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Mission Statement

An agency of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

The Wilmette Institute is a center of Bahá'í learning. Its programs aim to facilitate study and dialogue on the teachings and principles of the Faith to help individuals and communities apply learning and advance human civilization.

Our Guiding Principles are:

- Pursuit of knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith
- Application of the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith to current thought and problems
- Appreciation of all aspects of diversity
- Participation in the process of community building

Learning Outcomes

The Wilmette Institute designs its courses to meet the following learning outcomes, although not every course focuses on all these outcomes:

Knowledge: Demonstrate knowledge of Bahá'í history, texts, teachings, their relationship to each other, and identify correlations of Bahá'í teachings to social reality.

Abilities: Develop ability to engage in public discourse on topics covered by Wilmette Institute coursework, in addition to skills for research, scholarly writing, and content analysis. Develop ability to engage in collaborative work, often in interfaith, intercultural, and interethnic contexts. Develop capacity for reflective learning.

Application: Apply knowledge and understanding gained from courses towards community building efforts and active service to others. Deepen attitudes, beliefs, and values based on increased knowledge of personages, principles, and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith.

College Credit Courses

Students who wish to take a course for possible college credit will be asked to fill out an application for credit form indicating whether they are currently in an academic program or have applied to be in one, and what level of study is appropriate for them. Courses can be taken at the 100 level (simple undergraduate, suitable for junior college), the 300 level (advanced undergraduate, suitable someone majoring in a related subject or

attending a university with higher expectations), and the 500 level (basic Master’s degree, which can be tailored to the student’s needs based on the research paper they write). As a general rule, courses with course numbers in the 300 series can be taken for college credit, but other courses may also be suitable for adaptation to the college level. See also: [Taking Wilmette Institute Courses for College Credit](#).

Tuition Fees

Non-Credit Courses (and Credit Courses when not taken for credit)							
Type (# wks)	Individual Fee	20% off Seniors/ Students/ Pioneers	First-Timers (Flat Fee)	Study Group (1st member)	40% off Group members (max 10 members)	10% off for early register?	Refund policy
Standard (6 to 10)	\$75.00	\$60.00	\$10.00 (no refund)	\$75.00	\$45.00	YES	Retain \$10.00
Short/ Family (4 to 6)	\$50.00	\$40.00	\$10.00 (no refund)	\$50.00	\$30.00	YES	Retain \$10.00
24/7/365 (variable)	\$50.00	\$40.00	Not eligible	\$50.00	\$30.00	NO (N/A)	Retain \$10.00
Special (>10 wks) Archives	\$150.00	\$120.00	Not eligible	\$150.00	\$90.00	YES	Retain \$10.00
Credit Courses if not taken for credit (10 wks)	\$120.00	\$96.00	Not eligible	\$120.00	\$72.00	YES	Retain \$10.00

Tuition Support Options for Credit Courses (12 week/3-credit course = \$525.00)			
Standardized Tuition Support (Interest-free payment plans)	Downpayment	Discount for early registration	Refund Policy
Level 1a 3x \$125 (\$50 off) Level 1b 3x \$90 (\$155 off) Level 2a 3x \$70 (\$215 off) Level 2b 3x \$50 (\$275 off) Level 3 3x \$50 (\$325 off)	Levels 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b \$100.00 Level 3 \$50.00	\$50 off if registered before course starts.	Retain \$25.00

Department of Bahá'í History and Texts

[Link to 2019 schedule](#)

Chair: Dr. Susan Maneck

Email: smaneck@gmail.com

Purpose Statement

The department covers the history and development of the Bahá'í community; biographies of the Central Figures (Bahá'u'lláh, 1817-92; the Bab, 1819-50; and `Abdu'l-Bahá, 1844-1921), Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), and other figures of historical significance; the sacred texts of the Faith, that is, those composed by the Central Figures; and the authoritative (but not sacred) texts by Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice, and works produced on its behalf. Many faculty who teach in the historical side of the department also teach in the texts side because of the importance of historical context in studying them. The department has three sections: history, sacred texts, and authoritative texts.

