

Claymont Society for Continuous Education

How to Remain Human in this Time of Crisis

A Twelve-Week Residential Course of Study

June 5 to August 29, 2027

Based on the practical teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff and J. G. Bennett

Prospectus



How to Remain Human in this Time of Crisis

Imagine waking before breakfast to work with your attention — not in meditation alone, but through exercises designed to bring your mental, emotional and physical bodies into relationship with one another. Then joining others to cook and clean up together before heading out to spend the morning repairing a fence, planting, harvesting, or caring for the land, while at the same time trying to maintain some specific inner awareness. Lunch together. An afternoon class in movement and dance, working simultaneously with body, mind and heart. Dinner. An evening talk or reading. Each day following a broadly similar pattern, but giving new opportunities to learn: including how to maintain attention, inner presence, practical skills and community living.

This is the shape of a twelve-week residential course offered by the Claymont Society for Continuous Education. It is not a retreat from life. It is a more demanding version of it — one that asks participants to show up fully, physically and inwardly, every day, alongside a community of people from different countries and traditions who share a common wish: to learn how to live differently.



The course is offered in response to the growing pressures we are all facing, as this century develops into perhaps the most crucial period in human history. Not only are our actions threatening the climate and the balance of Nature, but our very humanity is being questioned with the development of artificial intelligence and advanced robotics. This in turn is exacerbating the influence of social media in diminishing people's confidence in their own judgement, and their sense of self. The result is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to perceive the reality and veracity of information with which we are bombarded every day or, to put it simply, to think for ourselves.

How can we come to a sense of confidence in our own identity as human beings, when we are being told that a combination of AI and robotics will very soon make most people's working life irrelevant?

Constant exposure to social media and rapid-fire online messaging is reducing our ability to maintain, or even direct, our attention. It has also become a commonplace that social media are replacing personal interactions with online encounters, leaving people — especially younger ones — with a sense of isolation and even depression. What can be done to help all of us maintain our equilibrium in the face of these challenges, and how can we learn to trust our judgement in a world where 'influencer' has achieved the status of profession?

The course of study being offered by the Claymont Society for Continuous Education is one in which participants will live in community while developing effective methods — through inner exercises, meditation, work with attention and learning practical skills together — which can help us to understand and know for ourselves what it is to be human.

A primary aim of the course is to help participants gain confidence in their ability to see for themselves what is a right action in any situation. They will have the opportunity to experience and understand the interrelationship between mind, feelings and body, and their own will. Working with practical tasks, while also working to maintain attention and a sense of presence, helps to establish a practice that can be taken into our everyday life.

The course draws on the idea that human experience itself transforms energy, and that in order to contribute positively to the world, we must first work to change ourselves. The kind of attention we bring to our work, our relationships, and our inner lives determines the quality of what we contribute.



The Course Will Include

- Living in a communal setting, with shared responsibility for domestic tasks, including cooking, for which there will be specific training.
- Working to understand and develop the relationship between our emotional, mental and physical natures, and our own inner vision.
- Continuing work in developing — or rediscovering — our own power of attention, and using this to observe and monitor how we relate to other people, how we do things, and how we react in different situations.
- Learning sustainable practices to grow and process food.
- Learning how to work cooperatively and positively with others on a range of projects.
- Practical work to maintain the buildings and gardens of the course center.
- Learning specific practical skills, such as those required to build a tiny house, working together with instruction and supervision from a skilled foreman.
- Studying ideas — and evaluating them through our own experience — relating to the higher aspects of human nature, and the ability to see from one's own perception what is right and required in a given situation.
- Movement and dance, developed by G. I. Gurdjieff, that involve working simultaneously with the body, mind and feelings, and gives specific opportunities to observe how these different aspects of our experiences interact with each other.
- Meditation, and inner exercises that can be used both as a morning preparation, and as a source of renewal during the day.
- Work with practical means of conflict resolution.
- Projects of service to the wider local community.
- Choir singing (with no requirement of previous experience).

Facilitators

The course will be facilitated by a variety of specialists — for example in carpentry, cooking and music — and by people with long experience of working with the practices and ideas of the experiential philosophers and teachers, G. I. Gurdjieff and J. G. Bennett. The emphasis will be on practice, and the study of ideas will be accompanied by opportunities to evaluate them for ourselves, through our own individual and shared experience.

The Setting

The course will be held at the Claymont Society in West Virginia, a retreat center in the Shenandoah Valley, located on 350 acres of forest, farm land and meadow.

Who Should Apply

The course requires no particular prior qualifications, apart from a realization that we people need to have — and hold on to — a sense of our own human identity, and of our responsibility towards the environment and each other, in the face of influences that are actively and even aggressively trying to weaken them.

Cost of Course

The course will run from June 5th to August 29th, 2027.

The cost will be \$3,000. Some financial aid may be available.

How to Apply

For further details, or to request an enrollment form, please contact remaininghuman37@gmail.com.

Course Coordinators: George Bennett & Amy Silver

More information about Claymont and JG Bennett is available at claymontsociety.org and jgbennett.org.



About the Claymont Society for Continuous Education

The British philosopher and scientist John G. Bennett was a primary student of G. I. Gurdjieff's and a major proponent, author and teacher of the Fourth Way. In the 1970's he launched a series of ten-month residential courses on the Gurdjieff Work in Sherborne, England. A major purpose of these courses was to prepare people to meet the challenges arising from the coming crises that humanity would face in the years ahead.

Mr. Bennett chose the term 'continuous education' to emphasize the notion that essential learning is important in all stages of life, and should not cease with one's formal education.

In 1974, shortly before he died, Bennett purchased a large tract of land and founded the Claymont Society for Continuous Education near Charles Town, West Virginia. Residential courses continued at the Claymont site from 1975 to 1987 under the direction of Pierre Elliot, who himself had worked with Gurdjieff and Bennett. Claymont has been a Fourth Way Center ever since.