Existential, Phenomenological, & Humanistic Psychotherapy  [= EPHum]
GSAPP, Rutgers University; instructor = Louis Sass;
Spring 2022: Wednesday, 4:45 to 7:30 pm.

COURSE DESCRIPTION for catalogue:

The course concerns psychotherapeutic applications of existential, phenomenological, and humanistic perspectives in clinical psychology. The focus is on specific models, skills, and techniques, as well as on the theoretical grounding (in psychology & philosophy) required to understand and apply these approaches. The primary emphasis is on existential-humanistic therapy and existential analysis, and on phenomenological approaches to treatment (especially of severe mental illness). We will also pay attention to cultural and multi-cultural issues connected with these perspectives. (This is an “Effective Individual Intervention” course)
(For more re the rationale for the course, see Appendix at end of this syllabus.)

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attend class; participate in discussion.
2. Do the required reading (and be prepared to demonstrate this in class)
3. Offer a brief presentation (5 – 10 minutes long) re some of the readings (include a handout, no more than a page long) once or twice during the semester. This can involve questions, criticisms, applications, or any thoughts relevant to the readings for the week you are assigned; it is meant to be a preliminary to class discussion of the reading in question. Many of these possible items are marked on the syllabus with %%. These will be assigned in an early class meeting. (These presentations: should be brief, around 5 minutes, certainly not more than 10. It should offer a brief summary—more extensive if the reading assigned was not a required one—and should focus on your thoughts on the reading, e.g., what you found interesting, confusing, difficult to understand, or otherwise problematic; how the issues raised might apply in psychotherapeutic contexts, applications.
4. Brief Case Presentation in class (in classes #10-#13; 5-7 minutes only) and Final Paper (10-12 double-spaced pages), offering reflections on a therapy case you are currently seeing or have seen in the past—re-considered from a phenomenological and/or existentially oriented stance (Phenomenological=focus on time, space, causality, self-experience, intersubjectivity. Existential = focus on issues of freedom, mortality, Angst etc.) You should consider your case in terms of at least two of the frameworks or perspectives discussed in the course (such as those of Yalom, Schneider, Spinelli, van Deurzen, Cohn, Laing, Frankl). If you wish to alter your paper from this model, that is possible, but in that case please clear your topic with the instructor.

Grade based on all the above
CONCERNING THIS SYLLABUS AND READINGS:

All required readings available on CANVAS.

Required readings are listed below in the order in which I suggest you read them.

Recommended and Background readings & videos or films: Some readings or videos or films are only recommended. These will be listed at the end of each class entry, always preceded by RECOMMENDED ONLY:

You are NOT expected to read or to view these recommended items; I list them just in case you have extra time and want more information on a particular topic, or should be aware of certain sources. Most of the recommended readings are available on the CANVAS website. The instructor will sometimes offer brief comments on or summaries of the recommended readings.

To repeat: the readings that are listed under Recommended Only are not required.

Videos and some other items are listed under the rubric In Class. There will of course also be some lecturing and much discussion in class sessions.

Note: %%% indicates a possible text for presentation by student; these will be assigned in an early class meeting.

Readings listed are somewhat tentative. I will occasionally adjust the required and recommended readings (as well as audio-visual material) to fit student interests and needs.

Please note: in preparation for the first class meeting, you are asked to read a few brief items.

**Please be aware that the excerpts placed on CANVAS reserves are sometimes longer than what is actually assigned; only the specified pages are required, as listed in this syllabus; follow the syllabus closely.

A KEY TEXT:


(15 CLASS MEETINGS, WITH READINGS ETC.)

PART ONE: INTRODUCTORY (1 session)

CLASS #1: OVERVIEW: HUMANISTIC, EXISTENTIAL, AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY

Readings:


In Class:
See LAS’s PPt re Humanistic & Existential Psychology (and re Sartre).
Video: Carl Rogers speaking; explaining origins of his pov:
https://www.thepositiveencourager.global/carl-rogers-and-the-person-centered-approach-videos/ (<3”)
Video: Abraham Maslow speaking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRd-ajUbN98 (6”)
Video: Re “Psychology of Conformity”: mentions Ernest Becker, Kierkegaard, Emerson, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARGczzoPASo (11”)

PART TWO: JEAN-PAUL SARTRE & EXISTENTIALISM (2 sessions)

CLASS #2: SARTRE, FREEDOM, AND EXISTENTIAL HUMANISM
Readings:

In Class:
Video, one minute only: Sartre emerging from Simone de Beauvoir’s apartment in Paris at time he won Nobel Prize—which he refused.
https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1964/sartre/documentary/

RECOMMENDED ONLY:
Recommended Readings:

CLASS #3: SARTRE #2: EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS
Readings:
Sartre (1943). “The existence of others” (section re “the look”) excerpt from *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 233-248. %%
Sartre, J.-P. (1943). Quality as a revelation of being (re “the viscous” etc).

