CLAYMONT SOCIETY FOR CONTINUOUS EDUCATION

2027 PROSPECTUS

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

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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?

HOW TO REMAIN HUMAN · CONTINUED

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.

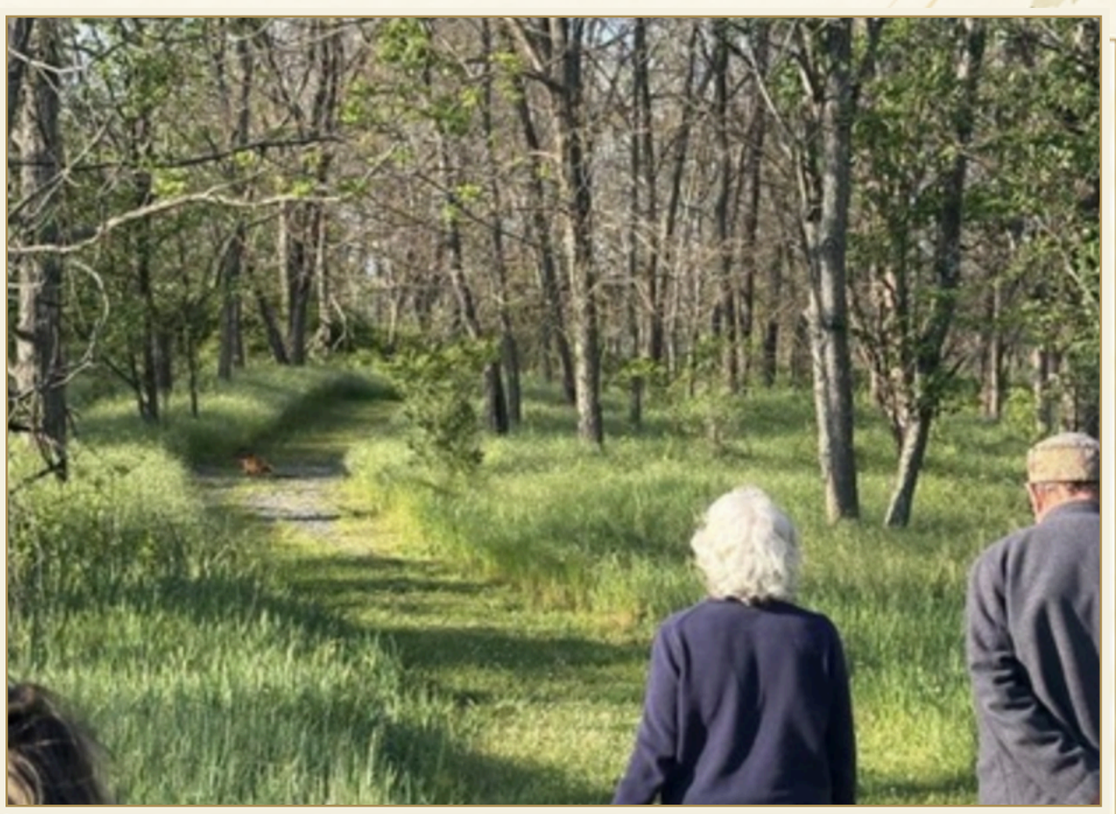
A primary aim of the course is to help participants gain confidence in their ability to see for themselves what is a right action in any situation. They will have the opportunity to experience and understand the interrelationship between mind, feelings and body, and their own will. Working with practical 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 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.

Practical work in community



A walk through the Claymont grounds

Background to the Course

This Course of Study in 2027 didn't come out of the blue. It's part of a long tradition of introductory courses dating back to **1971**, when the world situation was challenging, particularly in the United States, with the Vietnam War still raging, and the Kent State shootings still in many people's minds.

In the fall of that year, the philosopher and spiritual teacher J. G. Bennett began a series of five residential courses in England, each lasting ten months. These were for a hundred students at a time, many of whom came from the USA. Bennett's courses were partly a response to the world situation at the time, but they were also designed to offer something useful to the many people — mainly younger — who were searching for a different way of living.

The courses were based on the ideas and methods of G. I. Gurdjieff, and Bennett's own experience and research into a variety of spiritual traditions, including Sufism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism. The courses were intended as a way to give people the means to develop their own inner life, and inner resilience, so they could respond constructively to the world around them, and be a positive influence that might be of service to the wider community.

The Claymont Society for Continuous Education was initially set up by Bennett in **1974** to continue such courses in the United States, and to make experiments in community living. Claymont offered ten-month, and later four-month, courses for a number of years.

Since then Claymont has served as a retreat and conference center, for a wide variety of organizations and spiritual groups — often with similar aims to Claymont itself.

In light of the current world situation, Claymont is again offering courses with a structure and intention on the same lines as the courses that went before. Following two successful "hybrid" events from **2023**, partly in person but mainly online, we have now decided to hold an extended residential course, to give wider opportunities for practical experience. All the facilitators have themselves attended such programs, and have long experience with running study groups and courses in the past.

