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## STX331: Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey

**Dates:**  June 15, 2018 – August 2, 2018
**Faculty:** Robert Stockman, William Collins, Brent Poirier

### Course Description:

In this course we will undertake a systematic introduction to twenty of Bahá'u'lláh's most important works, ranging from The Hidden Words to Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. This only a small sample of His total corpus of over 6 million words, recorded in some 18,000 letters, poems, prayers, mystic works, polemics, exegetical treatises, and theological essays.

We will study themes in the works, topics that Bahá'u'lláh progressively revealed during His ministry, and related tablets wherever possible. The course will appeal to learners seeking basic information about the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, new Bahá'ís wishing more context on Bahá'u'lláh's most important works, and veteran Bahá'ís seeking deeper understanding of the ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation.

We will not read the twenty works in their entirety but, rather, will sample passages from the selection of most important works revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

### Learning Objectives:

1. To be able to explain to others the order of revelation and the titles of the major works of Bahá'u'lláh and a brief summary of their content
2. To be able to explain to others the major themes of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation and their development over time
3. To be able to explain to others the Islamic, Shi'i, Shaykhi, Iranian, and Bábí context of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation
4. To develop skills in reading, summarizing, and explaining Bahá'í scriptural texts
5. To deepen appreciation for the beauty and profundity of Bahá'u'lláh's writings
6. To demonstrate your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

### 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 8 or 10 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 (15-20 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:**

| Unit 1 | Introduction | June 15-18, 2018 |
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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 10 to 20 page research paper or a project of equivalent complexity.

Ramez Rowhani has prepared a chart showing major events in Bahá'u'lláh's life in perspective with the revelation of specific books and tablets that you should review.

Who was Bahá'u'lláh and why are we studying his revelation? Choose one or more of the short biographies provided in this unit to read, and place a comment in the forums. Be aware that some of these biographical pages are written and published by believers, and some of them are not.

| Unit 2 | Early Mystic Writings | June 19-25 |
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This unit reviews Bahá'u'lláh's earliest writings, in particular the Seven Valleys and Hidden Words. It considers the themes they focus on and, equally important, the ones they foreshadow.

**Learning Objectives**

1. To be able to **explain** to others the basic content of Bahá'u'lláh's early writings, the circumstances of their revelation, and their relationship to Islamic and Babi texts.
2. To **demonstrate** your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 3 | The Kitáb-i-Íqán and the Tablet of the Holy Mariner | June 26-July 02 |
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This unit reviews the **Kitáb-i-Íqán**, Bahá'u'lláh's second most important work, a book that defines many basic principles about God and revelation and continues discussion of the spiritual journey of the individual. It also includes reading and discussion of the **Tablet of the Holy Mariner,** a mystical work about Bahá'u'lláh's sufferings**.**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To be able to **explain** to others the basic content of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, the circumstances of its revelation, and its relationship to Islamic and Bábí texts.
2. To **demonstrate** your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 4 | The Súriy-i-Haykal and Tablets to the Kings | July 03-09 |
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"One of the most momentous of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is the Súriy-i-Haykal or Súratu'l-Haykal (Súrih of the Temple). Bahá'u'lláh ordered the Súrih and the Tablets to the Kings to be copied in the form of a pentacle symbolizing the human temple. The Tablets were copied in the following order: the Súriy-i-Haykal itself, then the Tablet to Pope Pius IX, the Tablet to Napoleon III, the Tablet to Czar Alexander II, the Tablet to Queen Victoria and the Tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh.*" (*Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By)*

**Learning Objectives**

1. To be able to **explain** to others the basic content of the Suriy-i-Haykal and Bahá'u'lláh's tablets to the kings, the circumstances of their revelation, and their relationship to Islamic and Babi texts and other writings by Bahá'u'lláh.

2. To **demonstrate** your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 5 | The Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Fire Tablet | July 10-16 |
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This unit reviews the **Kitáb-i-Aqdas**, Bahá'u'lláh's "Most Holy Book," the book summarizing His laws and laying out many of the fundamentals of His religion.  Also included are the text and commentaries for the **Fire Tablet**, an intensely personal and mystical work**.**

**Learning Objectives**

1. To be able to explain to others the basic content of Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i-Aqdas , the circumstances of its revelation, and its relationship to Islamic and Bábí texts (particularly the Bayan) and other writings by Bahá'u'lláh.
2. To demonstrate your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 6 | Tablets Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas | July 17-23 |
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This unit reviews the tablets of **Ishráqát, Bishárát, Tajallíyát, Hikmat**, and the **Lawh-i-Kármil** (Tablet of Carmel), short but very important works by Bahá'u'lláh revealed between 1873 and His passing in 1892. All five of the tablets are provided, plus descriptions and commentaries about them and supplemental (optional) materials.

**Learning Objectives**

1. To be able to **explain** to others the basic content of some of Bahá'u'lláh's later writings, the circumstances of their revelation, and their relationship to Islamic and Babi texts and the other writings by Bahá'u'lláh.
2. To **demonstrate** your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 7 | The Late `Akka Period | July 24-30 |
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This unit reviews **Epistle to the Son of the Wolf**, the **Kitáb-i-'Ahd**, and the three **Obligatory Prayers**. We will read part or all of them, review background information, and discuss them on the Forums.

**Learning Objectives**

1. To be able to **explain** to others the basic content of three of Bahá'u'lláh's last writings, the circumstances of their revelation, and their relationship to Islamic and Babi texts and the other writings of Bahá'u'lláh.
2. To **demonstrate** your understandings and skills through postings in the course, devotionals, special research or artistic projects, or presentations to your friends.

| Unit 7 | Reflection and Application of Learning | July 31-August 02 |
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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 through their local university will complete their final projects (10-20 page research paper or equivalent) over the next month and submit them to the lead faculty.