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PTH390: Bahá'í Theology

Dates: December 7, 2017 – February 14, 2018
Faculty: Mikhail Sergeev

Course Description:

This course on Bahá'í theology (the study of God and creation and of the relationship between them) provides an in-depth study of many of the fundamental spiritual teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. The units are organized around a series of questions we all ask from time to time:

- Who am I (what is human nature)?
- How do I know (epistemology, or the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge)?
- Whom can I trust to guide me (the nature of Manifestations of God and their revelations)?
- What is the structure of reality (ontology, or the study of the nature and relations of being)?
- Where do I come from (creation and evolution)?
- Where are we going (an ever-advancing species and our eternal souls)?
- What is expected of us (our religious lives)?
- What is freedom and what are the consequences (free will, reward, punishment)?
- What difference does it make (theology in action)?

This course is ideal for anyone who wants to delve more deeply into the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

Learning Objectives:

- To become familiar with major theological issues, common approaches to them, and the Bahá'í principles relevant to them.
- To acquire the ability to explain and discuss the Bahá'í approaches to theological questions in meaningful conversations and in situations of public discourse.
- To acquire a new appreciation and understanding of the Bahá'í revelation.
- To demonstrate the above in discussion postings to each unit, reflection papers, and a final course project.

Course Expectations:

This course is divided into one-week (or less) sessions beginning with an orientation unit and ending with a unit for review and summary. All units include readings, activities, and an online discussion among course participants. The course has been structured so that it typically 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 will naturally be meeting the course expectations for discussions, activities, and a final project. If you are not taking the course for credit, we suggest you set goals that will help you develop your personal capabilities and will be achievable in and around your other daily tasks.

During the final review unit, 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 (10-20 page research paper or equivalent) and submit it to the lead faculty.

Course Guidelines:

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.

Course Project:

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.

The following is a short list of possible ideas for final projects. Learners may propose other ideas as well:

- Submit a research/reflection paper (about 10-20 pages including references) on a course-related topic.
- 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:

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. 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.

Learners taking the course for credit must also complete a final project. The Wilmette Institute will send a transcript to the learner and the external accrediting institution within a month of completion of the course.

Learners who are not taking the course for credit will receive a certificate of completion from the Wilmette Institute after course expectations are met.

Preparatory Tasks:

1. Watch the Director's Welcome Video, read about the Technology Requirements of the course, the Technical Assistance we can provide, and our ability to Accommodate Disabilities.
2. Update your personal profile (see instructions in section 4 of the Course Software Tutorial).
3. Tour the course website to get better acquainted with the elements of a course:
 - a. Open and glance through a few of the Unit pages, including the readings and discussion forum.
 - b. Look at the items in the sidebars (columns), especially Local Study Groups and Resources.
 - c. Take a look at the other elements on the course site, especially the instructions in the Reflection and Application Unit, as this will influence your Personal Learning Plan.
4. Read through the Frequently Asked Questions about our Moodle course management system.

Course Schedule:

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| Unit 1 | Introduction | Dec 7-10, 2017 |
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In this unit, you will review the unit topics and dates, learn how to use Moodle (our course management system),

