

## HPL 463 EXISTENTIALISM

*“It is certain, that the café by itself, with its patrons, its tables, its books, its mirrors, its lights, its smoky atmosphere, and the sounds of voices, rattling saucers, and footsteps which fill it – the café is a fullness of being.” - Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness*

Existentialism is the philosophical movement and tradition that makes the phenomenon of human existence—and all its experiences—its primary focus. While its roots are rich and varied, drawing upon such thinkers as Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger, it is the work of the French intellectuals Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus that made Existentialism a way of life. With their focus on human freedom, authenticity, passion, death, and the search for meaning, they gave birth to a philosophical movement that permeated every form of intellectual expression of the day: literature, theatre, poetry, art, theology—and especially philosophy.

Particularly noteworthy are the places that served as inspiration for these Existentialists’ writings, the venues that allowed them to turn everyday experiences into profound and life-altering insights; namely, the Parisian cafés.

This course will examine the work of prominent Existentialist philosophers, with the invaluable added bonus of visiting the very places that inspired their thinking. We will sit on the bench in Café Deux Magots where Sartre and Camus had heated political debates; order an espresso in Café de Flore where Sartre and Beauvoir spent countless hours writing about authenticity and freedom, inspiring Sartre to pen the immortal line “Man is condemned to be free.”

Above all, the experiences of this course will show how everyday average experiences can become inspiration for rich and profound philosophical insights that can alter the course of one’s life.

### Les Deux Magots



## Café de Flore



## Brassai, Sartre au Cafe de Flore



*"Sartre's existentialism began in a café, was largely written in cafés, was discussed in cafés and seems sometimes actually to be about cafés. It made metaphysical mileage out of the business of restaurant life: the attitude of a waiter to his job, the penetrating stare from a neighboring table, the furtive foreplay of hands on the tablecloth." -Anthony Gottlieb, NY Times*