



Course: Climate Change 2019

Course Description:

Many people are already suffering from the devastating impacts of climate change such as increased water scarcity, more severe storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, famines, malnutrition, diseases, and dislocation from their homes. The threat of climate change to our children and grandchildren is immense and its long term consequences are unprecedented in human history.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It has far-reaching implications for our efforts to relieve poverty, to establish and maintain peace, and for the economy. It is no exaggeration to say that the future of human civilization is at risk because we are destroying the foundation for life on this planet.

This short course doesn't claim to be comprehensive. The issue of climate change is vast and complex and its ethical implications are profound. Our purpose here is to lay a foundation upon which you will be able to build your own knowledge, and to help make your actions a service to humankind and a contribution to saving the foundation for life on this planet.

The course is based on the scientific findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), especially on its 5th Assessment Report of 2014, and on more recent scientific research. The course includes the teachings and wisdom of many religions. While the course is intended for an interfaith group, scriptures were selected for their relevance in the context of climate change. Some sections feature more Bahá'í sources. Units 3, 4, and 6 focus more on scientific and practical matters. Units 2, 5, and 8 cover predominantly spiritual and ethical matters. Unit 7 includes both dimensions.

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To explain the basic science of climate change and how it affects people today and in the future
- To relate the spiritual and ethical teachings of the world's religions, especially of the Bahá'í Faith, to the climate crisis
- To demonstrate your new understanding by incorporating climate-friendly actions and habits into your personal life-style to make it consistent with your spiritual and ethical values
- To explain spiritual solutions to the climate crisis to your family, friends, and religious community
- To plan how you can incorporate your new understanding in practical service

Faculty: [Christine Muller](#) is the lead faculty for this course. Other faculty members are [Arthur Dahl](#) and [Laurent Mesbah](#).

Course Expectations and Guidelines:

This course is divided into weekly sessions beginning with an orientation (Unit 1) and ending with a review and summary (Unit 9). 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 9, 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 unit activities and the end-of-course learning 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	April, 1-4, 2019
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Learning Objectives

- To experiment with Moodle (the course management system) and to utilize that experience for the Unit 1 tasks.
- To build a foundation for your studies about climate change

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 **Nature and Humankind** **April 5-11**

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between humankind and nature
- To distinguish the roles of science and religion and to learn how to apply both disciplines to climate change
- To build a foundation of basic knowledge for the understanding of climate change and sustainability
- To discuss spiritual perspectives to our relationship with nature and with each other

Part 1 of Unit 2 begins with spiritual reflections about "Nature and Creation" and the "Interconnectedness in Nature". It also covers "Systems Thinking", "Photosynthesis", and "Sustainability", prerequisites to understanding climate change. Part 2 is all about "Science and Religion". It provides a brief introduction to the scientific method and discusses the roles of science and religion, their relationship, and their relevance for dealing with climate change.

Unit 3 **Science of Climate Change** **April 12-18**

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To develop a basic understanding of climate science
- To identify the drivers of global warming
- To explain to others why the Earth has been warming

This unit covers the basic scientific explanation of the causes of global warming, but does not claim to be comprehensive. The materials are written to be understood by everyone. They are fundamentally important for an understanding of climate change. Even if you already have some knowledge about climate science, the readings will help you get an overview of this complex phenomenon and to wrap your mind around the various aspects. If you like to go deeper into the science now or later on, there will be references to additional resources.

Unit 4 **Impacts of Climate Change** **April 19-25**

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To examine the different changes in climate caused by global warming
- To assess the effects of climate-change impacts on people, especially those who are most vulnerable
- To develop a deeper understanding of the scope of the threat of climate change for future generation
- To summarize and present the different impacts of climate change

People all over the world are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, however in different ways and to very different degrees. This unit will give you an oversight of the many ways climate change affects people and the Earth's natural systems. The videos will give climate change impacts a human face. The suggested activities will deepen your experience and some are of service to others.

Unit 5 **Spiritual and Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change** **April 26-May 2**

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To perceive the spiritual dimension of the climate crisis
- To identify and apply spiritual principles to the problem of climate change
- To assess the role of materialism and consumerism in every day life
- To create spiritual momentum for fundamental social change

When reading books about climate change written by scientists or journalists you will often encounter a desperate call for ethics, often in the final chapter. In various ways these authors deplore the absence of a coherent ethical framework. For science and technology can only inform us of facts or know how, but don't tell us what we should do and how we should approach our objective. It is the domain of religion to provide us with the moral guidelines of how to live. In this unit we will study spiritual and ethical principles that are directly applicable to the climate crisis. There are quotations about stewardship of the Earth from different religions, reflections on spirituality and materialism, and the importance of moderation. Ethical values are addressed such as various aspects of justice, eliminating the extremes of poverty and wealth, gender equality, the oneness of humanity, the need for a world federal system, decentralization and consultation, trustworthiness as an antidote to corruption, and education.

Unit 6 **Mitigating Climate Change** **May 3-9**

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To plan practical actions in your own life that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- To identify the different areas of action where society can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- To discuss the fundamental social change required for ensuring a safe future for our children
- To explain and apply responsible climate action in your community

By now you know that climate change is a very complex issue: There are many causes and a wide range of effects. Working towards a solution is equally complex. There is no simple prescription to solve the problem of global warming. However, it is quite possible to effectively mitigate global warming by taking a holistic approach. This means reducing emissions in all sectors of human activity. Topics discussed are energy generation and use, transportation, sustainable agriculture, reducing deforestation, and garbage as an obsolete concept. The course also discusses the numerous actions individuals can take to reduce their personal carbon footprint. Additional resources are included about mitigation of as well as adaptation to climate change.

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To find hope, confidence, and the will for action in the face of a disturbing reality
- To determine the reasons why faith communities have a responsibility to act on climate change
- To discuss climate change with others in a way that is both factual and hopeful by infusing it with spiritual principles
- To explain climate change in a non-partisan manner and to create unity with those who doubt climate science

This unit covers our human response to the climate crisis from various perspectives: psychological, ideological, social, and spiritual. We will sharpen our awareness of the scope and far-reaching consequences of global warming for present and future generations. The materials discuss the psychological challenge and various aspects of spiritual insights that can help us stay confident and focused on action. The second part of the unit covers climate science denial and how to effectively communicate about climate change.

Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity

- To explain and initiate/support environmentally responsible actions in the Baha'i or other religious community
- To extend the discourse about climate change to the wider community and to infuse it with spiritual and ethical principles
- To plan actions you will take as a result of learning more about climate change and to share them with the other course participants

Unit 8 starts with a reading that puts the climate crisis into a larger historical perspective from a Baha'i's point of view. It contains a webinar that presents how we can live on this planet sustainably even with a large population. Concluding materials address the path to economic well-being for all the people of the world and link climate change to sustainable development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Discussions in this unit include how we can incorporate the topics of human relationship with the Earth and climate change in our religious communities, for Baha'is especially in their devotional meetings, study classes, as well as children's and youth classes. Participants will also share their plans for actions and service in the course forum.