

Claymont Society for Continuous Education

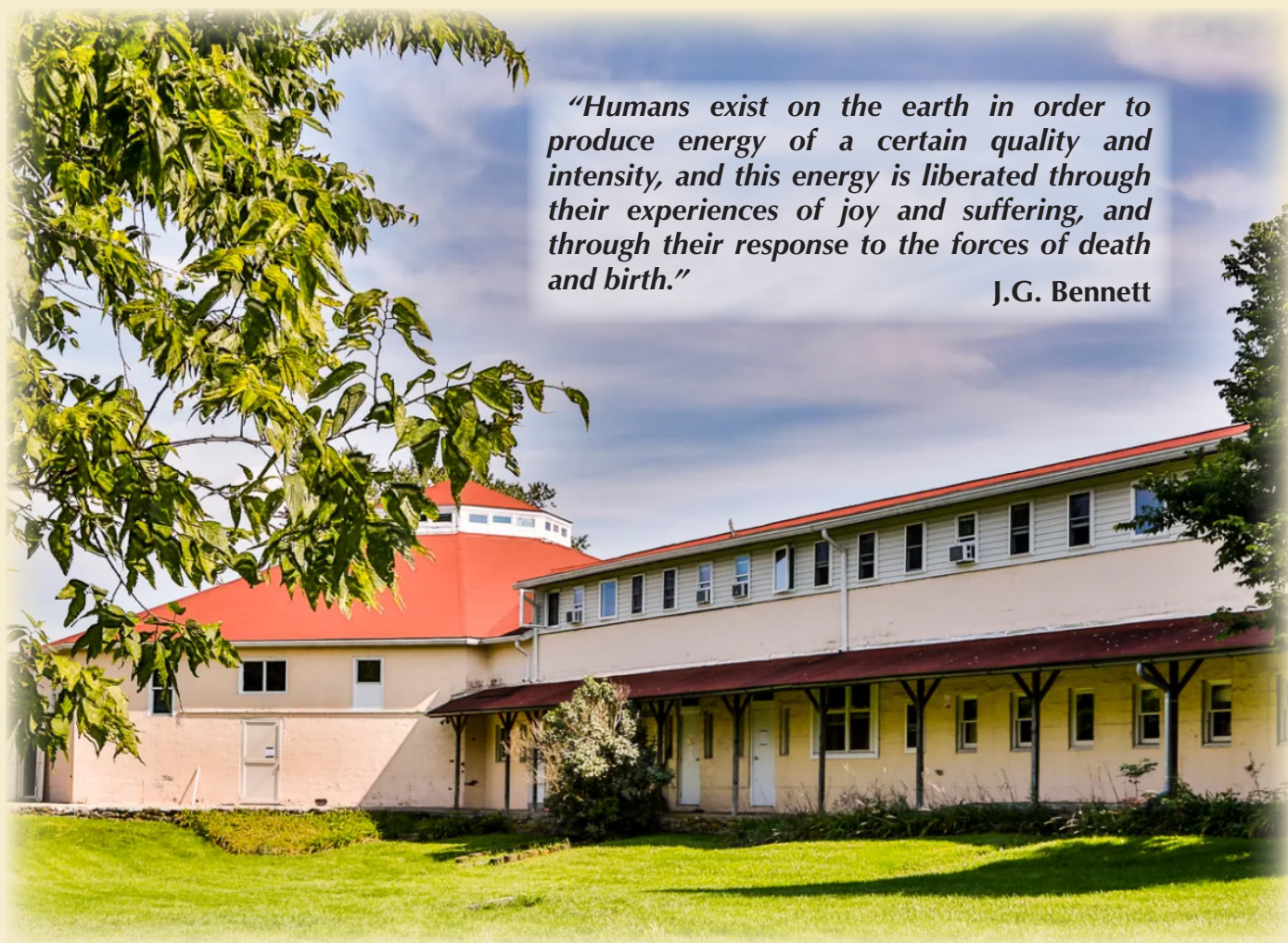
Fourth Way Course of Study

August 18 to November 12, 2023

Prospectus

“Humans exist on the earth in order to produce energy of a certain quality and intensity, and this energy is liberated through their experiences of joy and suffering, and through their response to the forces of death and birth.”

J.G. Bennett



Needs and Goals

Our global situation is in crisis on multiple levels and indeed, it appears that an old world is on the brink of dying. If something new is to emerge from all this, we must ask ourselves, what is our role? What is our responsibility? A new world—one built of mutual cooperation, living in balance with nature, compassion, self-sacrifice—needs nourishment from those who see a need and are willing to work. Developing our own perceptions and increasing our sensitivity to nature and our own latent potential can help us to prepare for more meaningful life in the midst of life's pressures and obstacles.

