



Philosophy of Modernity

Summer 2025

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| Term Dates: | June 30 – August 23, 2025 |
| Department: | Philosophy |
| Difficulty: | Intermediate |
| Instructor: | Joseph Minich (j.minich@davenantinstitute.org) |
| Meeting Time: | Saturdays 12:00pm – 2:30pm (Eastern Time) |
| Zoom & Recordings: | Populi > My Courses tab > course name > Conferences (left menu). |
| Delivery: | Populi is used for all course content & assignment submissions. Discord is used for additional community interaction. |
| Auditors: | No attendance requirement, but participation is greatly encouraged. |

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.

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 Texts

- Crawford, Matthew. "The Rise of Antihumanism" in First Things (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 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 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.

Course Delivery

Classroom Resources

- [Populi](#) online classrooms are used for all course content, including assignments, grades, announcements, course records, and more.
- [Zoom](#) links & recordings are provided on the Populi course page Conferences tab. Class sessions are two hours weekly (2.5 in summer) for ten weeks (8 weeks in summer) and recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class).
- [Discord](#) may be used for additional student and instructor interaction as well as Davenant community discussions.

Attendance: Required for all students taking courses for credit. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop Policy in the Academic Catalog.

Auditors: No requirements, but may participate in all class activities.

Late work: Grade reduction of -5% per calendar day upon instructor discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the last due date without an approved extension.

Requirements

1. Participation (20%)

Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have two excused absences.

2. Reading (40%)

Students will be asked the percentage of reading they were able to accomplish.

3. Writing (40%)

3,000-4,000 word research paper due the last day of class. **A proposal is due on the 6th class meeting.** More specific instructions will be given in class.

Course Calendar

| Week | Dates | Topic | Reading |
|------|-------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 7/5 | Introduction to Modernity | Minich, 1-66 |
| 2 | 7/12 | The Institutions of Modernity | Giddens, 1-78 |
| 3 | 7/19 | Modernity and Communal Trust | Giddens, 79-178 |
| 4 | 7/26 | What is Modern "Society?" | Taylor, 1-196 |

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| 5 | 8/2 | Modernity, Labor, and Technology | Marx, 1-10; Heidegger, 311-41 |
| 6 | 8/9 | Modernity and Secularization | Minich, 67-180 |
| 7 | 8/16 | Late Modern Digital Culture | Sacasas, 1-24; Crawford, 1-16 |
| 8 | 8/23 | Modernity & the Future | Minich, 181-274 |

Institutional Policies

Drop Policy

The policies below apply to changes made after the registration deadline two weeks prior to term. To change registration before the term starts, please log on to Populi. To change registration after the term starts, email the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. See the Academic Calendar section for exact dates.

Drop Date (100% Refund): Before the term starts, students may drop with a 100% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Drop Date (50% Refund): Within the first two weeks of a term, students may drop the course with a 50% tuition refund. Registration fee is non-refundable. To drop, please email the registrar.

Withdrawal: Within weeks three and four of a term, students who drop a course will receive no refund and will earn a “W” on their transcript. Students cannot drop after this time will receive a letter grade. To drop, please email the registrar.

Attendance & Class Meeting Time Scheduling

Attendance is required for all students taking courses for credit. Most classes are scheduled for evenings or weekends, especially core classes. If the scheduled time does not work for a particular student, they may drop the course according to the Drop policy.

Extension Policy

All coursework and exams must be submitted no later than two weeks after the term end date. Before that time, homework extensions are at the discretion of the instructor. If a student requires more time, the student may submit a formal extension request by emailing the registrar at registrar@davenantinstitute.org. If approved, an extension will be granted to the student for a specific period of time agreed upon by the student and instructor. Extension requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will generally be granted for medical and family emergencies only.

Minimum Grade Requirement for Degree Students

Students enrolled in one of our degrees must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). If the students’ GPA falls below 3.0, Davenant will initiate conversation with the student to judge whether the student is ready for their program. If the student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on a course required for their degree, they must retake the course in order to graduate. Their new grade will replace their former grade. If a degree student earns a grade lower than a “C” (2.0) on an elective, they are not required to retake the course, but they may request to retake the course or a close equivalent as a substitute for their former grade.

Grading Scale

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 93 | 90 | 87 | 83 | 80 | 77 | 73 | 70 | 67 | 63 | 60 | |

Passing: ≥93:A • ≥90:A- • ≥87:B+ • ≥83:B • ≥80:B- • ≥77:C • ≥73:C

Retake if Core: 70–72:C- • ≥67:D+ • ≥63:D • ≥60:D- • <60:F.

For a complete list of policies, see the Academic Catalog at davenanthall.com