



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

## HUMANITIES SEMINARS

### **Philosophy and Literature: Existentialism Preliminary Syllabus**

Universities tend to distinguish between philosophy and literary studies rather strictly. Philosophy, it is often assumed, develops new ideas systematically in non-fiction prose. Literature, by contrast, presumably thrives on fictional characters and plots. The former avoids rhetorical devices while the latter promotes them.

There is at least one philosophical tradition, however, which combines philosophy and literature into meaningful, significant works: existentialism. In this course we will explore the 19<sup>th</sup> century roots of the tradition and some of its more recent contributions. My aim is to show how what might appear to be a minor French group from the 1940s has in fact played a major role in transforming philosophy and literary studies today.

#### **Week 1: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Rumblings**

Soren Kierkegaard: Excerpts from *Fear and Trembling*

Friedrich Nietzsche, "The madman," from *The Gay Science*

#### **Week 2: Philosophy in Literature**

Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from Underground"

Leo Tolstoy, "The Death of Ivan Ilyich"

#### **Week 3: Real or Fantastic?**

Franz Kafka, "Before the Law," "Give it up," and "The Metamorphosis"

Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"

#### **Week 4: The Literature and Philosophy from Existentialism to Feminism**

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Nausea* and "Existentialism is a Humanism"

Simone de Beauvoir: "Introduction" and "Conclusion" from *The Second Sex*

#### **Week 5: Estrangement from a French and an Algerian Perspective**

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*