



**Director:** Dr. Robert H. Stockman

**Email:** [WI@usbnc.org](mailto:WI@usbnc.org)

[www.WilmetteInstitute.org](http://www.WilmetteInstitute.org)

**Voice:** (877)-WILMETTE

## **Bahá'í Spirituality: Pathway to Mental Clarity, Inner Calm, Awareness of God, and Physical Health**

**Faculty:** [Christopher White](#)

### **Course Description:**

How does Bahá'í spirituality help us develop mental clarity, spiritual awareness, inner calm, and even physical health? In Bahá'í Spirituality we will begin with a discussion of prayer and meditation in comparative perspective. Then we will consider the distinctive elements of Bahá'í prayer and meditation; the artistry of bodily postures and divine verses blended in the obligatory prayers; the history and significance of the Greatest Name and its use in prayers and meditations; the spiritual and physiological benefits of fasting; and how fasting might promote self-control and restraint. We will read and discuss insights from recent studies in medicine, psychology, and other scholarly fields to aid us in understanding how Bahá'í spirituality can lead to profound experiences of peace, encouragement, and joy.

### **Learning Objectives: To understand, explain, and share about,**

- Prayer, fasting, and other spiritual practices in the Bahá'í Faith;
- Comparative knowledge of spiritual practices in other religions; and
- The vital link between spirituality and embodiment of practices.
- To gain an appreciation for Bahá'í spiritual practices and a desire to follow them
- To demonstrate your understanding through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

### **Course Expectations and Guidelines:**

This course is divided into one week (or less) sessions beginning with an orientation (Unit 1) and ending with a review and summary (Unit 8). 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 8, 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:

<b>Unit 1</b>	<b>Introduction to the Course and to Moodle</b>	<b>April 15-18, 2015</b>
In this unit, you will review the unit topics and dates, learn how to use Moodle (our course delivery 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.		
<b>Unit 2</b>	<b>Prayer and Meditation in World Religions</b>	<b>April 19-25</b>
This unit examines prayer and meditation in different world religions.		
<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>Varieties of Prayers and Meditations in the Bahá'í Life</b>	<b>April 26-May 2</b>
An exploration of the distinctive elements of Bahá'í prayer and meditation and a discussion together of our experiences with prayer practices.		
<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>Why Do We Use Bodily Postures and Gestures in the Obligatory Prayers?</b>	<b>May 3-9</b>
We will look specifically at the artistry of bodily postures and divine verses blended in the obligatory prayers. We will talk about how inner, emotional elements of spirituality are linked to outer, embodied practices. Unit 5 What is the Significance of		
<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>What is the Significance of the Greatest Name?</b>	<b>May 10-16</b>
The history and significance of the Greatest Name and its use in our prayers and meditations.		
<b>Unit 6</b>	<b>Why do we Repeat the Greatest Name? Why do We Repeat other Prayers?</b>	<b>May 17-23</b>
What does it mean to repeat the Greatest Name 95 times a day? Recent studies on prayer suggest ways that we can develop new insights and a sense of peace through repetitive acts such as repetitive prayer, and in this unit we will discuss how these studies help us think about this worship practice in new ways.		
<b>Unit 7</b>	<b>What are the Spiritual and Physiological Benefits of</b>	<b>May 24-30</b>

	<b>Fasting?</b>	
<p>What are the spiritual and even physiological benefits of fasting? We will bring in recent scientific studies of fasting and talk about how fasting, like obligatory prayers, uses both body and mind in a regular practice that leads to spiritual awakening, patience, detachment and bodily health. Unit 8 Can Fasting</p>		
<b>Unit 8</b>	<b>Can Fasting Help Solve Problems Related to Waste, Pollution and our Consumer Culture?</b>	<b>May 31-June 6</b>
<p>Does fasting promote self-control and restraint? We will read recent scholarship on fasting and self-restraint in world religions and think together about the importance of this forgotten virtue in a modern world of mass consumption and waste.</p>		
<b>Unit 9</b>	<b>Integration and Application of Learning</b>	<b>June 7-9</b>
<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>		
<b>Course Project</b>		
<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"> <li>• Submit a research/reflection paper (approximately 15-20 pages including references) on a topic related to the course.</li> <li>• Create an artistic project related to the course with a written explanation about it.</li> <li>• Alternative final project formats can be discussed with course instructor.</li> </ul>		
<b>Certificate of Completion</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners not taking the course for credit will receive a certificate of completion from the Wilmette Institute after course expectations were met.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		