Objective:

This course will investigate several theories of human nature. We will examine the works of Ernest Becker, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Marx, and John Rawls. Emphasis will be placed on such issues as death, anxiety, freedom, oppression, choice, morality, individualism, community, justice, et al. Students will attempt to come to terms with the meaning of being human from a philosophical perspective. This course fulfills a pre-modern, upper-division common curriculum requirement in philosophy.

Please also consult http://cas.loyno.edu/philosophy/documents/Goalsandobjectiveshomepage for a fuller description of the objectives for advanced Common Curriculum courses. This course has been designed to satisfy Goal 1, Objectives 1-2, and Goal 2, and Objectives 1-3. It has also been designed to satisfy the College of Arts and Sciences’ Common Curriculum Objectives http://cas.loyno.edu/common/purpose.html by helping students to develop effective skills in research, writing, speaking, reading, and listening; to sharpen critical and analytical reasoning skills for solving abstract and concrete problems; to achieve an understanding of philosophical and religious traditions; and to cultivate the ability to reflect on and critique the presupposed values latent within our world, our commitments, our methodologies, our institutions, and our courses of study.

Text:

Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (Free Press)
Karl Marx, *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (McGraw-Hill)

All are available at Loyola Bookstore

Requirements:

Class preparation: Readings will be announced in each class for the following class. Students are expected to have read the material before coming to class.

Participation: Class discussions are an integral part of this course. Students are encouraged to share their views with the class without monopolizing the discussion.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Students must submit a written excuse for each legitimate absence (illness, jury duty, etc.). Anyone who has accumulated 3 or more unexcused absences will fail the course automatically. Please note that the daily attendance sheet is the only objective record of your attendance. If your signature is not on the sheet, you will be counted as absent.

Taking notes on a computer during class will be allowed by permission only. Please show up to class on time, and turn off your cell phones during class.
Make-up Exam and Late Work Policy

Students are allowed to take a make-up test, or to turn in a late take-home test, only upon submitting official documentation (e.g., doctor’s note for absence) to warrant it.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students with disabilities who wish to receive accommodations in this class should contact Disability Services at 865-2990 as soon as possible, so that warranted accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion. Disability Services are located in the Academic Resource Center, Monroe Hall 405.

Academic Honesty

University policy on cheating and plagiarism (University Bulletin, pp. 50-51) will be strictly observed in this course.

Course Grade:

Final grade for the course will be determined by the following distribution: 3 tests, 30% each; attendance and class participation, 10%.

Course Outline

July 2  Introduction, Becker, “Human Nature and the Heroic”
July 3  Reading: Becker, “The Terror of Death”; “The Recasting of Some Basic Psychoanalytic Ideas”
July 4  Holiday, no class
July 5  Becker, con’d

July 9  Becker, “Human Character as a Vital Lie”
July 10 Becker, “The Psychoanalyst Kierkegaard”
July 11 Becker, “A General View of Mental Illness”
July 12 Becker, “The Twin Ontological Motives”

July 16 Summary and Discussion, Introduction to Sartre
July 17 Test #1, Reading, Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”
July 18 Sartre, “Existentialism…” (con’d)
July 19 Sartre, “Self-Deception”

July 23 Sartre, “The Wall”
July 24 Summary and Discussion
July 25 Test #2, Introduction to Marx
July 26 Marx, “The Materialist Conception of History” Marx,
July 30 Marx, “Materialist conception of History”
July 31 Marx, “Capitalism and Human Alienation”, “Future Society”
Aug 1  Review and Discussion
Aug 2  Test #3