

1000-F26;The Making of the Modern Self: Existential Philosophy- Class A S

 Rediger



Spring Semester 2026

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Course Content:

This course traces the development of the conception of authentic existence in the works of thinkers from the Existentialist tradition such as Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Copenhagen's own Søren Kierkegaard. Among other things, we will focus on human experiences of anxiety, despair and self-deception as well as freedom and recognition. Moreover, we will observe how ethical thinking has moved from the language of duty to that of personal answerability, and how the search for meaningful personal existence has increasingly become the responsibility of the individual. The unique vocabulary of these authors appears not only in works of philosophy, theology, and psychology, but also literature and theatre, which

illustrates that we understand ourselves via the stories we tell, and that these narratives are necessarily told in dialogue with “the Other,” our fellow human beings.

Learning objectives

To be able to:

- Account for the key concepts of the existential philosophers presented in the course, and reflect on the manner in which these concepts are at stake in our contemporary way thinking about and understanding ourselves.
- Identify and consider the different ways in which the texts that we will read entail ethical thinking in relation to issues such as selfhood, freedom and responsibility.
- Reflect independently and critically on the claims and arguments in the syllabus texts that we have explored.

Course Instructor:

Mads Peter Karlsen, PhD, Associate Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion, University of Copenhagen. Email: mpk@teol.ku.dk

Class Meetings:

Thursdays 12:15-14:30, room 7C.1.05 (NB. First day of class will be January 22).

Language of instruction and discussion:

English. (Final papers, however, may also be written in Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian).

Credit:

15 ECTS credits

Streaming:

We plan on physical participation this semester, but the course will also be livestreamed, though the requirements for the research paper are changed significantly if you follow the course online.

Zoom link: <https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/4288458378?pwd=VktBT0JTLzB5czNoZkpoYTc5aUM5QT09> ↪ <https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/4288458378?pwd=VktBT0JTLzB5czNoZkpoYTc5aUM5QT09>

Expectations of the students:

The students are expected to have prepared themselves carefully for each class, that is, to have done the required reading and to think about issues, problems, and questions to be discussed in class. Moreover, the students are expected to engage in the discussions as well as the group work.

Requirements for DIS-students:

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). The syllabus volume and content are determined by the teacher, and three papers are to be submitted to the teacher of each 4-5 pages, as well as a final major assignment, which has a size of 19,200-24,000 characters.

Requirements for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final major assignment, which has a size of 24.000-28.800 characters. The assignments is assessed by the teacher and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: A final assignment assignment that has a scope of 36,000-48,000 characters.

For graduate students (kandidat/master students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final paper of 36.000-48-000 characters. The assignment is assessed by the teacher, and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: An assignment of 60,000-72,000 characters.

Course Evaluation for DIS students:

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1 Final paper: 45%

First short paper: 20%

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Second short paper: 20%

Attendance and participation: 15%

Course Evaluation for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

Final paper: 100%

GAI (Generativ Artificial Intelligence) Policy:

UCPH permits the use of GAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) in written assignments. You are required to follow the UCPH rules for the use of GAI and include an GAI declaration with the final paper. You can find the GAI rules, the template for the GAI declaration, and guidelines for completing the template [here \(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90453/modules/541156\)](https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90453/modules/541156). If you do not include an GAI declaration with the final paper, you will fail the class.

Plagiarism Policy:


In accordance with UCPH rules for academic ethics, there will be a no tolerance policy towards cheating and plagiarism. The submission of any paper which is not your own work will result in an automatic fail and may have severe consequences for your future studies

Recording Policy:

Recording of the classes is prohibited without the consent of all parties (i.e. all students and teacher) involved.

Readings:

Completion of reading assignments as scheduled is required and is a prerequisite for participating in class discussions.

For students who read Danish: Kierkegaards samlede værker, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter (SKS)*, is available online at www.sks.dk  (<http://www.sks.dk/>). I have provided references to *SKS* for the Kierkegaard readings (e.g., Danish: *SKS* 4, 148-151) in this reading plan. (Note: To see page

breaks, place a checkmark in the middle box, next to *SKS*, on the top left-hand side of the screen).

