

October 4, 2011

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Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 291, First Assignment

The following are three excerpts from J.P. Sartre's essay "Existentialism is a Humanism." You are to choose ONE of the excerpts and write a short essay (± 1500 words in length) discussing this passage, using the "Guide for Explicating a Philosophical Text" included with the Phil 291 Course Pack as a rough guide. The principal goal for this first assignment is expository rather than critical. You are to explain in your own words what the thesis is that Sartre is stating in the passage, and outline how he arrives at it in the essay. My chief concern with this assignment is to see how well you understand Sartre's position *on its own terms*, not whether you can 'refute' it. You are free, if you wish, to venture criticisms of Sartre's position, but they should arise directly as a critical response from your exposition.

This assignment is worth roughly 15% of your final grade for this course, and is due no later than Thursday October 13/11 by 4:30 p.m. The graded assignments will be returned October 25th.

N.B. Papers should be handed to the instructor directly or left with the secretary in the Philosophy Department Office ASH 2-40. Papers left in the Department Office must be dated-stamped and initialed by the Department secretary. Papers slipped under the instructor's office door will not be graded.

1. "To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the value of what we choose, for [car] we ever unable to chose the worse [jamais choisir la mal]." (*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, p. 350).
2. "The doctrine I am presenting to you is precisely the opposite of [quietism], since it declares that there is no reality except n action [il n'y a de r  alit   que dans l'action]." (*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, p. 358).
3. "But the existentialist, when he portrays a coward, shows him as responsible for his cowardice. He is not like that on account of a cowardly heart or lungs or cerebrum, he has not become like that through his physiological organism; he is like that because he has made himself a coward through his actions." (*Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, p. 359).