

I. Guiding Question/Thesis/Idea

Racial discrimination is a problem that has plagued human cultures for centuries, and the problems created by racial discrimination continue to today. The philosophical movement of **existentialism** proposes that humans are born without any essential nature, and that who we are is solely the product of the choices that we make and the way we live our lives. Thus, it seems likely that existential thinkers could offer us advice for ways of eliminating racial bias in our culture. If people have no essential nature, then it would not make sense to discriminate against others based on some imagined “essence” that they are perceived to have. In my project I plan to explore the possibility of using existentialist philosophy as a guide for overcoming stereotyping and racial discrimination.

II. Method of Research

I will begin my investigation of this topic by studying the recent data on racial attitudes, racial discrimination, and stereotyping. After familiarizing myself with this data, I will read though Jean Paul Sartre’s essay *Existentialism is a Humanism*, and explore the ways in which his existentialist philosophy might offer solutions to the problems of associated with contemporary attitudes about race. After composing a summary of my findings, I will compare the ideas presented by Sartre with the ideas of two other existentialist philosophers (yet to be determined) to investigate their comparative value of in offering solutions to this problem. I will complete my project by summarizing my findings and offering my own ideas on the potential value of existentialist solutions to these problems.

III. Outcomes/Product

My final project will consist of a 12-15 page essay covering the topics discussed above. My essay will be in the standard format used for journals in the social sciences.

IV. Project Timeline

- **September 2:** Honors Project Proposal submitted. Literature search on racial attitudes and first reading of Sartre’s essay begins.
- **October 1:** Submit summary of literature review, and analysis of Sartre’s ideas in *Existentialism is a Humanism as applied to racial attitudes*.
- **November 4:** Submit summary of two other existentialist philosophers applied to my topic and contrasted with Sartre’s views.
- **November 20:** Submit rough draft of APA style essay to my professor
- **December 9:** Submit final draft of essay to my professor

I will meet with my instructor at least **once every 3 weeks** to discuss my progress, plans, and results as my research project progresses.