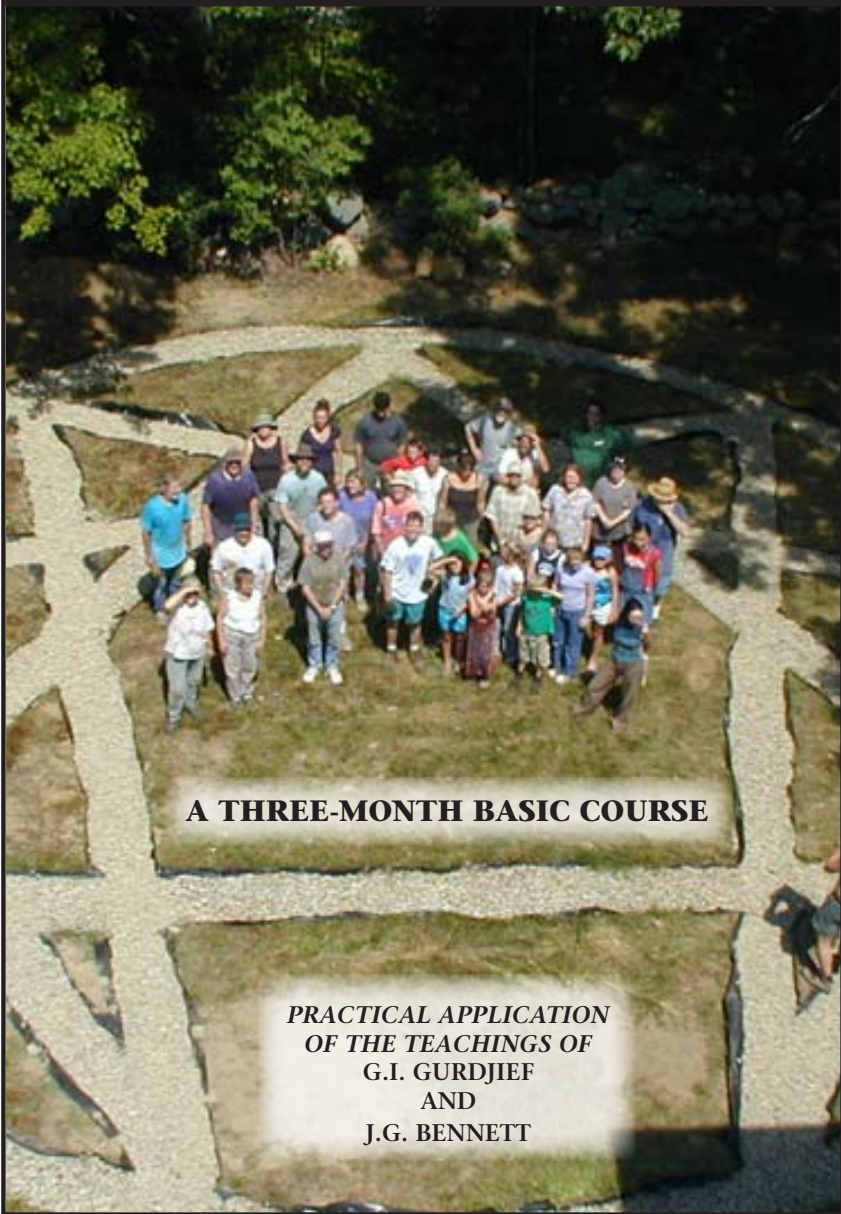


PROSPECTUS



A THREE-MONTH BASIC COURSE

*PRACTICAL APPLICATION
OF THE TEACHINGS OF
G.I. GURDJIEF
AND
J.G. BENNETT*

PROSPECTUS

We are pleased to announce a three-month course in the practical study of personal transformation, philosophy and human psychology. The focus will be on individual spiritual growth and how this can lead to an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life and service. Though the work of G.I. Gurdjieff and J.G. Bennett will provide the majority of practices and ideas presented during the program, the curriculum will include material from a variety of traditions.