Courses: History

Courses in the 300 series can be taken at the college-level or can be audited

HS110	The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh: Two Lives, One Story
In <i>The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh: Two Lives, One Story</i> , we will delve into the dramatic story at the heart of the Holy Anniversary years 2017 and 2019. From Shiraz to Tabriz, from the affluent courtyards of Tehran to the prison-city of Acre, <i>The Story of Bahá'u'lláh: Promised One of All Religions</i> , the text for the course, brings to life the story of the Twin Manifestations at the origin of the Bahá'í Faith: the Báb (“the Gate”) and Bahá'u'lláh (“the Glory of God”), each with a distinct but connected mission. Together their revelations are intended for a humanity about to enter a new evolutionary stage—the maturity of the human race. Throughout our study, references to world events and well-known American figures add context. We will also discuss some basic guidance about storytelling so that in a supportive environment you can explore and practice sharing these stories yourself, whether in a conversation with a friend or in a more formal setting. There are no hard storytelling requirements; the joy is in learning how simple it can be.	
HS120	The Life of the Báb
The Wilmette Institute offers three courses focused on the Bábí movement out of which the Bahá'í Faith developed: the first on the Báb Himself; the second on His followers and the Bábí movement; and the third on the writings of the Báb. The three courses are complementary. The course <i>The Life of the Báb</i> deals with	

the Báb's life: His childhood and marriage; the declaration of His mission; His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina; His return to Iran and His initial stay in Shiraz; His escape to Isfahan; His imprisonment in Azerbaijan; and His trial and execution in Tabriz. It ends with a brief consideration of Western academic reflections on "the Episode of the Báb." The course will share extensive resources for studying the life and teaching of the Báb, in anticipation of conversations, meetings, gatherings, and discourse throughout the world in celebration of the bicentenary of His birth in 2019.

HS125 The Bábí Faith, 1844-63: Rediscovering the Dawnbreakers

The Wilmette Institute offers three courses focused on the Bábí movement out of which the Bahá'í Faith developed: the first on the Báb Himself; the second on His followers and the Bábí movement; and the third on the writings of the Báb. The three courses are complementary. In *Rediscovering the Dawnbreakers* we will study the earliest period of the history of the Bábí and Baha'i Faiths, and will provide opportunities for meditating on the spiritual qualities needed for those who endeavor to live a Baha'i life and to serve the Faith. We will cover the birth of the Bábí revelation, including the declaration of the Báb, the enrollment of the Letters of the Living, and the Báb's pilgrimage to Mecca; His banishment to Adhirbayjan; His imprisonments in Maku and Chihriq, and the Conference of Badasht; upheavals in the Bábí communities in Mazanderan, Nayriz, and Zanjan; the martyrdom of the Báb in 1850; developments after the Báb's martyrdom, including an attempt on the life of Nasirí-d-Din Shah; Baha'u'llah's role in helping the Bábís and His imprisonment in the Siyah-Chal in Tehran; the martyrdom of Tahiri; the executions of many of the Báb's disciples and the fate of those who persecuted the Báb and His followers. This study of early Bábí and Baha'i history is aimed at suggesting how one can understand contemporary Baha'i communities and their efforts to grow and expand.

HS132 The Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees

In *The Leaves of the Twin Divine Trees* (also the name of a book written by Baharieh Rouhani Maani), we will explore the lives of the women closely related to the Báb, Baha'u'llah, and `Abdu'l-Bahá: Fatimih Bagum and Khadijih Bagum, the mother and wife of the Báb respectively, titled the Most Favored of All Women; Zahra Bagum, sister of the wife of the Báb; Fatimih Khanum, the second wife of the Báb; Khadijih Khanum, mother of Baha'u'llah; Asiyih Khanum, wife of Baha'u'llah, titled Navvab and the Most Exalted leaf; Bahiyih Khanum, daughter of Baha'u'llah and sister of `Abdu'l-Baha, titled the Greatest Holy Leaf; Fatimih Khanum, the second wife of Baha'u'llah, titled Mahd-i `Ulya; Gawhar Khanum, the third wife of Baha'u'llah; the sisters of Baha'u'llah; Jinab-i-Maryam, Baha'u'llah's cousin and sister-in-law, titled the Crimson Leaf; and Munireh Khanum, wife of `Abdu'l-Baha.

