

Idols of Modernity

The Human Desire for Meaning
and the Migration of the Holy

August 3-7 2026

In his recent book *The Uses of Idolatry* (OUP 2024), William T. Cavanaugh argues that worship has not disappeared from our supposedly "secular" world, but has merely changed its target. Instead of God, created things and structures are worshipped. Cavanaugh examines modern forms of idolatry, such as nationalism and consumer culture, and shows how people become dominated by their own creations.

The book draws on insights from history, theology, philosophy, political science, sociology and cultural studies, describing Western modernity not as a world that has become secular, but as one that has learned to (mis)understand itself as such. By questioning the religious/secular dichotomy, Cavanaugh's study recognizes idolatry as more than merely a "religious" phenomenon and views the critique of idolatry as a genuinely interdisciplinary project with the aim of revealing how and why we sacrifice ourselves and others to gods of our own design.

The foxs Summer School 2026 offers an opportunity to discuss these provocative theses and approaches with the author and to explore their consequences for our view of ourselves, our culture and our academic work.

Speakers:

Prof. Dr. William T. Cavanaugh (Chicago)
lic. theol. Francesco Papagni (Zürich)
Prof. Dr. Johannes Corrodi (Zürich)

The Summer School is designed for graduate and doctoral students in all disciplines, willing to engage in in-depth study of philosophical, intellectual- historical, and theological developments.

Location: Benedictine Monastery Mariastein,
Klosterpl. 1, 4115 Mariastein, Switzerland

Duration: Monday August 3, 2pm – Friday
August 7 2026, 2pm

Costs: 700 sFr. Includes course fees, accommodation, and all meals. Students who cannot cover their expenses through their home institution and are unable to afford the cost may apply for a reduced fee.

Please direct your applications to:
summerschool2026@foxs.ch

The number of participants is limited to 15.

Please enclose a short CV and letter of motivation.