Course texts:

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

These books should be purchased (For KU students):

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) ISBN 0-8065-0160-X

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844) ISBN 978-1-63149-004-0

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Jean-Paul Sartre, *No Exit* (1944) ISBN 978-0-67972-516-9

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1945) ISBN 978-0-300-11546-8

Primary texts on Absalon (under [Moduls](#)

<https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90453/modules/541064>):

Hannah Arendt, selections from *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963)

https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS COURSE REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddcwrap=1

Hannah Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy" (1946) & "French Existentialism" (1946) from *Essays in Understanding*

Jean-Paul Sartre, selections from *Being and Nothingness* (1943)

Background material (optional and additional reading)

Arne Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Soren Kierkegaard*, Mercer University Press, 2008.

David Detmer, *Sartre Explained*, Chicago: Open Court, 2008. [Sartre Explained : From Bad Faith to Authenticity: EBSCOhost](https://web-p-ebSCOhost.com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=8ea35448-8e5f-457d-a29f-291148aeb418%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSzyY29wZT1zaXRI#AN=479366&db=nlebk) <https://web-p-ebSCOhost.com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=8ea35448-8e5f-457d-a29f-291148aeb418%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSzyY29wZT1zaXRI#AN=479366&db=nlebk>

Skjul alle

Vis fremgang

































↔ Eksporter fagindhold




























✔ Offentliggør alle ▾










+ Modul



⋮	▼ SESSION 1: Introduction: Rediscovering Existential Philosophy	✔ ▾	+ ⋮
	Required reading	✔	⋮
	Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy" & "French Existentialism" (pp. 163-193)	✔	⋮
⋮	Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations" (JUST pp. 32-33).pdf	✔	Ⓢ ⋮
	Reading Questions	✔	Ⓢ ⋮
	Optional reading	✔	⋮
	Arendt, What Remains The Language Remains A Conversation with Arendt.pdf	✔	Ⓢ ⋮
	Additional reading	✔	⋮
	Dan Zahavi, "Phenomenology of Self".pdf	✔	Ⓢ ⋮
	Power Point	✔	⋮
	Session 1 - Rediscovering existential philosophy FS 2026.pptx	✔	Ⓢ ⋮

	SESSION 2: Kierkegaard: Anxiety in Eden and Freedom's Possibility		
			
	Required reading		
	Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety, chapter 1, sections 5-6, pp. 50-63 (Danish: SKS 4, 347-356) + pp. 172-173 ("The most concrete...its acquisition")		
	Arne Grøn, "The Human Synthesis" from Thinking with Kierkegaard (pp. 37-43)		
	Reading Questions		 
	Optional reading		
	Bernhard Obsieger, "Anxiety as the Origin of Freedom and Responsibility" (pp. 171-191).pdf		 
	Additional reading		
	Alistair Hannay, "Introduction"		
	Power Point		
	Session 2 - Kierkegaard and anxiety FS 2026.pptx		 

	▼ SESSION 3: Kierkegaard: Anxiety for Evil and Anxiety for Goodness	 
		 
	Required reading	 
	Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety, pp. 134-156 (Danish: SKS 4, 413-430)	 
	Reading Questions	  
	Optional reading	 
	Arne Grøn, The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard (Chapter 1).pdf	  
	Additional reading	 
	Power Point	 
	Session 3 - Kierkegaard anxiety for good and evil FS 2026.pptx	  

	▼ SESSION 4: Kierkegaard: Ethics of Vision	 
		 
	First short paper (hand out)	 
	Required reading	 

 Kierkegaard, "Our Duty to Love the People We See" from Works of Love (pp. 154-174) ✓ ⋮

 Reading Questions ✓ Ⓢ ⋮

Optional reading ✓ ⋮

 Arne Grøn, "Ethics of Vision" from Thinking with Kierkegaard (pp. 405-417) ✓ ⋮


Additional reading ✓ ⋮

Power Point ✓ ⋮

 Session 4 - Kierkegaard Ethics of Vision FS 2026.pptx ✓ Ⓢ ⋮

⋮
▾ SESSION 5: Sartre: Anguish (i.e., "anxiety") ✓ ▾
+ ⋮

Required reading ✓ ⋮

 Sartre, Being and Nothingness (pp. 53-57, 59-69) ✓ ⋮

 David Detmer, "Anguish" from Sartre Explained (pp. 71-75) ✓ ⋮

 Reading Questions ✓ Ⓢ ⋮

Optional reading ✓ ⋮

 David Detmer, "Phenomenology" from Sartre Explained (pp. 17-34)