HS140 `Abdu'l-Bahá: His Life and Ministry

`Abdu'l-Baha, the Center of Baha'u'llah's Covenant and the Perfect Exemplar for humankind, is unique in religious history. While He is not a Manifestation of God, He is closer in station to a Manifestation than to the station of humanity. Drawing on statements by `Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, as well as writings by many Baha'is, we will explore `Abdu'l-Baha's life, station, roles, titles, writings, talks, travels, accomplishments, relationship to Baha'u'llah, and impact on others. In particular, we will study the Tablets of the Divine Plan during this special centenary anniversary of their revelation, focusing on recent letters from the House of Justice and other related documents. We will also examine `Abdu'l-Baha's first five decades, 1844-92; His

station as the Center of Baha'u'llah's Covenant and His early years as Head of the Faith, 1892-1910; His travels to and talks in Europe and North America, 1911-13, and His guidance of the Baha'is in those areas; World War I and war and peace, 1914-21; His Will and Testament and His passing in 1921; and selected topics about 'Abdu'l-Baha (teachings about governance; philosophy and theology; and evolution).

HS150 The Life and Ministry of Shoghi Effendi

In The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi we will look briefly at Shoghi Effendi's childhood and youth (1897–1921) and more extensively at his ministry as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith (1921-57). We will consider the many roles Shoghi Effendi filled (builder, interpreter, author, and translator) as he carried out his duties as Guardian in fostering the growth and development of the Bahá'í Faith. He devoted much of his ministry to building the administrative order outlined by Baha'u'llah and elaborated by `Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament and to using it as an instrument for fostering the international spread of the Bahá'í Faith called for by `Abdu'l-Bahá in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Shoghi Effendi also worked tirelessly to extend and beautify the properties of the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa and Acre, to erect the facade of the Shrine of the Báb, and to prepare a physical home for the center of the administrative order. Shoghi Effendi translated many writings of Bahá'u'lláh into English, translated and edited a history of the Bábí period of the Faith, penned thousands of letters clarifying basic Bahá'í teachings, and wrote the classic history of the first hundred years of the Faith's beginnings. His devotion, self-sacrifice, and suffering are an inspiration to Bahá'ís of all generations.

HS168 Hands of the Cause of God: Pathways of Service

The course on The Hands of the Cause of God: Pathways of Service will focus on services they rendered with the aim of giving learners the courage, confidence, and strength to help them accomplish their personal goals of service to the Bahá'í Faith and to help win the goals of the Five Year Plan ending in 2021. We will study passages from the Bahá'í writings, extracts from Ruhi materials, and stories about the struggles of the Hands of the Cause and their successes. We will supplement our study with photographs of the Hands and with audio and video recordings. Optional live call-in video conferences will provide opportunities for discussing the materials.

HS190 Writing Biographies and Histories: Recording Stories of People and Places

Writing Biographies and Histories: Recording Stories of People and Places is designed to help Bahá'ís who wish to compose a memoir about their own lives, produce a biography of a Baha'i mentor, or write the history of their local Bahá'í community. Units in the first half of the course will cover such topics as selecting a topic and settling on an audience; the philosophy and ethics of writing biographies and history; collecting oral history; research in archives and libraries and on the web; organizing notes and outlining the topic. In the second half of the course, participants will pursue a research and writing project with support and advice from the faculty. The Wilmette Institute may be interested in publishing some short histories, biographies, and memoirs on its public website.

HS305 An Introduction to Bahá'í History, 1863-present

Bahá'í History, 1863-2017, will explore the major themes of Bahá'í history from Baha'u'llah's exile from Baghdad to the second decade of the twenty-first century, emphasizing the development of the Bahá'í Faith over the last century and a half. We will cover the period from 1863 to the end of Baha'u'llah's life in 1892; the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha (1892-1921); the ministry of Shoghi Effendi (1921-57); the ministry of the custodians (1957-63); the period from the election of the Universal House of Justice to the end of the twentieth century (1963-96); and the period marking a new direction in the teaching work and outreach to the public (1996-2017). In each unit we will be reading from God Passes By and/or Century of Light, supplementing the books with essays and articles on themes such as the development of the community, attracting minorities, the worldwide spread of the Faith, persecution, and more. The course will also look at the changes in the Bahá'í community since 1996, and in particular the changes brought about by the processes of the Five Year Plans.

