



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

**Director:** Dr. Robert H. Stockman  
**Email:** [rstockman@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:rstockman@wilmetteinstitute.org)

**Voice:** (877)-WILMETTE

## **STR 30: Sustainable Development and the Prosperity of Humankind**

**Dates:** September 5 – December 1, 2019

**Faculty:** Arthur Lyon Dahl, Christine Muller, Laurent Mesbah

### **Course Description**

Many people are troubled by the poverty and suffering of people at home and abroad, concerned about the future of their children, and worried about the destruction of the environment on which their lives depend. These are the challenges of sustainable development, requiring a fundamental transformation in the economic, social and environmental actions of our lives and society. This course will explore the profound implications for sustainability of our higher human purpose, as explained in the Bahá'í teachings, and the scientific and spiritual principles that can ensure the future prosperity of humankind.

Today the nations have agreed on Sustainable Development Goals with detailed targets and indicators that define how to reach sustainability by 2030, leaving no one behind. We shall explore the concept of sustainability in all its dimensions, and how only an ethical and spiritual transformation as defined in the Bahá'í authoritative texts will motivate people to transform their individual lifestyles and their local communities as essential steps towards a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future.

### **Learning Objectives: To acquire the capacity ...**

- To explain the concept and issues behind sustainable development, how it evolved, why it is important, and how it affects people today and in the future
- To understand the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals as the present global framework for action
- To relate sustainability to the issues of the environment, economic development, wealth and poverty, and social development in an integrated systems perspective
- To see the relevance of sustainability as a priority for communities, national governments, and the international system
- To identify ways you can live more sustainably that are consistent with your own spiritual and ethical values, and to explain your choices to others
- To plan ways to educate others about the material and spiritual dimensions of sustainable development
- To demonstrate your understanding through postings in the course, weekly essays, and a final paper or 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 video presentations, readings, and online discussion among course participants. The course has been structured so that it typically requires an estimated 6 hours per week of readings and graded discussion, in addition to the videos and a graded weekly essay. A final project or paper is expected. Because the requirements of colleges and universities differ widely, the course can be taken at one of three different levels:

**STR 130:** The 100-level requirements are suitable for many freshmen (first-year) students. In addition to the readings and videos, the student is expected to complete at least two postings in the discussion forum of each unit, one of which should be at least 300 words in length and reflective of what the student has learned. The final project is a paper of at least 5 pages or a PowerPoint and recorded presentation to the course.

**STR 330:** The 300-level requirements are suitable for juniors and seniors or students at more rigorous

universities. In addition to the readings and videos, the student is expected to complete at least two postings in the graded discussion form of each unit, one of which should be substantive, and a 500 to 750-word (2-3 page) graded essay each unit. The final project is a paper of at least 10 pages (exclusive of bibliography) or equivalent.

**STR 530:** The 500-level requirements are suitable for Master's degree students. In addition to the readings and videos, the student is expected to complete at least two postings in the graded discussion form of each unit, one of which should be substantive, and a 500 to 750-word (2-3 page) graded essay each unit. The final project is a research paper of at least 15 pages (exclusive of bibliography) or equivalent.

Additional requirements may be requested by the credit-grading institution.

---

## Course Readings

Arthur Lyon Dahl, *The Eco Principle; Ecology and Economics in Symbiosis*. This is the primary text for the course. Every unit includes a reader of authoritative Bahá'í texts and scholarship, links to videos and web pages, and/or additional supplementary readings for higher level requirements.

---

## Course Discussion

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.

- 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.

---

## 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. Create or update your personal profile.
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).
  - c. Take a look at the other elements on the course site.
4. Read through the information pages and watch the videos about our Moodle course delivery platform.

---

## Course Schedule

---

Unit 1	Getting Started: Welcome to Sustainable Development	Sept. 5-8, 2019
--------	---	-----------------

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, and learn how to post and reply in the discussion forums. Other learning tasks are to develop a Personal Learning Plan and to imagine and discuss a vision for a sustainable future society.

---

Unit 2	The Concept of Sustainable Development: Origins and Evolution	Sept. 9-15, 2019
--------	---	------------------

Learning Objectives: To be able to explain the concept of sustainable development, examine the history of international efforts for environment and sustainability, and appreciate the important role that women have played in defining sustainability.

<b>Unit 3</b>	<b>The 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals</b>	<b>Sept. 16-22, 2019</b>
---------------	--	--------------------------

Learning Objectives: To understand the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implementation To consider the ethical implications of the SDGs.

<b>Unit 4</b>	<b>Systems Approaches: Integration, Science and Ethics</b>	<b>Sept. 23-29, 2019</b>
---------------	--	--------------------------

Learning Objectives: To learn the basics of systems thinking and examples of systems approaches, to perceive the interconnectedness of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, to understand the harmony of science and religion in addressing sustainability, and to appreciate the importance of religious or ethical principles for achieving sustainable development.

