



# The Lamp

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE WILMETTE INSTITUTE

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## Basic Sequence of Distance-Learning Courses Launched

The Wilmette Institute announces **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith**, a new sequence of four distance-learning courses. Its purpose is to provide basic information on the Bahá'í Faith, its writings, and theology. **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith** was established after the Wilmette Institute Board reviewed the extensive guidance from the Universal House of Justice on the institute process.

The four courses in **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith** are as follows:

- The Bahá'í Faith: A Comprehensive Overview — designed especially for new believers and inquirers (starts June 2003)
- How to Study the Bahá'í Writings (starts December 2003)
- Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey (starts June 2004)
- Bahá'í Theology: The Concepts of God, Revelation, Manifestation, Humanity, Creation, Afterlife, and Covenant (starts December 2004)

The four basics courses will be offered on a repeating two-year cycle, with one course offered every six months—June and December.

The first course in **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith** sequence is The Bahá'í Faith: A Comprehensive Introduction, which will be taught June 1-August 31, 2003.

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## Plans for Local Study Groups Systematized and Clarified

Creating a local study group using a Wilmette Institute distance-learning course is now easier than ever, thanks to the Board's consultation about making the process more user-friendly. Here are five easy steps to get you started:

1. Pick a distance-learning course (DLC) from current offerings (see the up-to-date list on page 4).
2. Form a study group of as few as two members or as many as—well, that is up to you.
3. Register for the DLC on the Wilmette Institute's website. The first person in the group to register must give the group a name and select a group password.
4. Pay a flat group rate of \$300.00. You can send a check or money order made out to the Wilmette Institute, or you can pay by credit card at the Wilmette Institute website.
5. Designate a "group correspondent" to receive one set of course materials and to make copies for the group members. Any group member wishing an additional set of course materials can purchase them from Eileen Hanson <ehanson@usbnc.org> for \$20.00.

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## Basic Sequence . . . Continued from page 1

The second course, How to Study the Bahá'í Writings, will begin December 15, 2003.

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey and Bahá'í Theology: Concepts of God, Revelation, Manifestation, Creation, Humanity, Afterlife, and Covenant will be offered in June and December 2004, respectively.

The **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith** program may help to ease the transition of some distance-learning students into the Wilmette Institute's **Beyond the Basics** distance-learning courses on specific topics related to the Bahá'í Faith. However, students are not required to take courses from the basics sequence before enrolling in the specialized courses in **Beyond the Basics**.

The **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith** sequence of courses may also provide a bridge to the Wilmette Institute's **Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization** program. SFGC is a four-year program including home study plus two weeks of intensive study in Wilmette every summer. SFGC also includes intensive classroom work creating a spiritual community, and integrating the House of Worship into the learning process.

The basic sequence of courses is ideal for local study groups (see article on page 1). After completing the basic sequence, study groups can then turn to specialized topics of study on their own, to other courses available through their regional training institute, or to the some forty distance-learning courses in the **Beyond the Basics** program.

The Universal House of Justice, in a January 9, 2001, letter has noted

*The value of a sequence of courses, each one following the other in a logical pattern and each one building on the achievements of the previous ones, has become abundantly clear. Various models are emerging that provide insight into how such sequences can be used to create training programs. In one example the main sequence, much like the trunk of a tree, supports courses branching out from it, each branch dedicated to some specific area of training. In another, several tracks of courses, each with its own focus, run parallel.*

The three programs offered by the Wilmette Institute — **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith**, **Beyond the Basics**, and **Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization** — are all ideal for sequenced learning. We hope to see you soon in the Wilmette Institute's newest offering: **Basics of the Bahá'í Faith**. ▲

## Spiritual Foundations Summer Session Will Take a Timely Look at Global Issues

Plans for the 2003 Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization residential session are looking more exciting by the day. The theme of this year's program — "The Bahá'í Perspective on Global Issues: Carrying Forward an Ever-Advancing Civilization" — is particularly appropriate at this difficult time in world affairs.

The program begins on May 1 with assigned readings to prepare students for the residential session.

The residential session, which runs from August 2 through August 16, will devote part of the first week to a review of *The Promise of World Peace* and a look at 5,000 years of wars and efforts to establish a peaceful world. Ms. Camille Henderson, a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, will teach the unit.

Also packed into the first week are classes by Dr. Richard Thomas, professor in the History and Urban Affairs Program at Michigan State University and a member of the Regional Council for the Central States. He will be talking about the oneness of humanity with special emphasis on gender and racial equality.

In addition, students will consider the Bahá'í International Community's statements about global prosperity and the economic, political, social, spiritual, and environmental prerequisites for worldwide prosperity.

During the second week Dr. Jaleh Dashti-Gibson (a faculty member at the University of Notre Dame) will review world order from the point of view of political science.

Short units will explore miscellaneous aspects of carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization: education, an international auxiliary language, the environment, and agriculture. Dr. Jena Khododad, an associate professor at Rush Medical College in Chicago and a member of the Regional Council for the Central States, will lead discussion on science and religion.

The Bahá'í history unit will reinforce the theme of global civilization. It will focus on the period from 1957 to the present when the Faith achieved international standing and

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## Study Groups . . . Continued from page 1

After the group is registered, it will meet twice monthly to discuss the assigned readings and study questions. This is in addition to each member's individual work. At least once a month the groups will be able to discuss assignments with its assigned mentor.