Courses: Sacred Texts

Courses in the 300 series can be taken at the college-level or can be audited

ST105	Finding the Hidden Gift: An Approach to Studying the Bahá'í Writings
<p>Finding the Hidden Gift: An Approach to Studying the Bahá'í Writings introduces learners to a systematic method of studying any Bahá'í scripture by using a number of literary and exegetical tools. We will study selected passages from Bahá'í scripture through four "windows" into the meaning of divine wisdom: Language; Theme; Structure; and the Work as a Whole. Through learning to read carefully, with attention to literal and figurative language, theme, structure, and the place of the work in the author's writings, we will develop tools for analyzing any Bahá'í text systematically. The course will also examine quickly five other "windows" into the meaning of scripture: the oeuvre (body of works), the biography, the times, the literary tradition, and the world scriptural tradition.</p>	
ST108	Charters of the Faith: The Tablet of Carmel, the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Tablets of the Divine Plan
<p>In Charters of the Faith we will study three "Charters" of the Bahá'í Faith identified by Shoghi Effendi: Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament and Tablets of the Divine Plan. We will read and discuss the full texts of these three charters, supplementing our reading with stories, photographs, and other materials and seeking to gain a deeper understanding of their significance and their application in our own lives. We will examine the "three distinct processes" that Shoghi Effendi states these three charters set in motion, "the first operating in the Holy Land for the development of the institutions of the Faith at its World Center and the other two, throughout the rest of the Bahá'í world, for its propagation and the establishment of its Administrative Order" (Messages to the Bahá'í World, 84). The course will conclude with a discussion about the Hands of the Cause of God and the role they played between Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957 and the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 and with the role that individuals play in protecting and expanding the Faith.</p>	
ST152	Introduction to the Kitab-i-Aqdas

About the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, Shoghi Effendi has written that it “may well be regarded as the brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá'u'lláh, as the Mother Book of His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World Order.” He further refers to the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* as “the principal repository of that Law which the Prophet Isaiah had anticipated, and which the writer of the Apocalypse had described as the ‘new heaven’ and the ‘new earth,’ as ‘the Tabernacle of God,’ as the ‘Holy City,’ as the ‘Bride,’ the ‘New Jerusalem coming down from God,’ this ‘Most Holy Book,’ whose provisions must remain inviolate for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet. . . .” We will read the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* and supplemental texts related to it, while studying several of its main themes: covenant, succession, and manifestation; Baha'i institutions, including the rulers and the learned, the Universal House of Justice, Houses of Worship, Feasts, Holy Days, and the Baha'i calendar; the nature and purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's laws; Bahá'u'lláh's ordinances; prohibitions and punishments; Bahá'u'lláh's proclamations to kings, rulers, places, and groups of people; education and transformation; and teaching the Baha'i Faith.

ST155 Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

After revealing the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* in 1873-74, Bahá'u'lláh penned a series of tablets that include the *Lawh-i-Aqdas*, the Book of the Covenant, and the Tablet of Carmel. The tablets revealed after the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* elaborate on Bahá'u'lláh's laws, further explore the nature of the mystical life, describe basic theological teachings, and expound the principles necessary for transforming human society. The bulk of these weighty epistles were published in 1978 in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. In this course we will read and study these tablets and discuss their relationship to other works by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Baha. All readings will be provided via the web; no books need to be purchased.