Our Role in Conscious and Creative Evolution

According to the teachings of Gurdjieff and his student J.G. Bennett, the underlying cause of the crisis is that humans have failed to understand and accept our obligations for the evolution and maintenance of life on earth. We are not here just to fulfill our own wants and needs nor to engage in purely personal and often destructive pursuits. Gurdjieff explained it this way, "There is in our life a very Great Common Purpose — in this lies the whole sense and predestination of our life".

We must ask ourselves how we can play a role in such a lofty endeavor— to ensure the conscious and creative evolution of life on earth. Here we can begin to see the highest spiritual values are essentially practical – that in becoming oneself, one learns how to serve life. Our personal evolution and the evolution of all life are linked. Towards this aim of service, people will need to cooperate with each other. Individuals can only do so much on their own. We need to join with other seekers who share these goals and to support each other in our efforts. Moreover,

we must also learn to cooperate with nature and with influences greater than humanity. This is the Great Work in which all of us who share a concern for the future can find a significant role. The need for the inner work of transformation remains the same. The context and methods have to meet the demands of the present.



A Three Month Course of Study

There have been many books written regarding Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way. These books present an overview of the basic ideas and concepts. However, spiritual transformation cannot be achieved through intellectual understanding alone. It is largely an experiential process that requires coordination of the intellect, the body and the emotions. Real change of being cannot happen by accident. It is the result

of sustained and purposeful work over time. We must work and evolve together. To share in this task, we must first of all learn what is needed, then practice with discipline and diligence, and finally pass on to others what we have made our own. This is the context in which we are offering a three month Course of study and practice in The Fourth Way tradition.

The Course

The Course will be conducted both in person and on-line. One of the benefits arising from the pandemic has been the demonstration that real teaching and transmission can happen in a virtual setting. The focus of the course will be on the teachings and practices of G. I Gurdjieff and J.G. Bennett and the teaching staff will largely consist of people who studied with Bennett at Sherborne or with Pierre Elliot at Claymont. The staff will be augmented by outside senior Fourth Way and other spiritual teachers.

The Fourth Way has been called the “way of transformation through daily life”. Following this axiom we will try to learn from and use the opportunities that emerge during our day to strengthen our practice and grow in our being. The ideas introduced to participants will support their own inner work, helping them to acquire useful techniques and benefits from those who have gained a deeper understanding of the way.

Course Content and Time frame

Over a three month period this Course will explore the basic concepts and practices of the Fourth Way, including:

Self-Observation

Three Centered Awareness

Body Sensation

Conscience

Gurdjieff’s Movements and Movement Exercises

Guided Meditations and Spiritual Exercises

The Enneagram - Law of Three and Law of Seven

Making contact with Higher Will

Gurdjieff’s Ray of Creation

JG Bennett’s System of Material, Vital, and Cosmic Energies

Function, Being, and Will

Reciprocal Maintenance and Feeding

The course will begin with an on-site retreat August 18-26 and conclude 10 weeks later with a second on-site gathering November 6-12. Activities during the interim period will be conducted online.

The residential events at Claymont will enable deeper collective work, teachings and exercises that require direct group work and contact.

The course will present a blend of personal and collective challenges. Progress often requires periods of intense practice as well as active participation in the ordinary activities of life.

The course is open to anyone who feels a need and wish to go deeper in their spiritual search and practice.

Format and Tentative Weekly Schedule

On-site program August 18-26

Weekly on-line group activities

Sunday: Guided exercise/theme introduction (recorded)
Mon-Fri Guided Exercises (some minimum attendance required)
One or two evening presentations on Fourth Way topics
Other activities during the week (meditations and presentations)
Friday: evening theme meeting
Saturday: Special evening meetings or guest speakers
Weekly Zoom movements class (week night)
2 or 3 half or full day on-line seminars

On-site retreat November 6-12

Time commitments:

Attend Sunday meeting (on-line)
Attend at least one early morning exercise (on-line) each week (preferably on Monday) and do the exercise each day on your own time
Attend other events synchronously (on-line) if possible or asynchronously if necessary (using a recording of the on-line event)
Attend occasional major presentations

The core staff will consist of long term members of the Claymont Community. Movements classes will be led by Deborah Longo and Joe Naft. There will also be separate special presentations (to be announced).

Cost of Course

Tuition is \$2,500. If you are able to donate more it will go to our Scholarship Fund. Please contact the Registrar if you need scholarship support. To reach the registrar please email 4thwaystudy@gmail.com
For updates please visit <https://society.claymont.org/4th-way-course-2023/>

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.