In addition, the group correspondent will keep the mentor informed about the group's progress.

Any member of the group who completes the distance-learning course will receive a certificate of completion.

The International Teaching Center, in a February 2000 letter, described local study circles as including a small group of Bahá'ís who meet regularly "in their own locality with a tutor who helps them through a selected sequence of courses." Wilmette Institute distance-learning courses provide existing local study circles the option of supplementing other courses they are pursuing.

The structured distance-learning courses, the regular study, the regular meetings, and the availability of a mentor via telephone and e-mail—all meet the requirements set out for study circles.

Watch for future reports on Wilmette Institute study groups. Three have formed recently and are finding the distance-learning courses excellent for sequenced study of the Bahá'í Faith. ▲

## Wilmette Institute Course Leads to Newspaper Publicity for the Faith

On January 1, 2003, the Burnaby, B.C. newspaper *Burnaby Now* printed a brief article on page 13 titled "Bahá'ís Host Century of Light Gala Friday." The article reminded everyone that the "Century of Light Gala" would be "an evening of fellowship, entertainment, food, and a look at the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a Bahá'í perspective." Patricia Haley-Tsui, a student in the Institute's **Century of Light** course, sent in the article with a note that she had conducted the workshop on the "Century of Light" and that twenty Bahá'ís and twelve non-Bahá'ís had attended. *Burnaby Now* also printed a tiny reminder, "Light up the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Bahá'ís; see calendar page 13" on the top of page 11. This may be the first time a Wilmette Institute course has helped to generate newspaper headlines! ▲

## Global Issues . . . Continued from page 2

began to pursue social and economic development projects.

Two workshops will assist students in taking the cornucopia of knowledge back to their communities. One will focus on teaching the Faith; the other, on how to develop local classes and courses on aspects of the Faith.

In addition to some eighty hours of class work, students will take a field trip to a place of worship of another religion, and pray daily at the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. They will also build their own model Bahá'í community while living together in a National-Louis University dormitory, a few minutes' walk from the Mother Temple of the West.

The overall goal of the Spiritual Foundation program is to foster the institute process by raising up teachers trained in a sequence of courses that examine, in a comprehensive manner, many aspects of the Bahá'í Faith. Such students will then be able to share their knowledge in local deepenings and study classes. They may also become tutors appointed by regional training institutes for local study circles. This summer's residential session workshop on how to develop curricular materials for local courses will be particularly valuable for anyone wishing to become a tutor.

As the world teeters on the brink of yet another war, students can look forward to learning a great deal about global issues that will make it easier to share the Bahá'í perspective on the changes going on in the world. ▲

## Student Comments

I am Kabyatara Panigrahi from Indore, India. I am teaching Economics as a Post-Graduate teacher, in a Central School at Indore. I feel so happy and good to join you all again through this Institute study. I have already completed 'Tablets' and 'Secret of Divine Civilization'. Time and again I am allured to this kind of study for several reasons.

One of the reasons is to gain from this unique kind of group study where we can ask questions, share our joy of understanding the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and motivate ourselves for the blessed service of wise and effective teaching of the Cause. The second important benefit for me is to use the imports of these teachings and to share them in the classroom with the young students.

Looking forward to another great session.

Thanking you all and wishing very well to all of you,  
Yours in His service, Kabyatara

# Wilmette Institute Distance-Learning Course Schedule

Jan. 15–Apr. 31: **Living the Spiritual Life**  
 Feb. 15–May 15: **The Bahá'í Faith, 1892-1921: Inauguration of Institutions, Teaching Plans and Development Projects**  
 Mar. 15–June 15, 2003: **Bahá'í Administration and Community Development**  
 Apr. 15–July 15: **Preparing for Interfaith Dialogue: A Study of the Message "To the World's Religious Leaders"**  
 June 1–Sept. 30: **The Bahá'í Faith: A Comprehensive Introduction**  
 July 15–Oct. 15: **The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi**  
 Sept. 1–Nov. 30: **The Bahá'í Faith and the Establishment of World Peace**  
 Oct. 1–Dec. 31: **The Right of God: Huqúqu'lláh**

Nov. 1–Jan. 31: **Hidden Words, Seven Valleys, Four Valleys, Gems of Mysteries, and Other Early Mystic Works by Bahá'u'lláh**  
 Dec. 15–Mar. 15: **How to Study the Bahá'í Writings**

All distance-learning courses include e-mail listservers for students and faculty, regular conference calls, systematic lesson plans, and a wide variety of learning projects to help students apply their learning in their local communities. All courses are available at the "introductory" level for those unsure they can commit to taking a university-level course, the "intermediate" level for those wishing to go into more depth, and the "advanced" (graduate) level for those wishing to do extensive research or writing.

More information on all of them can be found on the Web at <http://www.wilmetteinstitute.org>. ▲

## The Lamp



THE LAMP is the newsletter of the Wilmette Institute, established in January 1995 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to offer academic, professional, and service-oriented courses related to the Bahá'í Faith. In addition to offering university-level courses on Bahá'í topics, the Wilmette Institute fosters Bahá'í scholarship; develops new, innovative curricular materials; creates high-quality courses on teaching the Faith; and refines Bahá'í concepts of pedagogy.

It aims to produce teachers and administrators of the Bahá'í Faith of great capacity, capable of sharing and demonstrating Bahá'í truths in their lives and speech.

For more information about the Bahá'í Faith, the Wilmette Institute, or its courses, contact:

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