

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department:	Psychology
Programme:	Psychology
FHEQ Level:	6
Course Title:	Existential Psychology
Course Code:	PSY 6105
Student Engagement Hours:	160
Lectures:	22.5
Seminar / Tutorials:	22.5
Supervision:	15
Independent / Guided Learning:	100
Credits:	16 UK CATS credits 8 ECTS credits 4 US credits

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to phenomenology and existential psychology, focusing on the works of Merleau-Ponty, Jaspers, Sartre, Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir. Beginning with Kierkegaard's psychology of anxiety and despair, the course covers: the structure of human experience, the psychology of limit situations, embodiment and sexuality, the ontology of human relationships. Sartre's theory of human conflict will be contrasted with Simone de Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity. Of special interest is Merleau-Ponty's account of human freedom and the structure of life choices, as well as Heidegger's existential analysis of temporality and death. The course also examines the literature of the absurd Camus' existential analysis of suicide and authenticity. The application of the phenomenological method to literature and films is explored and students will be given the opportunity to apply their phenomenological ideas to their 'reading' of a selected short film. There is an emphasis on active forms of learning, so that students are expected to read widely, think deeply, and participate in class discussions.

Prerequisites:

PSY 5100 Human Development

Aims and Objectives:

The course provides students with an awareness of the extent and scope of phenomenology, both as psychology and philosophy, the historical and philosophical background to phenomenology, as well as its aims, methods and basic concepts and questions: an understanding of how to pursue qualitative research within their discipline, using phenomenological methods. The course also familiarises students with key studies and debates in selected areas of the literature, thus laying the groundwork for an advanced and independent study of phenomenology. All students are encouraged to think critically about their discipline, using the phenomenological method to uncover the assumptions embedded within current psychological methods of inquiry.

Programme Outcomes:

Psychology: 6A (iii), 6C (iii), 6C (iv), 6D (iv)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes are found in the Programme Specification. This is located at the archive maintained by Registry and found at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the main schools in phenomenology and their impact on psychology.
- Develop an understanding of relevant phenomenological concepts and their post-structural critiques.
- Gain insight into the limitations of quantitative approaches to understanding persons.
- Gain insight into the ways in which different methodologies are used best when specific phenomena are examined.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of different psychological paradigms.
- Appreciate the development and influence of phenomenological approaches in psychotherapy.

Indicative Content:

- Structure of Human Experience
- Life-World / Being-in-the-World
- Moods & Existential Feelings
- Being-with-Others
- The Lived Body
- Freedom-Towards-Others
- Phenomenological Psychopathology
- Temporality & Death

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

The course material will be covered in the following ways:

- I. Lectures on key topics
- II. Group discussions
- III. Supervision meetings
- IV. Required Readings
- V. Phenomenological Analyses of Film Excerpts

Indicative Texts:

Camic, P. (2021). *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*. (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.

Laing, R. (2010). *The Divided Self: An Existential Study of Sanity & Madness*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex.

Reynolds, J. (2006). *Understanding Existentialism*. Chesham, Bucks: Acumen.

Styron, W. (2001). *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*. Vintage Classics.

See syllabus for complete reading list

Please Note: The core and the reference texts will be reviewed at the time of designing the semester syllabus

Change Log for this CSD:

Major or Minor Change ?	Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body	Change Actioned by Registry Services
Major	Remove 'Phenomenological' from course title, number of credits	09.11.2021, Psychology Department	
	Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	
	Revision – annual update	May 2023	