ST158 Tabernacle of Unity

The five tablets in *The Tabernacle of Unity* proclaim some of the central tenets of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith and the universality of His prophetic claims. In this course we will undertake a careful reading of the five tablets, exploring the Bahá'í concepts of progressive revelation and the role of religion in advancing human civilization; the relevance of the tablets to interfaith dialogue; and what the tablets teach us about the process of revelation. Bahá'u'lláh addressed two tablets to a Zoroastrian who admired Him and who asked questions about Zoroastrianism and Hinduism and three tablets to Bahá'ís of Zoroastrian background. The first tablet to the Zoroastrian admirer discusses a variety of questions about the tenets of Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions, emphasizing what is right and true in the various doctrines and beliefs under examination. When the admirer indicated that he had hoped for more detailed answers, Bahá'u'lláh revealed a longer tablet (the second one in the book) elaborating on each of the questions. As a group, the tablets show Bahá'u'lláh's love for the followers of a religion that arose in Iran, where His own revelation was born.

ST161 Exploring Bahá'u'lláh's Last Major Work: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

In the course on *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá'u'lláh's last major work, which is a single letter containing His own anthology of His writings, we will read the book slowly over a period of six weeks, examining major themes of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation: God as the source of His revelation; Who Bahá'u'lláh is; why He came; proofs of His station; His general teachings; the sufferings He endured; humanity's responses to His revelation; and accounts of martyrs that illustrate the transforming power of the Bahá'í Faith. Revealed for an enemy of the Bahá'í Faith, Shaykh Muhammad-Taquí (surnamed "Son of the Wolf"), the book warns him about

the consequences of his persecution of the Faith. Containing as it does Bahá'u'lláh's quotations from His own revelation, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf provides an excellent summary of themes He considered important to understanding the Bahá'í Faith.

ST170	The Writings of the Báb
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The Wilmette Institute offers three courses focused on the Bábí movement out of which the Bahá'í Faith developed: the first on the Báb Himself; the second on His followers and the Bábí movement; and the third on the writings of the Báb. The three courses are complementary. This course is an introduction to the Báb's principal writings. It features webinars by Steven Phelps: "Overview of the Writings of the Báb" and Armin Eschraghi: "The Báb's Tablet about the Special Prophethood of Muhammad".

ST171	Discovering the Báb's Persian Bayán: The Most Holy Book of the Bábí Religion
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Discovering the Báb's Persian Bayán is the first concise yet comprehensive online study of the Báb's "pivotal" and "doctrinal" work. Participants will explore and examine the various themes and dimensions of this very lengthy book which Shoghi Effendi describes as "that monumental repository of the laws and precepts of the new Dispensation..." Learn about the "central message" of the Bayán and discover how the Báb as "the Promised Messenger of God" broke away from traditional Shí'a and Sunní doctrine by introducing new laws and ordinances for the next phase of the human spiritual development.

ST172	The Secret of Divine Civilization
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In The Secret of Divine Civilization we will study `Abdu'l-Bahá's first extensive description of Bahá'í social teachings, reading it slowly over a period of seven weeks. Elaborating on principles that Bahá'u'lláh enunciated in His tablets to the kings and leaders of the world, the treatise describes the true nature of civilization and provides a blueprint for the "future reorganization of the world." To develop the theme of universal peace, honest government, and religion as the true bases of world order, `Abdu'l-Bahá redefines the Islamic tradition that a learned person "must guard himself, defend his faith, oppose his passions and obey the commandments of his Lord." Leaders, in particular, are called to a new standard of honesty and trustworthiness, a theme of particular interest during any election cycle. This course will thus look at the complementary processes of personal transformation and social development, leading to a reorganization of the world. It will also examine the book as an early example of public discourse and consider how we can use it to improve our own efforts in public discourse.

ST175	Some Answered Questions
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Some Answered Questions consists of a series of questions that Laura Clifford Barney asked `Abdu'l-Bahá over lunch in Acre between 1904 and 1906. The answers were recorded in Persian. `Abdu'l-Bahá reviewed, modified, and approved them, thereby converting pilgrim's notes into authoritative Bahá'í text. Barney herself undertook the task of translating them into English. The resulting classic Bahá'í text appeared in 1908. Limitations in the translation have been a concern for some time, as Barney was not fully conversant with philosophical terminology. The translation, newly revised by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Center, resolves many difficulties and brings the authoritative interpretations of `Abdu'l-Bahá to an English-speaking audience

with new clarity and precision.