The Course Will Include

Inner Work

- 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.
- 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.
- Meditation, and inner exercises that can be used both as a morning preparation, and as a source of renewal during the day.

Practical Skills

- Living in a communal setting, with shared responsibility for domestic tasks, including cooking, for which there will be specific training.
- Learning sustainable practices to grow and process food.
- 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.

Community Life

- Learning how to work cooperatively and positively with others on a range of projects.
- Work with practical means of conflict resolution.
- Projects of service to the wider local community.

Movement & Arts

- 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.
- 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.

George Bennett

Course Coordinator

George Bennett attended one of J. G. Bennett's year-long courses in 1973, and went on to a varied career as an international truck driver in Europe, a journalist, and later as a teacher at an elementary school in Massachusetts inspired by the teachings of Gurdjieff and Bennett. He has facilitated numerous seminars and courses in Europe and the USA, based on his ongoing work with the methods and practices he learned from Bennett. He wishes to share them with others because they have worked for him. He has five children and six grandchildren who live in the United States, England and Australia.

Amy Silver

Course Coordinator

Amy Silver attended a nine-month course at Claymont in 1982 and has lived and worked at Claymont since 1989, leading groups, teaching Movements, and running the seminar program. She serves as Executive Director of the Claymont Society for Continuous Education.

Leila Rassi

Resident

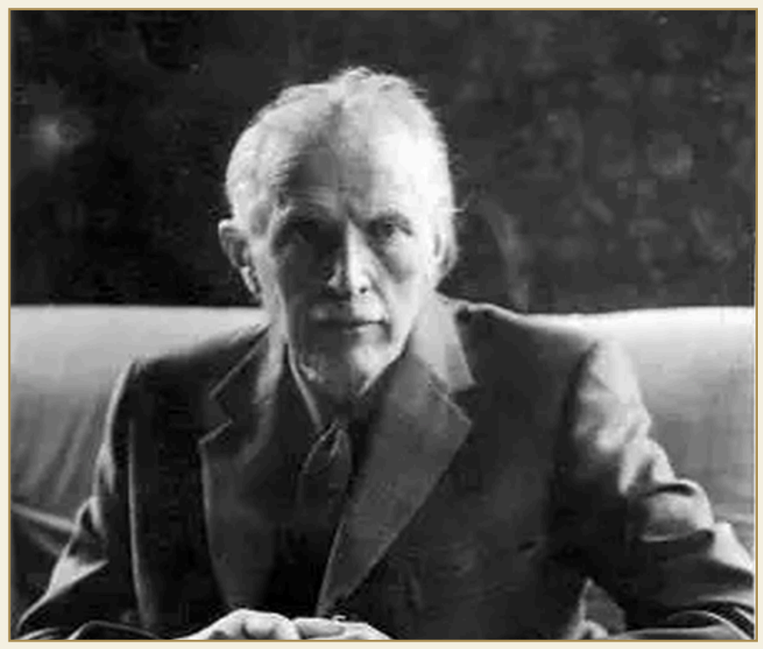
Leila Rassi attended the 2025 hybrid course and is Resident at Claymont. She works on the seminar program bringing groups from numerous traditions around the world to Claymont, and organizes Movements classes and community gatherings. Her design research and organizational leadership approach is rooted in the work of David Graeber, Edward Said, and adrienne maree brown, and focuses on human-centered systems design in health and technology. She is an energy healer, coach, and advisor.

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.



Who Should Apply

There are no prerequisites. No degree, no prior study, no background in these ideas.
We welcome participants from all over the world.

THIS COURSE IS FOR:

- People who have the sense that holding on to our own humanity matters
- Those who realize that they are responsible to the environment and to the people around them
- People who see that there are many forces undermining our capacity to respond to the needs of the moment
- Those who wish to change how they currently live their lives

It is a course for people who wish to prepare themselves for living constructively in an uncertain future.

Cost & Apply

COURSE DATES

June 5 to August 29, 2027

TOTAL COST

$3,000

The cost of the course includes board, lodging, tuition and materials. It amounts to $250 per week, or a total of $3,000. This can be paid in full, or in installments up to the beginning of the event. If you need financial aid, there is provision to request this on the application form. Some financial aid may be available.

How to Apply

To be considered for the 2027 cohort:

01 Submit the application form.

02 Complete an interview over Zoom with Claymont staff and alumni — a chance to learn more about each other and ask questions about the curriculum, logistics, and anything else that comes up.

03 The admissions committee reviews applications and interviews together, and sends an invitation to enroll.

Apply for the 2027 course

Scan the QR code with your phone camera, or open the application form below.

Open application form

https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1YgL2MIHS1xzFUj8NT_MOKrdcF2fKMAq27mWt2mI2ovM/viewform

You can also visit **remaininghuman.org** and select **Apply**.

For further details, or with any questions about the application, please contact **remaininghuman@claymont.org**.

Course Coordinators: George Bennett & Amy Silver
More information: claymontsociety.org and jgbennett.org.