

Department of Sociology

Soc 164a
Fall 2008

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Office: Pearlman 107

Office Hours: Mon.1:30-2:30

Wed.1:30:2:30

And by appointment.

Existential Sociology

In this course we aim to enjoy the art of learning in a relaxed mode of involvement and participation. Therefore, the contents and thematic development of the subject matter of this course do not lend themselves to a rigidly structured pace. Your involvement in the material will determine the pace, the flow and the sequence of the readings. We always manage to complete all the readings without the pressure of time slots. It is for this reason that your attendance and is the most important component of the course.

There is an experiential component to the course- which asks for willingness to relate concepts to empirical daily reality-both on a personal and group basis.

The Course introduces the existential approach to the study of identity formation theories, motivation and theory of social action. We integrate challenging perspectives from the existential literature with a number of orientations from sociology and social-psychology. No prerequisites are required. The goal is to acquaint the student with different interdisciplinary modes of analysis to the study of self and social forces; notably the positivistic approach, the existential approach and the dialogical-dramaturgical.

Requirements:

Attendance is obligatory. A take-home midterm essay and a take-home final will be required. (I also give 2 pages exercise writings samples to help you command key concepts we cover.

Please contact me if you have any documented disability. I will attend to your needs as best I can.

1. **The Positivistic Mode of Analysis** – We get to understand the sociological concept of *social fact* by Durkheim, and the social psychological theory of gender and sexuality by Freud. These are examples of what is referred to as positivistic-deterministic approach to human behavior. This section is short and mainly serves the purpose of contrast-effect with the social-existential approach.

2. **The Existential Mode of Analysis** – is the major area addressed in this course, with selected readings from primary works by **J.P. Sartre, Stern**, and my own book on the topic. Main topics include the theory of *Self and the Other*, the theory of freedom, anguish and bad faith, the theory of emotions, dynamics of making choices, the concept of self-deception, to be concluded with a theory of self-transformation and social change. Concepts in existential social psychology will also be given, which introduce us to modalities in human belonging and membership, as well as interactive ethics, the structures of pledge, the *practico-inert* and the *experiential uses* and applications of the *existential approach* in daily life
 In addition to Sartre, the thought of **S. deBeauvoir**, of **Nietzsche** and of **Kierkegaard**, on social psychological issues (relationships, sexuality, faith, social prejudice, consciousness, self-deception, the concept of “leap of faith,” etc.) will be given.

3. **The Dialogical-Dramaturgical Mode of Analysis** – Includes readings on the concept of **Habitus** and the work of **Goffman**.

Books required:

JP Sartre **Existentialism and Human emotions** (a short Pamphlet)
 JP Sartre **Being and Nothingness**
 Gila J. Hayim **Existentialism and Sociology**---Transaction
 S de Beauvoir; **The Second Sex**
 Goffman **The presentation of Self**
 S Kierkegaard --- **The Present Age**
 S Kierkegaard- **Fear and Trembling (selections)**

((Handouts to help you supplement and clarify the readings are offered free of charge.

Freud: On Femininity (Short handout)

Durkheim: What is Social Fact? (short Handout))

Syllabus

Topics and readings

SEPTEMBER

Wed. Sept. 3rd, Mon. sep.8

Introduction and overview

Modalities of Analysis: **The Positivistic Mode of Analysis**

Reading Assignment:

Durkheim : What is a Social Fact. (as an illustration of external determinism; 6 pages (handout).

S Freud: Lecture on Femininity. As an illustration of internal determinism pp. 124-135 (handout)

Wed. Sep 10

In-class Reading and Discussion of last assignments
(Bring handouts to class)

Mon. Sep. 15

Begin introducing fundamental concepts in Existential analysis

Ontology, structure of *being: in itself* and *for itself*

Constraint and Freedom

Assignment:

Hayim: Existentialism and Sociology

Read the section on **Freedom and Anguish** in chapter 1, pp; 13-18. We will be analyzing these pages with me in class because of their introductory language and importance- We do the same for the whole first chapter.

From now on, always bring with you to class Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Hayim's *Existentialism and Sociology.*

Wed. Sep.17

The nature of consciousness. Facticity, Essence vs. Existence.

The experience of absence-

reading in **Being and Nothingness**) pp. 59-61

Anguish and Fear :Reading in **B&N** ((pp.65-69)

Hayim : First chapter-concept and techniques of Bad Faith

Mon. Sep.22

Relations with the Other

Reading:

Techniques of self-deception in B&N pp. 96-112

Wed. Sep. 24

The Other:

Being for the other

Love relationship, desire, sadism and objectification, concept of Mutual Recognition, etc.

