

# **Male and Female in Modernity**

Davenant Hall Biblical Theology

Trinity Term 2024

Teacher: Dr Alastair Roberts ([a.roberts@davenantinstitute.org](mailto:a.roberts@davenantinstitute.org))

## **Course Description**

Christian teaching regarding the sexes has grown in prominence as a source of controversy both within and without the church over the past century. Yet these debates often devolve into hurling around proof-texts, straining the gnats of first-century context, and contesting abstract ideas about rights, progress, and equality. What all sides often fail to consider is how much the material changes of modernity have affected this whole topic.

This course will consider ways that the transformed material realities of the modern world and its associated ideas have altered both how we understand ourselves as male and female, as well as how sexual relations are practised and conceptualized more broadly. By examining the greater felt incompatibility between scriptural teaching and social reality and practice, considering topical issues and live debates, and engaging with important texts, it will propose ways in which we can thoughtfully and faithfully understand, adhere to, and communicate Christian teaching in the twenty-first century.

## **Course Format**

The format of the course will blend short lectures and guided discussion of the assigned texts. Students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selections for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute. On a typical week, students will be expected to read between 50 and 100 pages for the class, which will include selected passages of Scripture and secondary literature.

Classes will meet on Zoom for two hours weekly and will be recorded for absent students (not for dissemination outside of class). Additional student participation and instructor interaction will take place on our Discord channel, which students will be given access to before the course. Google Classroom will be used for assignment submissions, grades, and announcements.

## **Course Objectives:**

Objectives for this course include: (1) to equip students to perceive dimensions of the technological, social, economic, and ideological order of modernity that shape our understanding and living out of our existence as male and female; (2) to equip students to appreciate ways in which current debates are impacted and generated by these realities; (3) to resource students to speak more insightfully, creatively, and persuasively into contemporary gender discourses.

## **Requirements:**

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

*Oral examination (30%):* At the conclusion of the course, I will schedule a 15-30-minute Zoom session to assess you on your mastery of the relevant concepts and material from the course.

*Writing (50%):* Students will submit a weekly written piece, of at least 500 words in length, with a brief synopsis and critical reflection on one of the readings set for the week.

## **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	

## **Auditing**

Auditors are not required to attend class live or turn in assignments, but can participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If you had hoped to take the course for credit, but the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or switch to another course which works for you. 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

*Course texts (you will need to obtain copies of these)*

Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*

Ivan Illich, *Gender*

Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*

*Excerpts of all of the following texts will be provided digitally*

Allan Carlson, *From Cottage to Work Station*

Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*

Christopher Lasch, *Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage, and Feminism*

## Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Key Topic	Primary Source Reading
1		Man and Women in a New Economic and Technological Order	Ivan Illich, <i>Gender</i> , chapters 1-3
2		Marriage and Divorce	Christopher Lasch, <i>Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage, and Feminism</i> , chapters 4 & 5
3		The Family	Allan Carlson, <i>From Cottage to Work Station</i> , chapters 1, 3, & 7
4		The Body in Modernity	Oliver O'Donovan, <i>Begotten or Made?</i> , chapters 1-3
5		Reproduction and Abortion	Oliver O'Donovan, <i>Begotten or Made?</i> , chapters 4 & 5
6		Gender Identity and Its Formation	Carl Trueman, <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self</i> , chapters 6 & 7

7		Sex and Dating	Carl Trueman, <i>The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self</i> , chapters 8-10
8		Society and Its Institutions	Ivan Illich, <i>Gender</i> , chapters 4-6
9		Politics and the Public Square	Saba Mahmood, <i>Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject</i> , chapters 1 & 5
10		Man and Woman, the Church, and Modernity	Christopher R Schlect, 'Cultural Change and Ecclesiastical Office' ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ9ticGPql0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ9ticGPql0</a> )