Kierkegaard & Religious Existentialism

Spring Term 2015
REL 29 (2A)
Dist: TMV; WCult: W
Open to all classes

Professor: Joshua Furnal
[religion@dartmouth.edu]
Course Description

In the rubble of war-torn Europe, existentialism emphasized the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent who can determine their own authentic development. Existentialism was primarily a European cultural movement that flourished after World War II in film, literature, and philosophy. Both religious and non-religious thinkers gravitated toward this way of thinking in the twentieth century, and the inspiration for many of them was attributed to the nineteenth century Danish thinker, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). In this class, students will be introduced to important aspects of Kierkegaard’s most influential writings through close readings of the text, personal response writing assignments, class discussion, class presentations, and a research paper. We will examine the development of Kierkegaard’s philosophical and religious thinking by exploring key existential themes, such as: authenticity, anxiety, boredom, despair, faith, freedom, and self-deception. As a result, students will be able to trace—in class discussion sessions, writing assignments, student papers and presentations—Kierkegaard’s influence on existentialism, which includes both religious and non-religious thinkers alike, such as: Martin Buber, Franz Kafka, Lev Shestov, Gabriel Marcel, Paul Tillich, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, Ingmar Bergman, Woody Allen, and Billy Wilder. Open to all classes. Dist: TMV; WCult: W.

Mandatory Texts

- All other mandatory readings will be made available in the Library or electronically on Canvas.