Hegel's classical model of slave-master

Readings:

Hayim –Existentialism and Sociology: Chapter 2

Sartre B&N pp. 340-353-- The Look

Mon. 29 (Brandeis Tuesday)

Wed. October 1st—Rosh hashana- no classes

Modalities:

Readings during the break if you wish to:

Slave- Master Hegelian Model, the Sartre Model, etc Chapter 2 in my Book

B&N 474-497, (from 497—as far as you can handle)

Mon Oct. 6--- Wed Oct. 8-

Theory of Motivation

Comparing positivistic theory of motivation with the Existential approach

Concepts of Project, Life-script.

Readings: Hayim chapter 3. and selections in B&N

Mon.Oct. 13---Wed. Oct. 15

Sartre: Existentialism and Human Emotions: Read pamphlet and bring to class

Hayim: Chapters 4-5 Fundamental concepts in the Critique of

Dialectical Reason:

Seriality, Praxis, the Pratico inert, the relation between subject and the material world.

Mon. Oct. 20--Wed. Oct 22

**The pledge group, the third person, analysis of revolt.
Freedom and Responsibility.
Summary and review**

Beginning Simone de Beauvoir-- the Second Sex

Mon. oct. 27--Wed. Oct. 29, --Monday Nov. 3rd

**Experiential Work-shop- students' presentation of the Second Sex,
The Model of Immanence and transcendence.**

All students read:

The Nomads

Early tillers of the Soil

**The following small sections in SDB book will be divided among pairs of
students for class presentations:**

Topics for experiential presentations:

Myth and Reality

Woman's Situation and Character

The young girl

The Narcissist

Sexual initiation

Women in love

The Lesbian

The Mystic

The Married Woman

The Independent Woman

Prostitutes and Hetairas

November

Wed, Nov 5 Mon Nov 10, Wed. Nov 12-

Introducing Kierkegaard

The Present Age:

entire book

Fear and atrembling: Selections

Three stages on Life's Way:

**The stage of sensual immediacy , Ethical stage of Pledge, and the Leap
of Faith**

Mon Nov. 17- Wed. Nov. 19, Mon. Nov.24

Goffman: presentation of Self...

Book plus handout

**Pursuit of ethics of Safety – complicity VS.
Ethics of authenticity-commitment**

Wed Nov. 26,

Mon. Dec.1st

Use time to cover lagging material, Comparisons of Sartre and Goffman, Reviews, etc. Preparing for the Finals.

Wed. Dec.3rd

Modeling all authors and key concepts

Mon. Dec.8th

Last day of classes: review of Finals

Conceptual Format

The existential and social psychological modes of analysis are the major areas of study in the course. We will try to balance the **analytical and the experiential**. We select readings from **Being and Nothingness**, all the while using my work on **Existentialism and Sociology**, and other selected readings to help you clarify key themes and introduce you to recent field work in the social-existential theory of identity and daily action. Main topics covered in **Being and Nothingness**, in **Existentialism and Human Emotions** and in **Existentialism and Sociology** include the constitution of Self, of Self and Other, of Emotions, Choice and Bad Faith, anguish and freedom, and especially of human relationships, and the importance of the social group in social and personal formations.

From **Being and Nothingness** we move to the study of the social psychology of racism and group behavior. In this context, types of personal and social identifications will be presented in selected readings taken from Sartre's work **The Critique of Dialectical Reason**. Here, concepts of **pledge, praxis and "serial" groups** will be analyzed in relationship to concrete social and political institutional settings.

In addition to Sartre, the thought of Kierkegaard **Fear and Trembling**, **The Present Age** and that of Nietzsche (if time allows) on the origins of morality, will be given. They introduce us to earlier sentiments on existentialism, and provide important historical antecedents to existential analysis and orientations.

It is impossible to study the contribution of Sartre to sociological analysis without, at the same time, introducing the work of Simone de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir, in **The Second Sex** and other works connects the existential mode of analysis to issues of sexual identity and historical consciousness, and offers some of the most provocative thinking on stages in identity formation and their social historical fate. We study **Freud's theory of gender** and sexuality for contrast effect.

While studying the concept of "self and other," both in Sartre and in de Beauvoir's works, we will also be weaving in and out of Sartre's foundational concepts. We also read Goffman's study on **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life** as both a "theory in action" and as a case study that contrasts well with the rest of our readings.

Relax and let's enjoy the class. I invite you to visit me during my office hours for additional help on assignments, readings, and anything else.

Gh.