Additional reading			
Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism.			
Power Point			
Session 5 - Sartre Anguish FS 2026.pptx			

SESSION 6: Sartre: Bad Faith			
Sartre, Being and Nothingness (pp. 70-72, 78-85)			
David Detmer, "Bad Faith" from Sartre Explained (pp. 75-89)			
Reading Questions			
Optional reading			
Phillips, "Bad Faith in Sartres Waiter Example".pdf			
Additional reading			
Brian Söderquist, "Kierkegaard and Existentialism".pdf			
Power Point			



Session 6 - Sartre Bad Faith FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 7: Sartre: The Look of the Other



Required reading



Sartre, Being and Nothingness (pp. 276-289)



Søren Overgaard, "The Look," from Key Concepts (pp.106-116)



Reading Questions



Optional reading



Brian Söderquist, "Is Hell the Other" (pp.501-525)



Additional reading



Power Point



Session 7 - Sartre The Look of the Other FS 2026.pptx








▼ SESSION 8: Sartre: The Other is Hell



Second short paper (hand out)



Required reading	✓	⋮
Sartre, No Exit	✓	⋮
 Reading Questions	✓	S ⋮
Optional reading	✓	⋮
 Sartre, "Interview on No Exit"	✓	S ⋮
Additional reading	✓	⋮
 David Detmer, "No Exit" from Sartre Explained (pp. 143-157)	✓	S ⋮
Power Point	✓	⋮
 Session 8 Sartre The other is Hell - FS 2026.pptx	✓	S ⋮

⋮	✓	▾
▾ SESSION 9: De Beauvoir: Tragic Ambiguity	+	⋮
Required reading	✓	⋮
Beauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity, chap. 1 "Ambiguity and Freedom" (pp. 5-35)	✓	⋮
 Reading Questions	✓	S ⋮
Optional reading	✓	⋮



Beauvoir's Place in Philosophical Thought - Andrew.pdf



Additional reading



Power Point



Session 9 (MMS) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 10: Beauvoir: Personal Freedom and Responsibility



Required reading



Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, chap. 2, "Personal Freedom and Others" (pp. 37-78) and chap. 3, section 2, "Freedom and Liberation" (pp. 84-90).



Reading Questions



Optional reading



Beauvoir and Sartres disagreement about freedom - Kirkpatrick.pdf



Additional reading



Mussett, "Simone de Beauvoirs Ethics" (pp. 63-70)



Power Point





Session 10 (MMS) FS 2026.pptx



▼ SESSION 11: Arendt: A Serious Man Following Orders



Required reading



Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (pp. 21-35, 48-55, 135-138, 276-279)



Reading Questions



Optional reading



Arendt, "Some-Questions-of-Moral-Philosophy"



Additional reading



Rossatti, "Kierkegaard, Hannah Arendt and the Advent of the "Hollow Men" or towards a Kierkegaardian Reading of Eichmann in Jerusalem" (pp. 301-328)



Power Point



Session 11 (MMS) FS 2026.pptx



▼ Background Material





Optional and Additional Readings



▼ Final paper



Final paper

14. maj | 0 point



▼ Electronic Ressources about Absalon and CUL



[Absalon help for students - see your Study Page at KUnet](#)

(<https://intranet.ku.dk/>)



[Books and journals for your study from Copenhagen University](#)

[Library](#) ([http://kub.kb.dk/c.php?](http://kub.kb.dk/c.php?g=514341&p=3514066&preview=8882aa68f366075fe92c490f6da2733c)

[g=514341&p=3514066&preview=8882aa68f366075fe92c490f6da2733c](http://kub.kb.dk/c.php?g=514341&p=3514066&preview=8882aa68f366075fe92c490f6da2733c))



▼ GAI Rules and Declaration



Links

