be assessed through the following REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. One paper (three to five pages, typed, double-spaced) analyzing and assessing some aspects of one or more of the texts covered in class;
2. Several tests and a final exam in which you will demonstrate your understanding of the content discussed in class;
3. Discussions in class and attendance.

**Paper Guidelines**

Detailed guidelines for the paper will be posted on WebCT as the due date approaches.

1. Your paper must be typed, double-spaced, with standard margins and no exaggerated font sizes (do not use anything larger than 12-point, and please use Times New Roman or Arial).
2. Use in-text citations according to the norms given on the MLA style sheet. Also, you must include a works cited page: failure to do so results in an automatic half-grade deduction.

**Tests and Final Exam**

The tests will be based on both the content of the lectures and the readings, but mainly I use the tests to track how well you are keeping up with and understanding the readings for the class. The final exam will basically be no different from the other tests you take.

The style of the tests may vary, but generally they will be short-answer based with some true and false questions, and three or four short essay questions. You will know more about what each test looks like as the test dates approach.

**Class participation and Attendance**

Class participation means things like participating in discussions, raising questions, and responding to questions both your fellow students and I ask. It also means simply asking me, every once in a while, "What the heck does this mean?"

Attendance is a very important part of your class participation grade. After you miss two classes, your class participation grade will be deducted by 5 percentage points for each class you miss thereafter.

### GRADING

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Tests and Final                       | 60% (Each test, and the final, is worth 12%) |
| Term paper                            | 25%  |
| Class participation<br>and attendance | 15%  |

### FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Your final grade is calculated by assigning each category above a point value of 100. Your test scores will be averaged out. Your total score is assigned a percentage, and letter grades are assigned as follows:

|        |    |       |    |       |    |
|--------|----|-------|----|-------|----|
| 93-100 | A  | 80-82 | B- | 65-69 | D+ |
| 90-92  | A- | 77-79 | C+ | 60-64 | D  |
| 87-89  | B+ | 73-76 | C  | 0-59  | F  |
| 83-86  | B  | 70-72 | C- |       |    |

### POLICY STATEMENTS

Consult university policy on plagiarism and cheating. I have busted several students for this in the past few years. Many students do not realize how easy it is for professors to find out that they have taken their paper from an online source. I persecute to the fullest extent.

All papers must be free of serious errors in spelling and grammar. If there are too many problems, I will return the papers to you without a grade until corrections are made.

### Required Texts

Phil 107 Reader (available from the bookstore)

Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot.

Plato. The Symposium. Penguin Classics.

Freud, Sigmund. Sexuality and the Psychology of Love. Touchstone Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy

Sartre, Jean-Paul. No Exit and Three Other Plays. Vintage.

## READING SCHEDULE

**Note: check for announcements, revisions, additions, and postings on WebCT/Vista regularly!**

**Week One: January 28<sup>th</sup> – February 1<sup>st</sup>:** Sartre: Being and Nothingness. Pp: 559-580; 612-619.  
(In Phil 107 Reader)  
“Existentialism is a Humanism” (available on WebCT/Vista).

**Week Two: February 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>:** Sartre continued.

**Week Three: February 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>:** Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology of Perception (In Phil 107 Reader). Pluth on Lacan: “The Mirror Stage” (On WebCT).  
**First Test on Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Week Four: February 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Sartre: No Exit.

**Week Five: February 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>:** Plato: The Symposium.  
**Second Test on Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Week Six: March 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>:** Film and Discussion  
Film 1: Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Room and Time TBA

**Week Seven: March 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>:** Pluth on Freud’s Theory of Sexuality (On WebCT/Vista).

**Week Eight: March 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>:** **Spring Break. No Classes.**

**Week Nine: March 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>:** (No Class on Friday, March 28<sup>th</sup> for Section One)  
Freud: “Contributions towards a Psychology of Love”.

**Week Ten: March 31<sup>st</sup> – April 4<sup>th</sup>:** (No Class On Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>)  
**Third Test on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>**  
Nietzsche: “On Truth and Lies” (In Phil 107 Reader).

**Week Eleven: April 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>:** Nietzsche continued.  
Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy.

**Week Twelve: April 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>:** Film and Discussion  
**Fourth Test on Monday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Film 2: Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>: Room and Time TBA

**Week Thirteen: April 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>:** Beckett, Waiting for Godot.  
Pluth on Alain Badiou, “Art and Philosophy”. On WebCT/Vista.

**Week Fourteen: April 28<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Thierry De Duve, “5 Remarks on Aesthetic Judgment”. (In Phil 107 Reader).

**Week Fifteen: May 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>:** Alexandre Kojève: “Footnote on the End of History” (In Phil 107 Reader).

**Week Sixteen: May 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>:** Review themes of Course for final: Random notes on the Human, Animal, and Divine.  
**Term Paper Due Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**

## FINAL EXAMS:

Phil 107-01: Friday, May 23rd, 12:00 – 1:50 PM.

Phil 107-02: Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 – 7:50 PM.