In Class:
Video re Sartre on Bad Faith:
https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=sartre+on+bad+faith&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_VE99YeHcE5DM_AamhL_ACA47 ,<4”

RECOMMENDED ONLY:
Recommended Readings:

Background text:

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PART THREE: EXISTENTIAL AND EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC THERAPY (3 sessions)

CLASS #4: R. D. LAING, THEORY AND THERAPY
Readings:

In Class:
Videos: of R.D. Laing, including:
“R. D Laing I” on reconceptualizing SMI and medicine:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0ZvZAG_XRg (15”; watch first 14”)
POSSIBLY SEE SOME OF THESE (LAS: 12 03 2021):
“R D Laing Part One: 12 “
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3JGS63RgMw
“R D Laing Part Two: 8”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZbwT7oge-E
“On Forgetting Depression”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKOxp2q2lss (4’),
“On Kingsley House”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTEZ_eumRKI (2”)

RECOMMENDED ONLY:

Recommended Readings:

Mildly Recommended Video:
Laing on Transpersonal Psychology, describing fragmented contemporary self-experience as a historically contingent illusion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiCOazoizU (78”; relevant segment is 22”-58”)

Background Text (just to be aware of):

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CLASS #5: LOGOTHERAPY & AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF EXISTENTIAL-HUMANISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY
Readings:

Video to watch in advance:
Existential therapist Kirk Schneider discussing personal background and his approach to therapy, (67” but view 18”-42”)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYTVa8cNzTk

In Class:
Video: Interview with Victor Frankl on Logotherapy, “Self-actualization is not the goal”, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OL8DyVusLeE (12”)
Video: Interview with Rollo May on Existential Psychotherapy,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLpLjtV8XwM (28” but view from 6”30’-20”)
Video: Irving Yalom on “Inpatient Group Psychotherapy”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05Elmr65RDg&t=144s (6”)

??possible GUEST LECTURE BY Professor Kristen Riley, re meaning-centered psychotherapy for cancer patients; one-hour guest lecture in spring 2022; to be scheduled.

RECOMMENDED ONLY:

Recommended Readings:

Review articles re empirical studies:


**Background Video:**
Logotherapist Victor Frankl: “Finding meaning in difficult times”,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlC2OdnhIIQ (28” but view only first 12” or so)

CLASS #6: BRITISH SCHOOL OF EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS

Readings:
Review/re-reread Cooper chap 2, “Existential philosophy,” pp 17-30 (which you already read for first class)

**Video to watch in advance of class:**

**ALSO BEGIN READING HEIDEGGER:**
Heidegger (1927), *Being and Time* (BT) (Stambaugh translation; SUNY Press 1996), pp. 30-34 (concept of phenomenology)
59-67 (Being-in-the world, worldliness) (both in Heid BT set 1) %%
88-94 (aroundness and Dasein’s spatiality),
335-338 (de-distancing etc, temporality of spatiality) %%

**In Class:**
Ernesto Spinelli interview, “Existential Therapy: a Personal Reflection on its Defining Features”, (39” but view 3”-33”):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4rCuHpa5hE

**RECOMMENDED ONLY:**
Recommended films to watch, if you have time and inclination:
“La Jetée,” 1962, short experimental film (25”) by Chris Marker
(Consider the above in light of Heidegger’s perspectives on “care” and distancing (Wings) and on time and memory (La Jetée), and their possible relevance in psychotherapy.)

PART FOUR: HEIDEGGER AND EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS (3 sessions)
CLASS #7: HEIDEGGER AND DASEINSANALYTIC THERAPY

Readings:
- Review the Heidegger *Being and Time* pages read for last class.
  - Heidegger, *Being and Time*:
    - 126-134 (attunement, fear)
    - 314-317 (fear and Angst) (above in Heid BT set 2)
    - 169-178, (primordial totality, Angst as disclosedness) (in Heid BT set 3) %%

In Class:
- Discuss Heidegger B&T readings for this class session and the previous session.
- Videos: Sheldon Solomon summarizing “Terror Management Theory”,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQb93wBF97c (4”)
  Philosopher Hubert Dreyfus summarizing Heidegger’s conception of Dasein,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIXSOPy8VhU (45”, but view 8”35’ – 31”15’)

Recommended Readings:
  - Rec background: excerpts from Sechehaye (Ed.), *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*.

