

Over the course of the last three years I've been experimenting with teaching Becker in four distinct courses; philosophy, psychology, comparative world religions and Christian Lifestyle. The first two are within the Social Studies Department and the last two are within the Theology Department. Presenting Becker across a curriculum is a testament to the breadth of Becker's vision, but equally a tribute to my school St. Xavier. Rich in tradition, it is flexible enough to allow experimentation. Blessed with material wealth, its mission of service is the top priority. I have a further advantage of teaching honors level upperclassmen who can readily grasp Becker. I mention all this as background because the particulars of our educational circumstances are paramount. We should know our schools and play to their strengths in presenting Becker.

The 'Bloodhound Approach' is how I characterize my treatment of Becker. In a semester class the aim is to put students on the scent of Becker and give them the tools to follow up. As with other thinkers and concepts I work with, my goal is to provide initial exposure, pique some interest, so that when they encounter him again, hopefully in college, they'll take a closer look. The Bloodhound Approach plays well to Becker's interdisciplinary theory and allows exploration from different angles, thus allowing the same student to see different aspects of Becker in different classes. What follows is a brief synopsis of the angle of approach in each class.

World Religions: The approach here is anthropological with an examination of the human need for culture in the absence of instinct, the nature of myth as meaning making and the evolution of hunting gathering mythology into agricultural mythology. Peter Berger and Joseph Campbell provide most of the underpinning. Becker is presented at the end of the first quarter in the context of explaining religious violence and the Western metaphor of God as King/Lord. Later, Becker is resurrected in the context of the Buddhist concept of anicca or impermanence and also the transpersonal psychology of Ken Wilber.

Psychology: Social psychology is the broad setting for studying Becker on violence. From this starting point we backtrack into a more psychoanalytic approach focused on Jung's concept of The Shadow. Students, through a series of exercises, attempt to identify elements of their personal shadow and the connection is made between personal violence and social violence. Sam Keen's Faces of the Enemy (book and film) is a great resource here. The testing methodology of the Terror Management Team is also explored.

Philosophy: Kierkegaard is the focus with the students reading The Psychoanalyst Kierkegaard from The Denial Of Death. The interface between philosophy/theology and psychology is emphasized . Short vignettes from the film The Examined Life, specifically the sections with Cornel West, Avital Ronell and Simon Critchley, work very well here.

Christian Lifestyle- The chapter on Suffering and Loss provides an opportunity to bring Becker into the Catholic teaching on death similar to the way the work of Kubler-Ross has been used for years. In this area, the existential humanism of Erich Fromm in The Art of Loving works very well, complementing Becker. In my experience, if Becker is too 'heady' for students, they can still get to some of the same content through Fromm.

Resources : Books- Meeting The Shadow

Faces Of the Enemy

Ken Wilber Reader

Films- Flight From Death

Faces Of The Enemy

The Examined Life

A Working List Of Suggestions For Presenting Becker To Teens

- **Know yourself and your audience. What are your needs and what are theirs?**
- **What is their 'vital lie' and how might they respond if it is challenged?**
- **What support/resistance will you encounter from your educational institution? What are you willing to risk?**
- **Consider presenting Becker in outdoor settings like parks and cemeteries**
- **Consider presenting Becker in a seasonal context, Spring and Fall in particular.**
- **finish** early, leave time for processing.
- **Rather than presenting Becker in his entirety, create bloodhounds. Let them pick up the scent and follow their own trail.**
- **Emphasize their potential for doing good. Leave them with hope and empowerment. give them somewhere to go.**
- **Follow up, follow up, follow up. Keep yourself available**

Presenting Heroism In A Generational Context: Historians Neil Howe and Bill Strauss (The Fourth Turning) have developed a powerful theory of generations that posits four types of generations that have followed in the same pattern in the West since The War Of The Roses. The sequence is Hero, Artist, Prophet and Nomad. The four types also develop in conjunction with 80 year cycles punctuated by a crisis. We are on the cusp of the 80 year crisis as a new Hero Generation (today's Millenials) takes the stage. The last Hero Generation was the GI Generation. I make it a point to encourage students to think in terms of their generational identity and to undertake the great work necessary. It seems that finding the right balance between personal and collective heroism is key to healthy living. The two forms check and balance perhaps?

Cemetery Exercises

Bill Bornschein, Louisville, Ky.

1. Afternoon discussion of Flight From Death following a morning viewing. I explicitly recommend to them that they don't discuss the film during lunch. Let them sit with it.
2. Finding a Story - In a historic cemetery, have students search for memorable stories of the deceased.
3. Creating A Story – Have students imagine the fictional life a person whose headstone tells only the core facts. I wonder who they were
4. Creating Your Own Memorial – What would the design be? What would it say?
5. Write a letter to a deceased relative or friend.
6. Incense Walk - Silent walk with a stick of incense. Tibetan tradition.
7. Back to back field trips to a historic and a indigent cemetery. Particularly effective for discussing social death and the banality of evil. Most of the above exercises work in both environments
8. Starting a Joseph of Arimathea Society – Students act as pall bearers and witnesses for indigent burials.
9. Working Within A Tradition- Our school cemetery for the deceased Xaverian Brothers affords an opportunity to address the heroic and the impact that the Brothers have had. The five core values of the Xaverian Brothers (trust, simplicity, humility, zeal , and compassion) can be processed through a visit.

The Heroism Project – Provide five students with disposable cameras. Have them take pictures around school of what they consider the essence of the school. Analyze the pictures with classes. What is shown, omitted, unexpected. In our particular case, observe the tension between what the culture defines as heroic (making it) vs. how the religious culture defines the heroic 9 making a difference. This could be adapted to a work environment as well.