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College of Liberal Arts and Sciences_PHI 104: Existentialism and Literature (SP20)_Blackboard Notebook Project

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PHI 104: Existentialism and Literature (SP20): Blackboard Notebook Project

Kirsten Jacobson

If technology cooperates, this Blackboard journal will become the new place for you to make your notebook entries. I will post prompts to which you can respond. You can also add entries of your own creation. The grading of these notebooks will continue as described in our original syllabus. I will be updating the grades for your notebook entries to date in the Grade Center soon. You have the grade already for the first notebook check, and I'll post your second and third checks soon. We have two more notebook checks—i.e., the 4th and 5th check-ins) to go before the end of the semester; each of these are worth five percent of your grade, so I've put the grade for this online journal at 10 (i.e., 10%).

Finally, only you and I will be able to see your notebook entries. In other words, unlike a Discussion Board, which is viewable by the whole class, this is just between individual students and me.

ENTRY 1: Testing, testing, 1, 2, 3 (make entry by midnight EST on Friday, March 27th)

Hey there! Welcome to our remote version of PHI 104. For your first notebook entry for the 4th segment of our notebook journey together, will you please write me a few sentences that let me know if you have any concerns about our course or your current situation; if you have any current questions about our course; and/or anything that's on your mind right now about this new reality we're facing together? Thanks, and "see" you soon!

ENTRY 2 (make entry by Tuesday, April 7th before 11 a.m. EST): In the novel *Green Girl*, Ruth spends a fair bit of time seeing herself from above, so to speak. In other words, she looks at herself at times from a third person perspective, capturing how someone else might see her motions and experiences from outside herself. For this entry, write at least a paragraph that describes a moment in your day or a stretch of time in your day from a third person perspective. In other words, narrate how someone might see you moving about life right now. Though that person wouldn't have perfect access to your thoughts, feel free to interject interpretations of yourself into your narrative. That is to say, your narrator can be someone who has some degree of omniscience!

Entry 3 (make by Tuesday, April 14th before 11 a.m. EST): We're all being asked to make a lot of changes right now, and this often involves needing to make explicit choices where before we might have rolled along with the flow of how we've always done things. De Beauvoir is getting us to think about how we do and don't take up choices/freedom well. For Tuesday, you'll be reading her accounts of three archetypical ways that folks can often fail to take up freedom well—the sub-person, the serious person, and the nihilist. In this notebook entry, reflect on

whether you find yourself acting in ways that resemble any of these patterns of behaving. It would be great if you could do so with respect to our current situation. In doing so, you might, for example, notice how you USED TO act akin to a serious person, but in this new situation, you may no longer be doing so. On the contrary, you might find that in moments of crisis like this, you are more likely to turn to behaviors akin to the sub-person, etc. Please know that I won't be judging anyone negatively or positively for "admitting" that you behave in one way or another. As de Beauvoir notes, it is a life-long challenge for us to work on taking up our freedom adequately...and we will likely have "good" and "challenged" moments of doing so! (Lastly, if you're feeling confused about de Beauvoir's arguments and/or descriptions pertaining to the sub-person, the serious person and the nihilist, still go ahead with this notebook entry and focus more simply on how your relationship to making choices is similar or different from your life before this pandemic period began.)

Entry 4 (make by Thursday, April 23rd before 11 a.m. EST): One of your assignments for Tuesday, the 21st, is to read a Rolling Stone article focusing on "moral fatigue" in light of our current pandemic (<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/corona-exhausted-moral-fatigue-974311/>). For this entry, write either about 1) ways in which you are finding new levels of moral responsibility appearing in choices that previously were "simple" or ethically uncomplicated, or 2) how other people are now "showing up" in choices you're making that used to seem like choices where you could simply focus on your own needs and desires. Whichever option you choose, try to draw on one or more of the arguments that de Beauvoir makes to help you work through the dynamic character of choices—e.g., how there is never an absolute rule for how to do the "right" thing, how others are always implicated in our choices, how we must continue to create "original solutions," etc.

Entry 5 (make by Tuesday, April 28th before 11 a.m. EST): This week's Rankine reading and your choice of COVID-19 related article(s) focus significantly on who we see and don't see in crises and the ethics of that (over)sight. In this entry, discuss some aspect of the ethical decisions being raised by the current pandemic (and highlighted by our readings), and use arguments or points from de Beauvoir to help you describe or argue for a certain response that you think is warranted. If you're not certain what should be done pertaining to some issue, you could, alternatively, discuss what makes the decision challenging to make (again drawing in part on de Beauvoir's arguments). (Note that this entry and the previous two are helpful preparatory entries for gearing up for your final essay!)

Entry 6 (make by Friday, May 1st before noon EST):

I want this entry to do one of two things for you. Option 1: Let this help you prepare for or fine tune your essay that is due on Monday by using it to articulate one of your main points and/or ask me a question about something that you're stuck on/uncertain about/curious about/etc. I'll

try to get back to you ASAP so that you can get some feedback as you continue working on your paper this weekend. Option 2: If you're feeling all set with your paper or just don't feel like choosing option 1, you can instead use this entry to reflect on something that particularly struck you from our studies/discussions in this course. In other words, reflect on something that made you think about or do something in a new way; talk about something that you really agreed with or disagreed with; etc. LET ME KNOW which option you choose so I can be sure to respond to those who are choosing OPTION 1. Thanks!