The aim of the course is to provide conditions for work that will enable participants to experience the possibility of personal and spiritual development, and give them tools for their continuing work of transformation after the course is completed. Many suitable candidates for participation in this course will already have experience with this type of work, but eligibility will be determined by commitment and capacity. What is required is a flexible, tolerant and intelligent approach to the rigors of personal work on oneself. Previous participation in a like-minded group may be a help, but it is not essential.

The course will be held at a campus in Royalston, Massachusetts in the northeast of the United States. The campus, known as Camp Caravan, is owned by The Miller's River Educational Cooperative (MREC), a group committed to working with the ideas and methods of Gurdjieff and Bennett. MREC has generously made its property available for this event. Camp Caravan is ideally suited to providing the varied conditions necessary for an intensive retreat of this kind. It includes living quarters, classrooms, a dance space, meditation rooms and acres of forest and open space. Accommodations will normally be in dormitories, though provision can be made for couples and families.



CURRICULUM

The curriculum of the course is developed from the teachings and methods of GI Gurdjieff and JG Bennett. This is sometimes referred to as the Fourth Way. This path uses the teachings and practices from various traditions, but its particular emphasis is on the possibility of spiritual transformation using the activities of ordinary life. For this reason, the course will be concerned with observing and understanding the imbalance in oneself of the three functions of body, feeling and thought, and then acquiring techniques and knowledge in order to learn how to bring these three elements of human existence into a more coherent balance.



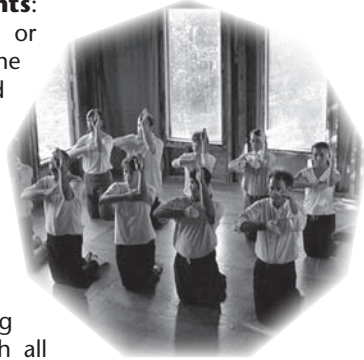
The course will include a wide range of activities, all designed to activate and attune the latent inner faculties within all of us, including the development of sensitivity, intuition, perception, foresight and creativity. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

- **Practical work:** Participants will, in rotation, take responsibility for practical tasks such as cooking and serving meals, care of children, care for the buildings and general domestic duties. There will be work in the garden, growing food for the course community, and other practical work, such as maintaining and renovating buildings. All these activities provide not just practical experience, and the opportunity to learn unfamiliar skills, but also act as opportunities for inner development.
- **Work on attention:** Attention is a key tool for all the work of the course. It is a faculty that can deepen our connection with all our activities, and can be developed and strengthened through the use of specific techniques

- **Inner exercises and practices:** The course will introduce participants to a series of inner exercises, of increasing depth and complexity. Some of these come directly from Gurdjieff, or were developed from his indications. Others were devised by J. G. Bennett. These exercises help us to experience finer energies and emotions that are not ordinarily perceptible.

- **Work with the Movements:**

Sacred dances or “Movements”, as they came to be known, were created and developed by Gurdjieff, sometimes from sources he discovered in his travels through central Asia and the Near and Middle East. The Movements are a unique method of training attention and working with all three centers – physical, emotional and mental. Many of them also communicate ideas and inner states through the language of gesture.



- **Psychology and cosmology:** Gurdjieff and Bennett developed a comprehensive way of understanding the world and the part that people can play in it. The course will give an opportunity for participants to study these cosmological and psychological ideas and relate them to their own experience.

- **Tasks aimed at strengthening**

our Connection to Will: Much of human activity is reactive and haphazard, and it is necessary to be able to make real decisions, that come from the will rather than from a temporary whim. The course will provide opportunities to develop the ability to make reliable decisions, both short and long-term, and know that they will be carried out.

- **Adopting unfamiliar roles:**

Taken as a whole, the course will provide many opportunities for working in unfamiliar roles and activities. This can be of immense benefit in opening our eyes to the way we do things and how we see ourselves.



Role-playing and theater are tried and tested techniques for effecting self-observation.

WHY NOW?

