

- Taught by Caleb Owens, graduate student in theology at Boston College
- Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. CST
- Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25
- Visit pmaurin.org for more information.

Antimodern Progress: Contradiction, or Christian Alternative?

If capitalism is the religion of modernity, as Eugene McCarraher has argued, then progress might be understood as its creed. Suggest to the average American that the world is worse off today than it was 600 years ago and expect a firm, even furious defense of modern medicine, airplanes, and grocery stores. In response, skeptics of modernity often struggle to articulate an alternative account of progress, finding themselves uncomfortably allied with mainstream politics or stranded among reactionaries. One must, it seems, side with progress or decline, either uncritically embracing modernity or wholesale rejecting it—an untenable dilemma for those of us unable to ignore the contradictions of modernity, yet also unwilling to quit the internet.

In this four-session course, we will investigate the meaning and promise of the idea of “antimodern progress,” primarily through a study of the 20th-century Catholic philosopher and friend of the Catholic Worker Movement, Jacques Maritain.

Given Maritain’s paradoxical role as both a lifelong critic of modernity and leading influence in the Catholic Church’s embrace of modernity, he provides an apt starting place for a critical reevaluation of progress. Through lecture, discussion, and short readings of primary materials, we will work to understand, evaluate, and elaborate upon Maritain’s antimodern account of historical progress with the aim of identifying and proposing concrete expressions of antimodern progress in the world today.

