Existential Sociology

The Course introduces the existential-sociological approaches to the study of identity, self and society, group relations, and the wider social dynamics. No prerequisites are required. The goal is to acquaint you with 3 interdisciplinary modes of analysis addressing the self as identity and as a member of a group: the Serial and the Praxis groups. Dynamics of motivation, rebellion, self-deception and transformation-on the micro and macro level are addressed. The three models are the existential-sociological model, the dialogical-dramaturgical model, and the positivistic model.

Please see the full Conceptual Plan and Format of the course on the last page of this syllabus.

Requirements:
Attendance is required. 2 Short Take-home writing assignments, to help you command key frameworks and concepts—and a take-home final paper will be required.

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

1. The Dialogical-Sociological Mode of Analysis
   Study the theory of the genesis of self in the work of Mead, and Concept of Habitus in Bourdieu.
2. **The Existential-Sociological Mode of Analysis** – is the major area addressed in this course, with selected readings from primary and secondary works by J.P. Sartre, Stern, Kierkegaard, de Beauvoir, and my own book on the topic. Main topics include theory of *Self and the Other*, theory of freedom, anguish and bad faith, theory of emotions, dynamics of making choices, the concept of self-deception, concept of bad faith, to be concluded with a theory of self-transformation and social change. Existential social psychology introduces us to modalities in relationships and interactive ethics, the structures of pledge, the *practico-inert* and their *experiential uses* and *applications* in daily life.

De Beauvoir, Kierkegaard, address other sociological areas: notably those of sexuality and self identity, concepts of authenticity, "leap of faith, and the Present Age.

3. **The Positivistic Mode of Analysis** –Psychological theory of gender and sexuality by Freud. This section is short and mainly serves the purpose of making contrast-effect with the social-existential analysis of Sartre and De Beauvoir.

**Books required:**
- G. Mead (genesis of self) *(Reader)*
- J.P. Sartre *Existentialism and Human emotions*
- Jp. Sartre *Being and nothingness* *(selections in the Reader)*
- G. Hayim *Existentialism and Sociology* --- Transaction
- S de Beauvoir; *The Second Sex*
- S Kierkegaard --- *The Present Age*

**Reader:** Short articles in the form of a *Reader* is offered free of charge. Reader will help you supplement and clarify readings.
Syllabus

WEEK 1
Tuesday, January 14
Short Overview
Main topic: The Dialogical Model
Introducing fundamental concepts in the Dialogical-Sociological Model of analysis as Presented By George Herbert Mead:
Genesis of self, The Generalized Other, the ‘Me’ and the ‘I’ and the concept of Habitus by Bourdieu in general.
Readings: ( Reader)
Mead : Self and society Me and I
Coser ; on Mead

WEEK 2
Tuesday JAN. 21
Mead and Sartre
Continue Mead - Experiential applications of the concepts of Me and I
Concept of Habitus in Bourdeiu (Reader)

Begin Sartre: Concepts of ‘Being in itself’ and ‘being for itself’
From now on, Please always bring with you to class the Reader -as well as the book on Existentialism and Sociology.

WEEK 3
Tuesday JAN 28,
Concepts of Freedom and anguish
Concept of Bad faith; as self-deception
Techniques and Pattern of Bad Faith

Readings:
Hayim: Chapter 1 Freedom Anguish and Bad faith
Sartre Anguish vs. Fear inB&N (Reader pp.65-69)
Concrete Examples of Bad Faith B&N pp. 96-112 (Reader)
WEEK 4
Tuesday, Feb 4.
Introduce the concept of Self and Other
Patterns of Relationships with the other
Readings

A Stern: Our ‘Being- For-Others’ and Their ‘Gaze’ (Reader)

Hayim chapter 2 ‘Relationships with the Other’.
Modalities of subordination, reciprocity, love, etc,
A Manser: Relations with Other People (Reader)

Sartre; The Look (B&N)
Relations with the Other PP. 340-353 (Reader)
Concrete Relations with the Other 474-497 (Reader)

WEEK 5
Tuesday Feb 11
Start theory of Motivation and transformation
Concepts of Situation, Project, Life-script.
Readings
Hayim chapter 3.

WEEK 6 Monday Feb 17 – Friday Feb 21st NO CLASSES

WEEK 7
Tuesday, Feb 25,
Second work by Sartre on
Existentialism and Human Emotions
Theory of Existence and Essence
Freedom and ethics of responsibility
Please Bring small booklet by Sartre to class.
WEEK 8
Tuesday, March 4th.
Sartre : Types of Groups and Group dynamics.
Seriality, Praxis, and the anatomy of revolt,
Readings:
Hayim: Chapters 5
Fundamental concepts in the Critique of Dialectical Reason:
The Serial and the Praxis group, Anatomy of revolt.
Pledge gro
The Pratico-Inert – technification of everyday life
Recovery of Human Experience Chapter 8

WEEK 9
Tuesday, March 11
Breathing Space to fill in gaps in the readings.
Freud: Article on Femininity (Reader)
Start de Beauvoir-- the Second Sex
Discuss our Experiential Work-shop- students’ presentation of selected
topics from the Second Sex,

WEEK 10
Tuesday, March 18,
topics in SDB book will be divided among individual or pairs of students
for short class presentations: The topics of choice are
Myth and Reality Woman’s Situation and Character
The young girl The Narcissist
Women in love The Mystic
The Married Woman The Independent Woman

WEEK 11
Tuesday March 25
Continue workshop class presentations --Second Sex.
And Conclusions

WEEK 12
Tuesday, April 1st
Introducing Kierkegaard
Three stages in Life (handout)

Readings
The Present Age: (very readable book by Kierkegaard
Entire book

WEEK 13
Tuesday April 8
Culture of passion and culture of Complicity
‘Existence precedes Essence’ as foundation of all existential theories
Kierkegaard
Pursuit of ethics of Safety versus
Ethics of commitment
Comparative analysis Of Models -preparing for Finals

FINALS OUT

WEEK 14
Tuesday April 15 ---Tuesday April 22nd NO
CLASSES(Spring Recess)

Last week
Tuesday April 29
Last Day of Classes
Review and road map to guide you for the Finals.

****Please pay attention to the following:
Final Papers are due on Friday May 9
Papers to be submitted at my office between 12-1. (Pearlman room 107)
Absolutely no Emailed papers accepted.
All papers are to be handed to me in person.
Earlier submissions to be coordinated with me
Thanks for your cooperation and best of luck.
I will be there to help you for any need.
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Conceptual Format

The existential and social psychological modes of analysis are the major areas of study in the course and no prerequisites are needed, except your attendance and willingness to learn and to contribute. . . We try to balance the analytical and the experiential. We read Existentialism and Human Emotions and 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 the person and the group in daily action. Main topics covered include the constitution of Self, of Self and Other, of Emotions, Choice and Bad Faith, anguish and freedom, human relationships, the theory of motivation and life script, and the importance of the group in social and personal formations.

We then move to the study of the existential sociology of the group. 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, concept of the ‘pratico inert’ and theory of revolt will be analyzed- in relationship to concrete social and political institutional settings.

In addition to Sartre, the thought of Mead on the genesis of the self, Kierkegaard on the The Present Age and that of Nietzsche (if time allows) on the origins of morality, will be given. The latter two 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.

Relax and let’s enjoy the class. I invite you to have individual appointments with me for additional help on assignments, readings, and anything else.

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