Recommended videos:
- Video: w William Barrett re Heidegger, interviewed by Bryan Magee from 1977, 45”:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27bo4FMP3vo

Recommended Films to Watch, if you have time and inclination:
- “Hiroshima mon Amour,” 1959, director Alain Resnais, screenplay Margeurite Duras.

CLASS #8: HEIDEGGER & EXISTENTIAL-PHENOMENOLOGY

Readings:
- Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp:
  - 118-122 (everyday being one’s self and the They) (check if in set 2)
  - 231-240 (death) (in Heid BT set 4)
    - Rilke, “8th Duino Elegy” (Snow translation; or Hunter translation; re the animal’s Open vs the human beings” World)
    - (for an audio reading of this, Mitchell translation:
      https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wouc19ZZS10)
    - Cooper chap 8: Brief existential therapies, pp 129-137; %%
    - Cooper chap 9: Dimensions of Existential Therapeutic practice, pp 138-146;

https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039631 %%
In Class:

Video: Existential Phenomenological therapy demonstration; therapist Alfried Längle (colleague of Frankl) working with a real client, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6hdJ8dtilk (48”, but view 12” - 33”40’; for context: the client—Bruce—was adopted, and he never felt loved by his adoptive mother)

Discuss: Rilke’s “8th Duino Elegy” in relation to Heidegger’s thought.

RECOMMENDED ONLY:
Rec literary text: Leo Tolstoy story, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich.” (1886; re this issue of mortality)
Recommended Film to Watch, if you have time and inclination:
Deep Background Video:
Existential Therapist Erik Craig presenting on Daseinanalytic approach, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKv6FxIjgAw (24”)

CLASS #9: FEELINGS OF BEING: ONTOLOGICAL ISSUES IN PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Readings:


In Class:

Film: Terence Malick’s “Tree of Life” (2011). View excerpts from this film (or preview); discuss their relevance for existentially oriented therapy. Malick is a former student of philosophy, espec of Heidegger (even translated one of H’s books).

Video: Kirk Schneider re awe in therapy, “Psychotherapy and the Mystery of Being”, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ResfXydlGAM&t=6s (10”)

RECOMMENDED ONLY:
PART FIVE: PHENOMENOLOGY (4 sessions)

CLASS # 10: PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOTHERAPY: EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

Readings:


In Class:

Video: “Husserl and the Adventure of Phenomenology”: 12 minute lecture: view and discuss. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjknxjlepKA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjknxjlepKA)

Sass present re “EAWE: Examination of Anomalous World Experience.”

Powerpoint or video.

Discuss autobiographical passages from Ellen Saks and Antonin Artaud: implications for therapeutic intervention.

Student case presentations.

RECOMMENDED ONLY:


Background Texts:


CLASS # 11: SCHIZOPHRENIA: LANGUAGE AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Readings:


In Class:
- Video of interview of SMI patient with severe language anomalies.
- Sass re the experience of language in schizophrenia.
- Student case presentations.

RECOMMENDED ONLY:

Recommended Readings:

Background Texts – by instructor, re the nature of phenomenology, etc:

CLASS #12: DELUSIONS AND THEIR TREATMENT

Readings:

In Class:
- Videos of interview with two patients, one male one female (male patient with apparent delusions): view and discuss.
- Student case presentations.

RECOMMENDED ONLY:

Recommended Readings:


**Background texts:**


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**CLASS # 13: PHENOMENOLOGY AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL THERAPY OF MOOD DISORDERS (AND SOME OTHER CONDITIONS)**

**Readings:**


**In Class:**

**FILM:** Lars von Trier’s “Melancholia”: view and discuss excerpts (illustrates the lived-world of psychotic depression); compare to excerpts from “Last Year at Marienbad.”

**POEM:** Read (also listen) and discuss Sylvia Plath’s poem, “Lorelei” (melancholia, suicidal depression):

We will link to YouTube video of Sylvia Plath reading her poem, Lorelei

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMXLRVNeMMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMXLRVNeMMQ)

Student case presentations.

