What if there is no meaning in life? What if there is? How do we know what that meaning is? Where does meaning come from? What if there is no God? What if there is?

Existentialism is a philosophy that takes our pure existence as its starting point. Thus, it does not presume the necessity of any essential laws, God, or goodness or evil. We just are. But what do we do with this? Where do we go from here? This class will study several of the most prominent existential philosophers in the history of philosophy, such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. We will examine how they make their existentialist arguments, and more specifically, their arguments with regard to what one should do and how one should live from an existentialist perspective. Students should expect to learn about the approach of existentialism in general, as well as how to explain the different perspectives from within this genre as espoused by several existentialist philosophers. Finally, we will work to address our own existentialist experiences and apply them to the philosophies at hand. The course will include close readings, discussions, lectures, and some group work.

Requirements for the course: Students will be expected to have all readings prepared for each day’s class; to participate in discussions, assignments and group work; to write two 7-8 page papers; and to sit for a mid-term and final exam.

Required texts may include:
Camus—*The Myth of Sisyphus* and/or *The Plague*
Kierkegaard—*Fear and Trembling*
Nietzsche—*The Gay Science*
Sartre—*Existentialism and Human Emotions* and/or *No Exit*
Selections from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*