Why is a course being offered now? The simple answer is that the knowledge and understanding available at the course is needed now. The world as we see it is heading for a crisis. Whether this crisis comes in the next year, decade or century, human activity is accelerating unchecked, with predictably dire consequences for the earth, the biosphere and humanity itself. The only possible remedy is a change in people themselves. We can see that our own desires and perceived needs put stresses on the biosphere and on our social and personal arrangements, whether at the local, national or international level. And yet we can also see, if we look dispassionately at ourselves, that we are powerless to change our behavior or attitudes.

A new era is possible, but it cannot come about by accident. The defining characteristic of such a new era will be cooperation and acceptance. At one level this means a willingness on the part of people to work together for aims that are not the simple gratification of their desires. This means people will have to learn to accept one another. On another level, the new era requires us to understand our responsibilities for the ordering of the world, to see that our part in the natural world - which includes us - is one of stewardship and responsibility, and not one of exploitation.

What is needed is both a different vision of the purpose of human life, and the knowledge of how to bring about the necessary change in ourselves. Such knowledge is often regarded as esoteric, but if it is to effect a real change it must also be practical. The task of spiritual transformation requires commitment, and this commitment has to be strengthened and developed over a prolonged period. The course is designed to provide conditions that will foster such development.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Similar courses and programs of varying intensity and length have been offered in the past, both by J.G. Bennett himself, at his experimental school at Sherborne House in England in the 1970s, and at Claymont Court in West Virginia in the late 1970s and '80s. These courses were modeled, at least in part, on the work of Gurdjieff at his school near Fontainebleau-en-Avon in France, in the 1920s.

Gurdjieff arrived in the West from his native Armenia by way of Moscow, Tbilisi, and Istanbul. He brought a remarkable and revolutionary teaching, which immediately attracted a wide variety of seekers. Gurdjieff had spent his whole life searching for knowledge throughout Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, relentlessly pursuing an answer to his question: 'What is the sense and purpose of life, and in particular human life, on the Earth?'

While in Russia he gathered about himself members of the intelligentsia, including the formidable writer and teacher in his own right, P. D. Ouspensky and the already famous composer Thomas de Hartmann. The Bolshevik revolution forced Gurdjieff to leave Russia with a small group of students, and they eventually settled at Fontainebleau-en-Avon, outside Paris, in France. Here he started his school, under the title of "The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man". Conditions for 'work on oneself' were established, and many pupils were able to see for themselves the efficacy of the teaching. In 1924, however, Gurdjieff was involved in a nearly fatal automobile accident, which forced him to close the 'Prieure', as his institute was commonly known, and devote his time to writing and working with a small group of students in Paris.

The British scientist, mathematician and linguist J.G. Bennett met Gurdjieff in Constantinople (later Istanbul) in 1919. As a fluent Turkish speaker, Bennett was able to speak directly with Gurdjieff, and he spent a very intense and fruitful summer at Gurdjieff's institute in 1923. Following this experience, he dedicated his life to Gurdjieff's teaching and, later, to sharing his own understanding with others.

After his time at the Prieure, Bennett returned to England and worked with Ouspensky for many years. At the same time he pursued a colorful career that culminated in his position as director of Britain's first industrial research association, established by the coal industry. In 1946 Bennett set up a community at Coombe Springs, at Kingston, near London, that became a magnet for people wishing to learn and research principles and techniques for inner work. Then, in 1947, he re-established contact with Gurdjieff in Paris, and worked with him until Gurdjieff's death in October 1949. Bennett continued his work at Coombe Springs until 1966, when he gave away the property to the Sufi teacher Idries Shah. In 1971 he started an experimental teaching community at Sherborne in Gloucestershire, England, offering ten-month courses. When

Bennett died in 1974, courses continued for a further year and a half in England, and for over a decade at Claymont in West Virginia.

As well as ideas and techniques derived from Gurdjieff, Bennett presented his own synthesis from a wide range of spiritual traditions. These included exercises and insights drawn from Sufism, an Indonesian teaching known as Subud and the teachings of a Himalayan saint, the Shivapuri Baba. The Turkish teacher Hasan Shushud greatly influenced Bennett in later years. Bennett's experimental courses at Sherborne admitted almost 100 students each year. For many of the participants this was a life-changing experience, the value of which has continued for the past 35 years.