**RECOMMENDED ONLY:**

**Recommended Readings:**


Rec literary example: Sarah Kane, 4:48 *Psychosis* (a play), pp. 205-212 (whole play is recommended). (illustrates psychotic depression; play first performed in year 2000)


PART FIVE: MULTI-CULTURAL ISSUES, CONCLUSION (2 sessions)

CLASS #14: MULTI-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF TREATMENT; MICK COOPER RE EXISTENTIAL, HUMANISTIC, AND CBT APPROACHES

Readings:

Hoffman, L., Granger, N., Jr., & Mansilla, M. (2016). *Multiculturalism and meaning in existential and positive psychology.* In P. Russo-Netzer, S. E. Schulenberg, & A. Batthyany (Eds.), *Clinical perspectives on meaning: Positive and existential psychotherapy* (p. 111–130). Springer International Publishing. AG. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6_6)


Video (or possibly view in class: TBA)

Watch Mick Cooper interview, comparing and contrasting various approaches to therapy, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf2L5kr2U5M (29”)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf2L5kr2U5M)

In Class:

Discussion of Cooper video
LAS re Fanon; see his notes.

Video re Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks*, about 9 minutes long. A summary, with various visuals including photos, film clips, and text, with a lecturer all the while: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXmsW1yr4pl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXmsW1yr4pl)

RECOMMENDED ONLY:

Recommended Readings:


Rec: Luxon, Nancy. 2021. Fanon’s psychiatric hospital as a waystation to freedom.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 0(0) 1–21. DOI: 10.1177/0263276420981612


Background texts:

Background text:

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**CLASS #15: INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGY; CONCLUSION**

Readings (one or both of the following):


In Class: TBA.

**RECOMMENDED ONLY:**

Recommended Readings:


**Background Texts:**

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**END OF COURSE**

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**APPENDICES BELOW**


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**APPENDIX TWO:** Heidegger’s *Being and Time*

If, in the future, you wish to read more of Heidegger’s key work, *Being and Time*, beyond the pages required for the course, here are some additional sections to recommend:

49-55; 139-144 (understanding and interpretation)
178-183 (care and pre-ontological self-interpretation)
186-196 (Dasein, worldliness, and reality)
326-335 (taking-care vs theoretical discovery)
397-398 (Dasein and meaning of being in general).

**APPENDIX THREE:** SOME USEFUL REFERENCE WORKS OR OTHER SOURCES TO BE AWARE OF:


**APPENDIX FOUR: RATIONALE FOR AND BACKGROUND RE THE COURSE:**

More than any other therapeutic approach, those of existentialism and humanism emphasize the importance of a sense of meaning and the role that a person’s general orientation, worldview, or vision of existence can play in psychological well-being. Phenomenology and existentialism particularly stress the importance of implicit factors and formal aspects of experience not typically emphasized by other schools of psychology, including the “lived body,” cultural horizons, and other implicit or “pre-reflective” modes of experience. There has been a particular focus on problematic experiences including feelings of inauthenticity, anomie, bodily alienation, abandonment, and radical cultural conflict or dislocation, among others. It is therefore imperative for clinical students to have some familiarity with the psychological, philosophical, and cultural perspectives that have inspired and undergird these approaches. The focus of the
course is, however, on clinical interventions and their theoretical basis, hence on the relevance such models and perspectives have for practice, especially in psychotherapy.

While phenomenological and existential approaches have long been central in psychology and the mental health professions, they have taken on special importance in recent years—not only in psychotherapy but also in psychopathology and cognitive science.

There has been a major revival of specifically existential approaches in therapy, with innovative work especially in the UK and the USA, and considerable research affirming the efficacy of such approaches. At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that existential and humanistic approaches have come to imbue novel practices in both third-wave CBT and in the now-dominant psychodynamic approaches termed “relational” and “intersubjective.” Phenomenological psychopathology has also seen a major revival and much innovation over the past couple of decades, especially in Europe and South America. Noteworthy as well is the fact that “embodied and embedded” approaches (a.k.a. the “4 E” approach) have become prominent in important areas of cognitive science; these trace much of their ancestry to phenomenological perspectives initiated by the philosophers Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger.

In this course, students will view excerpts from various films that illustrate clinical and therapeutic issues. They will also consider certain literary works or autobiographical writings by patients that illustrate clinically relevant topics and should foster discussion of issues that arise in therapy. In addition, a range of teaching videos (using selected extracts) of therapy and other interactions with patients will be used to illustrate tools and approaches offered by prominent schools of existential or humanistic psychotherapy. The course also includes discussion of existential and phenomenological aspects of students’ ongoing or recent treatment cases. Students will periodically be asked to reflect on the relevance of the class topic for cases they have seen, and will be asked to present a case re-considered in light of one or more of the specific therapeutic models to be presented.