PLATONISM, EXISTENTIALISM, PRAGMATISM

1. Content
The class will explore three different, classic theories of reality and human beings’ place in it: one from ancient Greece (that of Plato), one from modern America (that of John Dewey, a founder of pragmatism), and a third from modern Europe (that of Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, founders of existentialism). Each of these theories provides a broad metaphysics that outlines the fundamental elements of human life, an ethics of how we should live in light of these elements, and a conception of the nature of politics and art and religion. Each of them is mind opening in itself, but when read in conjunction provide rich material for discussing some of the more important questions about what it means to be human.

2. Books
Plato Republic, trans Grube and Reeve  Hackett  0872201368  
Sartre Nausea New Directions 0811201880  
Sartre Existentialism is a Humanism  Yale UP 0300115466  
Camus, The Stranger Vintage 0679720200  
Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays Vintage 0679733736  
Camus, The Plague Vintage 0679720219  
University of Chicago 0226144011  

3. Syllabus
Jan 20  Business Meeting

1. Plato
Jan 25  Republic, Book 1 to Book 2, 367e (pages 1-42)  
Jan 27  Republic, Book 2, 368a to Book 4, 427d (pages 42-102)  
Feb 1  Republic, Book 4, 427d to Book 5, 471c (pages 102-146)  
Feb 3  Republic, Book 5, 471c and Book 6 (pages 146-185)  
Feb 8  Republic, Books 7 (pages 186-212)  
Feb 10  Republic, Book 8 (pages 213-240)  
Feb 15  Republic, Book 9 (pages 241-263)  
Feb 17  Republic, Book 10 (pages 264-292)  
Feb 22  UNEXPECTED SNOW DAY

2. Existentialism
Feb 24 “Existentialism is a Humanism”  
Mar 1 “Existentialism is a Humanism”  
Mar 3 Nausea

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------Spring Break----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Mar 22 Nausea  
Mar 31 The Stranger  
April 5 Sartre on The Stranger
3. Dewey

Apr 7  Selections 21 (“Escape from Peril”) and 22 (“Philosophy’s Search for the Immutable”)
Apr 12 Selection 33 (“The Live Creature”); Selection 34 (“The Live Creature and ‘Ethereal Things’”)
Apr 14 Selections 30 (“Experience and Thinking”) and 15 (“The Pattern of Inquiry”)
Apr 19 Selection 17 (“Experience and Philosophical Method”)
Apr 21 Selection 29 (Education as Growth”), 28 (“The Child and the Curriculum”), and Selections 26 (“My Pedagogic Creed”)
Apr 26 Selection 39 (“The Search for the Great Community”)
Apr 28 Selection 43 (“The Human Abode of the Religious Function”)

4. Finishing Up

May 3: The Plague

4. Procedures

Each class will consist of discussions of material assigned for that day. Each student must study (not just read) this material before the class meeting. For each class session students are required to come with a question to be discussed on that day, and be willing to share it with the rest of the class. All students are expected to participate in class discussion, and may be called on from time to time to insure that this occurs. Also, when students wish to speak they must raise their hands and be recognized by me, rather than just interjecting their ideas as the spirit moves them; this is to prevent the aggressive from dominating others who might wish to speak.

Students must come to class on time, and remain in the classroom until the end of the class session. If you are late for class, do not attempt to enter after the door is closed, and if you have to leave for any reason do not come back into the classroom for that day. Late comings and goings disrupt class discussion, and will not be tolerated.

Each student will write one paper a week (a “Preparatory Comment,” whose nature I will explain in our first meeting). There will be a Final Paper that will be assigned on the last day of class, and will be due after the reading period has ended. Late work will be penalized at the rate of one-half letter grade per day. Comments on late papers are at the discretion of the instructor.

Incompletes will not be given except for very serious cause (for instance, incapacitating illness).

4. Grades

Grades will be determined principally on the basis of the written papers (67%), but classroom participation will also be a quite significant factor (33%).

5. Meeting With Instructor Outside of Class

By appointment. Email bfay@wesleyan.edu and suggest some meeting times and I will select one from among them.