This course examines problems of existence as posed by black thought in philosophy and literature.

**Texts: (All paperback editions)**

**Requirements:** two take-home examinations. The first is worth 30 percent of your grade. The second is 50 percent of your grade. The remaining 20 percent is from attendance and class participation.

**Sessions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading assignments and topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Introductions and discussion of syllabus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part I: Literary Black Existentialism: “Experience,” “Being,” and “The Situation”**

9/15  
Second half: Richard Wright, *Native Son* and “How Bigger Thomas Was Born.” What is the relationship between choice and meaning for “the marginalized” of the modern world?

9/22  
Second half: Richard Wright, *The Outsider* (read to the middle). What is the significance of dread and the growing sense of the demonic underside of living as an outsider? How does “guilt” configure in the life of an outsider? What is the significance of “responsibility” in Wright’s depiction of the outsider’s struggle to be? And what is required in order “to be” at the end of this text? **Recommended reading:** Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* and Floyd Hayes, III, “The Concept of Double Vision in Richard Wright’s *The Outsider*,” in *Existence in Black*.
Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Why is hypervisibility a form of invisibility? What are some of the “Catch 22” dynamics of the search for authenticity in black?

Race and Judaism conference: Paley Library. Attend whichever session you can. See website:  
http://www.temple.edu/isrst/


Discussion of Morrison and Baldwin on the sexualization and sexuality of racial existence. The underside of creolization—How is “bad mixture” lived? What are the existential limits of racial mimesis.

First take-home examination assignment will be assigned on 10/20 and due on 10/22 by email attachment to lewgord@yahoo.com by 9:30 AM.

**Part II: Black Existential Thought and the Question of Liberation**

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (entirety). Recommended: Lewis Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*; and Lewis Gordon, “Through the Zone of Non-Being” (on blackboard)


Molefi Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea*. Are Afrocentrism and Afrocentricity forms of black existentialism?


*Existencia Africana*. Africana existential philosophy

Lewis Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. Concluding discussion and final take-home examination will be assigned. Due by email attachment to lewgord@yahoo.com at 9:30 AM, December 10th.

Any student who has a need for special accommodations due to disabilities should speak with me as soon as possible to discuss the specific situation and contact Disability Resources and Services, located in Ritter Annex, at 215.204.1280. Finally, the University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02
There are other novels, music, and film that you should read, listen to, and view along the way, or after the
class, that could enrich your understanding of this material. The following list isn’t exhaustive, but it
consists of works that will be a good start.

**Recommended films:**
Marcel Camus, *Black Orpheus* (1959)
Lina Wertmüller, *Swept Away* (1975) and *The Seven Beauties* (1975)
Euzhan Palcy, *Sugar Cane Alley* (1983)
Perry Henzell, *The Harder They Come* (1962)
James Clavell, *To Sir, With Love* (1967)
Lina Wertmüller, *The Seven Beauties* (1976)
Stephen Frears (Dir.) and Steven Knight (written by), *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002)

**Novels, Plays, and Biographies:**

Many, but try at some point to read:

M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* and *Autobiography of My Mother*
Amiri Baraka, *The Dutchman*
Jean Genet, *Les Nigres*
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Les Blancs*
F. Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*
A. Camus, *The Plague* and *The Stranger*
J-P Sartre, *Nausea*
J-P Sartre, “*The Wall*” and Other Essays
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Monifa Love, *Freedom in the Dismal*
M. Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
M. Love, *Dreaming Underground*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Short Stories*

**Listen to Music, especially the Blues**
Recommended:
*The Dinah Washington Double CD Collection*
*Billie Holiday collection*
*The Charles Mingus Anthology* (especially Notes on Integration)
*Thelonious Monk Anthology*
*John Coltrane Anthology*, but especially *A Love Supreme*
Marvin Gaye, *What’s Going On* and *I Want You*
Portishead, *Dummie*
Bob Marley, *Survival* or one of the anthologies of most of his songs
Peter Tosh, *I Am*
Joni Mitchell, *Mingus* or one of the double-cd collections of her works
Mozart, *Don Giovanni*
Abbie Lincoln, *Turtle’s Dream*
Max Roach and Abbie Lincoln, *We Insist*
Jimmy Hendrix (everything)
Curtis Mayfield (everything)
Me’Shell Ndegeocello, *Peace Beyond Passion*
Angie Stone (every cd)
Nacimento (whatever you can get your hands on)
Public Enemy, *Fear of a Black Planet*
Duke Ellington, *Black and Tan Fantasy*
Jackie Wilson collection of greatest hits
*Bo Diddly* collection
*Best of Burning Spear*
*Best of Steel Pulse*
Lucia Souza (everything)
The Mighty Sparrow (everything)

*There are many more philosophical books, films, and music, which will be referred to in class, but you should acquire some familiarity with the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Gabriel Marcel, to name several.*