<b>Unit 5</b>	<b>The Environmental Challenge: Harmony with Nature</b>	<b>Sept. 30-Oct. 6, 2019</b>
---------------	---	------------------------------

Learning Objectives: To explain the different areas of environmental sustainability and the concept of planetary limits, to perceive the need to respect and conserve nature, to discover how spiritual principles help us address environmental problems, to find practical ways of living more environmentally sustainably, and to educate and empower others to work for an environmentally sustainable society.

<b>Unit 6</b>	<b>Economic Development and Sustainability: Poverty and Wealth</b>	<b>Oct. 7-13, 2019</b>
---------------	--	------------------------

Learning Objectives: To identify some characteristics of the Western economic system that make it unsustainable, to appraise the value of work in development, to identify preconceptions about poverty and wealth and modify them to help achieve sustainable development, and to reflect on the meaning of true prosperity.

<b>Unit 7</b>	<b>The Concept of Sustainable Development: Origins and Evolution</b>	<b>Oct. 14-20, 2019</b>
---------------	--	-------------------------

Learning Objectives: To identify the different areas of social unsustainability globally and in your local or national community, to assess the importance of values for social development, to apply Baha'i principles to social development, specifically the principles of trustworthiness, unity, justice, and service, to discuss the important roles in social change of currently marginalized people, specifically women, indigenous people, the poor, and youth, and to demonstrate your learning by contributing in some way to social development in your community.

<b>Unit 8</b>	<b>Implementing Sustainability: Individual and Community Action</b>	<b>Oct. 21-27, 2019</b>
---------------	---	-------------------------

Learning Objectives: To extend the concept of sustainable practices to the community and individual levels, to consider how generalized goals can be turned into concrete actions, and to learn how to organize a community activity that has a sustainable goal.

<b>Unit 9</b>	<b>Governance for Sustainability: Processes, Institutions, Indicators</b>	<b>Oct. 28-Nov. 3, 2019</b>
---------------	---	-----------------------------

Learning Objectives: To appreciate the relevance of governance processes for organizing and regulating a more sustainable society, to consider multilevel governance and which issues are best treated at each level: local, national, global, to evaluate existing institutions of governance and consider possible improvements, and to learn about indicators as tools to identify the status and trends of key factors relevant to sustainability.

<b>Unit 10</b>	<b>Education for Sustainable Development and Responsible Living</b>	<b>Nov. 4-10, 2019</b>
----------------	---	------------------------

Learning Objectives: To discuss sustainable development at the individual level, to design an action plan to live in a more sustainable way, to assess the status of sustainability in your own community, and to explain to your community the importance of sustainability and to support it on its path to implement more sustainable practices.

<b>Unit 11</b>	<b>Future Perspectives on the Prosperity of Humankind: Crises and Responses</b>	<b>Nov. 11-17, 2019</b>
----------------	---	-------------------------

Learning Objectives: To examine different scenarios that explain how present Western civilization is unsustainable, to develop a vision of a sustainable world and to perceive the changes that are necessary to make society more sustainable and to apply ethical/spiritual principles that would make those changes possible.

<b>Unit 12</b>	<b>Completion of Course Work</b>	<b>Nov. 18-Dec. 1, 2019</b>
----------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------

Two weeks to write the final paper or project and complete any other work.

### Lead Faculty: Arthur Lyon Dahl



Professor Arthur Lyon Dahl of Geneva, Switzerland (<http://yabaha.net/dahl>), is President of the International Environment Forum (<https://iefworld.org>), a retired Deputy Assistant Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and a consultant on environmental assessment, observing strategies, indicators of sustainability, coral reefs, biodiversity, islands, environmental education, and social and economic development. He holds an AB in Biological Sciences from Stanford University and a PhD in Biology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has published many scientific papers and books including: *Unless and Until: A Baha'i Focus on the Environment* and *The Eco Principle: Ecology and Economics in Symbiosis*.

### Support Faculty: Christine Muller



Christine Muller graduated from the Conservatory Basel, Switzerland with degrees in piano teaching and early music education. She has been a lifelong student of the Baha'i Faith and of the environment. She serves as faculty for the Wilmette Institute courses on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, is involved with climate change education and action in the interfaith community, was active on the RI Interfaith Power&Light board for 9 years, and currently serves as board secretary of the Baha'i-inspired [International Environment Forum](#). She wrote the script and songs for a staged reading on Climate Change, Science and Religion, created an [Interfaith Study Course on Climate Change](#), and co-produced the [Story of Stuff: A Baha'i-inspired Program for Youth](#).

### Support Faculty: Laurent Mesbah



Laurent Mesbah was born and grew up in France in a multicultural background. He did research and teaching in plant genetics at the free university in Amsterdam, the Netherlands where he completed his Ph.D. In addition Dr. Mesbah completed a certificate of advanced studies in Environmental Diplomacy at the University of Geneva and is member of the International Environment Forum since its foundation in 1997. He has been living in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2000 with his family where he has been involved in education and youth empowerment as well as in managing, implementing and evaluating projects related to sustainable development with international organizations. Laurent teaches environmental sciences and value based leadership at the university and co- founded and leads Bloom Earth School in Sarajevo. Dr. Mesbah has been active in Baha'i institutions since his youth in France, Netherlands, and Bosnia and Herzegovina where he currently serves as an Auxiliary

Board member.