

**PSY 471 EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**SUMMER SESSION II**  
**JUNE 29 - AUGUST 7, 1998**

Instructor: Robert G. Santee, Ph.D.  
Office: Kieffer Hall, Room 5  
Office Hours: MTWR - 11:00 - 12:00  
By Appointment

Time: MTWRF 9:40 - 11:10  
Room: Henry Hall 121  
Phone: 735-4720

Texts: Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre; Kaufmann

Psychology of Existence; Schneider & May

When Nietzsche Wept; I. Yalom

Chuang Tzu: The Basic Writings; translated by B. Watson

The scope of this course is a philosophical and psychological examination of the basic aspects of human existence.

Existential philosophy views traditional philosophy as being too systematic, academic, superficial, and out of touch with life. The existentialists focus on getting beyond the subject/object dichotomy of traditional western philosophy. Existentialism is concerned with understanding man as a being in his own world, not as an object to be systematically reduced to a set of concepts relative to a particular philosophical perspective.

Existential psychology does not purport to found a new school over against other schools or to give new techniques or therapy as over against other techniques. It seeks, rather, to analyze the structure of human existence--an enterprise which, if successful, should yield an understanding of the reality underlying all situations of human beings in crisis (Schneider & May, Psychology of Existence, 1995).

Existential Psychology is distinguished by three thematic elements:

1. The human being is suspended between freedom and limitation.
2. Dread of freedom or limitation promotes dysfunctionality or extreme counteractions to either polarity (e.g., oppressiveness or impulsivity).
3. Confrontation with or integration of the polarities promotes a more vibrant, invigorating life design. This life design is exemplified by increased sensitivity, flexibility and choice. (Schneider and May)

Both of these approaches explore human existence in the world relative to such areas as death, anxiety, meaninglessness, isolation, freedom, responsibility, choice and willing. These approaches do not stop, however, with mere exploring, for they are concerned with the integration of these various domains within the very life of woman/man.

The focus of this course is to explore the relationship between philosophy and psychology within the psychological perspective known as existential psychology. As such, this interdisciplinary approach will allow the student to examine the extent to which philosophy and psychology mutually influence each other within a given domain. Special emphasis will be given to the writings of Chuang Tzu in order to provide a cross-cultural perspective on existential psychology.

The starting points of this course are

1) Mark 15: 29-37

The people jeered at him as they walked by, and wagged their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "Sure, you can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! If you're so wonderful, save yourself and come down from the cross."

The chief priests and religious leaders were also standing around joking about Jesus.

"He's quite clever at 'saving' others," they said, "but he can't save himself!"

"Hey there, Messiah!" they yelled at him. "You 'King of Israel'! Come on down from the cross and we'll believe you!"

And even the two robbers dying with him, cursed him.

About noon, darkness fell across the entire land, lasting until three o'clock that afternoon.

Then Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?" ("My God, my God, why have you deserted me?")

Some of the people standing there thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. So one man ran and got a sponge and filled it with sour wine and held it up to him on a stick.

"Let's see if Elijah will come and take him down!" he said.

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and dismissed his spirit.

Mark 15: 29-37

2) the Shakespearean notion that

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts  
and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no  
more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound  
and fury. Signifying nothing.

Macbeth Act 5, Scene 5

3) Faith means not wanting to know what is true - Nietzsche

#### 4. Chuang Tzu

The emperor of the south Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's try boring him some!"

Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died.

Class format will consist of lectures, group interactions, discussions and self-exploration. The emphasis of the class will be on the student's philosophical/psychological exploration of his/her own being in the world.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of existential philosophy.
2. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of existential psychology.
3. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the relationship between philosophy and psychology within the domain of existential psychology.
4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of an interdisciplinary approach when exploring an area of interest.
5. The student will develop an understanding of the extent to which philosophy and psychology impact significantly on the manner in which he/she navigates through his/her own world.
6. The student will demonstrate an understanding of existential psychology from a cross-cultural perspective.

#### **REQUIREMENTS:**

Student will be required to

1. Take two exams.
2. Write a paper (10 pages, typed, double-spaced) that explores the extent to which existential philosophy and psychology define and assist the student in traveling through their own existence.

3. Write a 5 page paper (typed, double spaced) on the integration of philosophy and psychology within the novel When Nietzsche Wept.
4. Write a 5 page paper (typed, double spaced) analyzing Chuang Tzu's analysis of the 4 ultimate concerns.

**GRADING:**

Exams	200 x 2 = 400	A = 630 +
5 page paper on WNW	100	B = 560 - 629
10 page paper	100	C = 490 - 559
5 page paper on Chuang Tzu	<u>100</u>	D = 420 - 489
TOTAL	700	

### Tentative Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
6/29	Introduction	PE: Preface, Introduction EDS I; WNW All
6/30	Philosophy, Psychology	PE: Preface, Introduction EDS I; WNW All
7/1	Literary Roots	PE: 1; EDS I; WNW All
7/2	Literary Roots	PE: 1; EDS I; WNW All
7/3	<b>HOLIDAY</b>	
7/6	Dostoevsky	PE: 2; EDS 2; WNW All
7/7	Kafka	PE: 2; EDS 6; WNW All
7/8	Camus	PE: 2; EDS 11; WNW All
7/9	Ortega	PE: 2; EDS 7; WNW All
7/10	Kierkegaard	PE: 2; EDS 3; WNW All
7/13	Nietzsche	EDS 4
7/14	Nietzsche	EDS 4
7/15	Heidegger	EDS 9
7/16	Sartre	EDS 10
7/17	<b>MID-TERM EXAM WNW PAPER DUE</b>	
7/20	4 Ultimate Concerns; Psych Roots	PE: 3
7/21	Death; Psych Roots	PE: 3,4
7/22	Freedom; Existential Integrative Tech.	PE: 5
7/23	Isolation; Existential Integrative Tech.	PE: 5
7/24	Meaninglessness; Exis. Integrative Tech.	PE: 5
7/27	Chuang Tzu	CT All
7/28	Chuang Tzu	CT All
7/29	Chuang Tzu	CT All
7/30	4 Ultimate Concerns	CT All
7/31	Existential Integrative Therapy	CT All
8/3	E-I Therapy <b>CHUANG TZU PAPER DUE</b>	PE: 6
8/4	Case Illustrations	PE: 6
8/5	Case Illustrations	PE: 6
8/6	Case Illustrations	PE: 6
8/7	<b>FINAL EXAM PAPER DUE</b>	