COURSE STAFF

Instructors and staff guiding the course include individuals of long experience who have devoted their lives to the path of transformation and have made the exercises and spiritual practices offered on the course an integral part of their own lives. The majority of the staff studied with J.G. Bennett or one of his pupils. They have worked with the ideas and practices of Gurdjieff and Bennett for many years; long enough to be convinced of their efficacy. Their approach will not be academic but practical. The motivation for offering this course rests in the fact that staff members have seen the value of this work for themselves.

Staff members who have already committed themselves to the course include:

- **George Bennett:** George was brought up at J.G. Bennett's research community at Coombe Springs, in England, and studied with Bennett on the third basic course at Sherborne, in England. In the past twenty years he has participated in and helped to organize seminars in Europe and the USA. In his professional life he has worked as an international truck driver, journalist and publisher, before training as a teacher. He currently teaches at the elementary school founded by Miller's River Educational Cooperative in Royalston, Massachusetts.
- **George Cole:** George was part of a work group in North Carolina in the 1970s and then attended a basic course at Claymont in West Virginia. It was his good fortune to study with Irmis Popoff and Pierre Elliot among others. He currently lives on Bainbridge Island in Washington

State and is a member of the Arcadia Foundation, a group dedicated to exploring and working with principles set forth by Gurdjieff and Bennett. Professionally he is a project manager for a development company and has a background in various trades.

- **Walter Goodwin:** Walter Goodwin attended the fourth course at Sherborne, and Clark University where he received a degree in philosophy and psychology. He has studied and taught the Gurdjieff movements for the past three decades in Europe and North America. Walter lives in the Pacific Northwest where he works in groups, coaches children and runs a small business. He is a past board member of the Claymont Society and present board member of the Arcadia Foundation.
- **Lene Nielsen:** Lene currently lives in her native Copenhagen. She attended a basic course at Claymont in West Virginia, and has participated in work gatherings every year since then. She studied with Elizabeth Bennett and Pierre Elliot. Lene worked as an actress and theater director for fifteen years and for five years was a member of a theater group based on principles of the 'Work'. Lene has recently qualified as a landscape architect.
- **Carolyn Shaffer:** Carolyn Shaffer studied with JG Bennett on the third basic course at Sheborne. She has led groups and been involved in running seminars for many years. Carolyn has lived in India, where she opened a school for indigent children in the city of Varanasi.
- **Elan Sicroff:** Elan trained as a pianist at the Juilliard School in New York. He studied with J.G. Bennett on the second course at Sherborne, and remained on the staff for the third and fourth course. Elan worked with Mme Olga de Hartmann, wife of the composer who collaborated with Gurdjieff from 1975 to '79. Elan has toured the USA, Canada and Europe playing the 'Gurdjieff' music as well as the classical compositions of Thomas de Hartmann. Elan was a resident for six years at Claymont, West Virginia, as a member of the model society envisioned by Bennett. Elan works as a piano teacher and is a member of the Miller's River Educational Co-operative in Massachusetts.

Additionally, the course itself is supported inwardly and outwardly by a worldwide community of friends and experts with long experience, some of whom will be able to contribute to the course.

PARTICIPATION

The course will run from September 8th until December 15th, 2006

Candidates wishing to gain from this experience will need to put themselves under the conditions that are offered, as the aim is to awaken one's own conscience as a guide to one's own path. A discriminating attitude is needed, so that everything participants learn is measured against their own experience, and becomes part of their own understanding.

As well as a commitment to seeing the course through, some key rules will apply. The use of illegal drugs is absolutely prohibited and students must commit to remaining on the property except during scheduled days off. Applicants will need to be in good health, both physically and mentally.

The fees for tuition and residence are set at \$3000, for accommodation in small dormitories. Applications for family rooms, or for couples, will be considered.

HOW TO APPLY

Potential participants should complete an application form and return it to the Course Registrar. The Registrar can also be contacted for further information or application forms. If considered suitable, applicants will be offered interviews, either by course staff or by their colleagues and associates around the world.

Contact the Course Registrar at:

76 Richmond Road , Warwick , MA 01378

USA

Email: basiccourse@gis.net

Phone: 978 544 5225

