**Philosophy of Modernity**

Philosophy

Summer 2024

Teacher: Joseph Minich (j.minich@davenantinstitute.org)

## Course Description

Interpreters of our civilization often invoke something called modernity. But just what is this phenomenon? What sets apart our moment from past moments? Alternatively, are the differences between past and present overblown? Asking and answering such questions inevitably involves a reading of human beings and of the story that they’re in. In this course, we will look at how several thinkers interpret man and his story relative to the question of modernity. Our goal will be to learn from and critique these thinkers in order that we might gesture toward a more complete understanding of our civilization, as well as our task within it. Among the items discussed will be the nature of secularism, the debate over whether we live in a “disenchanted” age, the relationship between modernity and communal trust, and the role played by non-intellectual factors (technology, etc) in all of the above.

## Course Format

The format of the course will be a roughly equivalent mix of lecture and guided discussion. It is assumed that students will come having read and engaged with the text selection for that day, and with thoughts (and critical questions) prepared to contribute. Classes will meet via [Zoom](https://zoom.us/) for two and a half hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Supplementary student interaction (both informal and formal) is highly encouraged, and I also aim to make myself available to you. [Google Classroom](https://classroom.google.com/) will be used for assignment submissions, grades, and announcements.

## Course Objectives:

This course aims (1) to introduce students to the substance and interpretation of modernity, (2) to dialogically engage, learn from, and help train students in the art of thinking well, and (3) to encourage students concerning the veracity of the Christian faith by means of an expanded (rather than calcified) imagination.

## Course Requirements::

*Class Participation (20%):* Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

*Reading (40%):* Students will be asked the percentage of reading they were able to accomplish.

*Writing (40%)*: 3,000-4,000 word research paper due the last day of class. **A proposal is due on the 5th class period.** More specific instructions will be given in class.

## Grading Scale

Include the following grading scale:

A 93–100%

A- 90–92.99%

B+ 87–89.99%

B 83–86.99%

B- 80–82.9%

C+ 77–79.99%

C 73–76.99%

C- 70–72.99%

D+ 67–69.99%

D 63–66.99%

D- 60–62.99%

F 59.99% or less

Or…

| **A** | **A-** | **B+** | **B** | **B-** | **C+** | **C** | **C-** | **D+** | **D** | **D-** | **F** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9 | 3 9 | 0 8 | 7 8 | 3 8 | 0 7 | 7 7 | 3 7 | 0 6 | 7 6 | 3 6 | 0 |

## Auditing

Auditors are not required to attend class live or submit assignments, but may participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or to another course. See the drop/switch policy on the Course Catalog or [M.Litt. FAQ](https://davenanthall.com/pastoral-track/). Students are entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them. Please email Julia Thiele at [j.thiele@davenantinstitute.org](mailto:j.thiele@davenantinstitute.org) with any changes, requests, or questions.

## **Course Texts**

Crawford, Matthew. "Algorithmic Governance and Political Legitimacy" in *American Affairs*

*Journal* (PDF).

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology" in *Basic Writings* (PDF).

Marx, Karl. "Estranged Labor," in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (PDF).

Minich, Joseph. *Bulwarks of Unbelief: Atheism and Divine Absence in a Secular Age*

(Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2023).

Sacasas, L.M. "The Analog City and the Digital City" in *The New Atlantis* (PDF).

Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

## Course Schedule

| **Week** | **Dates** | **Key Topic** | **Reading** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 7/1-6 | Introduction to Modernity | Minich, 1-66 |
| 2 | 7/8-13 | The Institutions of Modernity | Giddens, 1-78 |
| 3 | 7/15-20 | Modernity and Communal Trust | Giddens, 79-178 |
| 4 | 7/22-27 | What is Modern “Society?” | Taylor, 1-196 |
| 5 | 7/29-8/3 | Modernity, Labor, and Technology | Marx, 1-10; Heidegger, 311-41 |
| 6 | 8/5-10 | Modernity and Secularization | Minich, 67-180 |
| 7 | 8/12-17 | Late Modern Culture & the Internet | Sacasas, 1-24; Crawford, 1-20 |
| 8 | 8/19-24 | Modernity & the Future | Minich, 181-274 |