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Course: The Bahá'í Faith and the Arts

Course Description:

In this course on the Bahá'í Faith and the Arts, we will explore the purpose of the arts from a Bahá'í perspective; how art and religion have harmonized and conflicted in the past and how the Bahá'í dispensation will be similar to and different from the past; the artist as a person with an important gift to share with the world; how the Bahá'í writings encourage artists; reframing imagination, creativity, and risk-taking within a Bahá'í context and prioritizing the positive aspects of creativity to enhance our lives, our communities, the Bahá'í Faith, and the future; and developing a serviceable language about the arts that enables us to integrate the arts more fully into Feasts, Holy Days, core activities, commemorations, and so on and to include more people in art making and appreciation of the arts.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain what the Bahá'í writings say about the arts.
2. Explain various aspects of the arts in relation to religion in general and the Bahá'í Faith specifically
3. Engage in dialogue about questions and topics raised in each unit.
4. Inspire ourselves and others to develop creative capacity and talent.
5. Express a new awareness that might foster the transformation of ourselves and the world through use of the arts.

Faculty: [Anne Perry](#), [Sandra Hutchison](#), [Marjan Nirou Saniee](#)

Course Expectations and Guidelines:

This course is divided into one or two-week sessions beginning with an orientation (Unit 1) and ending with a review and summary (Unit 7). All units include readings, activities, and an online discussion among workshop participants. The course has been structured so that it requires an estimated 5 or 6 hours per week of reading and discussion.

During Unit 1, you will draft a personal learning plan (PLP) to define the goals you have set for yourself by participating in this course. If you are taking the course for credit, one of your goals would naturally be meeting the course expectations for discussions, activities, and a final project. If you are not taking the course for credit, you need to set goals that will help you develop your personal capabilities and will be achievable in and around your other daily tasks.

During Unit 7, you will refer again to your PLP and complete a self-assessment reviewing the extent to which you met the goals you set for yourself. In addition, learners seeking credit from their university will complete their final project (15-20 page research paper or equivalent) and submit it to the lead faculty.

Your instructor will periodically review your progress in the course and be available to discuss things with you. The following guidelines will help you gain maximum benefit from your participation in the course and will contribute toward a rich and rewarding experience through dialogue with others. We recommend that you consider them when drafting your PLP.

- Complete the readings and activities for each unit. Afterwards, your first posting in the discussion area should make reference to the readings and activities in such a way that your instructor can tell you read the material and engaged in the activities.
- Post at least 2 message replies in the discussion area for each unit/session. Each post should contain substantive comments (i.e., a comment like “oh, that’s interesting” is NOT substantive).
- Choose at least 2 different days each session when you will participate in the discussions. We suggest posting at least once within the first few days of the session, with your second post at least two days before the next session begins. By contributing more than one post on different days, you will help the group develop rich ongoing discussions.
- If you post on time (i.e., within the time period of each unit on the course schedule), others will be able to read and respond to your post.
- Keep a course journal to help you track your ideas as you work on your final project.

In order to be eligible to receive a **Certificate of Completion**, you must participate in a majority of the discussions, as well as complete a majority of available unit activities and the end-of-course self-assessment. Learners taking the course for credit must also complete a final project. Your first discussion posts within each unit should address the discussion topic and demonstrate understanding of the course/unit concepts. Additional postings should provide substantive comments to other participants that are thoughtful, relevant, and help to extend the discussion.

Course Schedule:

Unit 1	Introduction to the Course and to Moodle	March 10-14, 2015
In this unit, you will review the unit topics and dates, learn how to use Moodle (our course management system), set up your user profile, begin developing a personal learning plan, and learn how to post and reply in the discussion forums. Learners seeking university credit through their own university or an external agency will be required to design a personal learning plan to meet external standards, including active and ongoing participation in the course discussion forums, readings, assigned activities, and completion of a 15 to 20 page research paper or a project of equivalent complexity.		
Unit 2	The Purpose of the Arts from a Bahá'í Perspective	March 15-21
How are the arts seen/presented in the Bahá'í writings? How is this different from other religious traditions? Readings include excerpts for Ludwig Tuman's <i>Mirror of the Divine</i> .		
Unit 3	The Relationship of Art and Religion	March 22-28
Art and religion have had a dynamic and intertwined relationship historically, influencing and enhancing each other, and sometimes conflicting. We will explore this in a general sense and discuss how and why the Bahá'í dispensation will be similar and difference from the past.		
Unit 4	The Artist as a Person with Specialized Work to Offer to the World	March 29-April 4
Are artists unique among humans? What makes an artist? Is being an artist a gift or a curse? Why are some people drawn to favor creativity and others not? Does our Faith encourage us to be artists?		
Unit 5	Re-framing Imagination, Creativity, Risk-taking Within a Bahá'í Context	April 5-11
How can we prioritize the positive aspects of creativity to enhance our lives, our communities, the Bahá'í Faith, and the future? Readings by Roger White, Kerry Hart, Eno Marconi, Inder Manocha, Rob Weinberg, Glen Eyford and Ludwig Tuman.		
Unit 6	Developing a Serviceable Language to Speak About the Arts	April 12-18
Whether creating art for general purposes or art/art activities for core activities, holy days, special commemorations, and the like, how can we integrate the arts more fully and include more people in art making and being influenced by the arts? A look at several notable Bahá'í artists Mishkín-Qalam, Russell Garcia, Juliet Thompson, Mark Tobey, Bernard Leach, Robert Hayden, Marion Jack, Roger White, Dizzy		

Gillespie and Kevin Locke.		
Unit 7	Summary and Integration	April 19-21
<p>In this unit, we discuss the course in general and the relationship of the various topics to each other and review the learning goals set during Unit 1. Those seeking credit will complete their final projects (15-20 page research paper or equivalent) and submit them to the lead faculty.</p>		
Course Project		
<p>Your Personal Learning Plan (PLP) helps you focus on what you want to learn in the course and on what course project you might be interested in creating. The final project is a course requirement only if you wish to receive credit from an external agency. You will have an opportunity to share your final project with course participants.</p> <p>The following is a short list of possible ideas for final projects. Learners may propose other ideas as well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a research/reflection paper (approximately 15-20 pages including references) on a topic related to the course. • Create an artistic project related to the course with a written explanation about it. • Alternative final project formats can be discussed with course instructor. 		
Certificate of Completion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners not taking the course for credit will receive a certificate of completion from the Wilmette Institute after course expectations were met. • For learners taking the course for credit, the Wilmette Institute will send a transcript to the learner and the external accrediting institution within a month of completion of the course. 		