ST190 The Báb's Qayyumu'l-Asma': Commentary on the Qur'an's Surih of Joseph

The new dispensation announced by the Báb challenged existing notions of religion and revelation. The Báb's commentary on the Súrih of Joseph is a highly intricate and complex composition which betrays the authorial presence of the young messiah at every word. Yet, almost every word is Qur'anic, however rearranged and ordered to conform to the new message. Thus revelation is seen in a different light. While it is certainly divine in origin, the creativity and the boldness it represents should be seen as coming directly from the Báb Himself. Thus revelation emerges as a cooperative activity, one shared by God and the manifestation. Details and examples of such artistry and creativity will be illustrated through provisional translation.

ST331 Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey

In Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey, 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. We will study themes in the works, topics that Bahá'u'lláh progressively revealed during His ministry, and related tablets wherever possible. The course is designed for learners seeking basic information about the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, new Bahá'ís wishing more context for 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 important works revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

Courses: Authoritative Texts

**AT123 Responding Effectively to Global Challenges:
Three World Order of Bahá'u'lláh Letters**

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters, a compilation of letters written by Shoghi Effendi, identify the essential character and distinguishing features of the Bahá'í Faith in contrast to other political and religious systems. In studying the letters, we will examine what Shoghi Effendi identifies as the defects of the prevailing world order, the guiding principles of the Bahá'í system that will bring about World Order, and the necessary steps world leaders must take to rectify these defects. We will also study what Shoghi Effendi says about the ordeals we must traverse in order to realize a new phase in human thought and the important role that North America is to play before we reach the peaceful settlement of world affairs. This course is designed to strengthen our understanding of the times in which we live and our certainty that humankind will pass through a daunting period of world history, knowing that world peace, the dream of the great thinkers of all ages, is not only possible but inevitable.

AT126 The Advent of Divine Justice: Guidance for Winning Five Year Plan Goals

Shoghi Effendi’s soul-stirring letter, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, was written in 1938 during a time of tremendous turmoil in world affairs. As we find ourselves once again in the midst of breathtaking worldwide change, we turn to his brilliant analysis of our strengths and weaknesses, to his unerring guidance, and to his assurances of our “unspeakably glorious destiny.” While addressed “To the beloved of God” in the United States and Canada—countries not yet caught up in the vortex of World War II—his sweeping vision of the World Order of Baha’u’llah is thrilling for all Bahá’ís for all time. Shoghi Effendi helps us understand that there is one Divine Plan, “whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá’u’lláh,” and “whose outline has been delineated for them by the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Baha.” Shoghi Effendi himself leads us to further stages in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan, which continues to be propelled forward under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice. In this course we will learn the spiritual prerequisites for success of the Divine Plan, the teaching requirements, and the “double crusade” each Baha’i must conduct to “prepare . . . for the time when the Hand of Destiny will have directed them to assist in creating and in bringing into operation that World Order. . . .” As the Universal House of Justice wrote in its December 29, 2015, letter: This is an urgent call for action—“the urgency . . . impelled by the world’s desperate condition.” As we embark on the current Five Year Plan, study of *The Advent of Divine Justice* could not be more imperative.

AT161	One Common Faith
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One Common Faith analyzes the assertion that “the time has come when religious leadership must face honestly and without further evasion the implications of the truth that God is one and that . . . religion is likewise one.” In the document commissioned by the Universal House of Justice, we will look at the nature and results of the dominance of materialism in the modern world; the consequences of global integration; and the failure of the world’s past religious systems to deal with the crisis of modernity. We will also discuss what it says about the Baha’i principles that make the Baha’i approach effective: the impact of progressive revelation on understanding religious systems and their efforts to civilize humanity; and the power of unity in reforming civilization and the nature of the forces that oppose it. Finally, we will examine what the document explains about the efforts the Baha’i community must make to become an effective agent of change and lead the world to one common faith. Our study of One Common Faith will provide a foundation for teaching, for interfaith dialogue, and for contributing to public discourse.

AT180	Century of Light
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‘Abdu’l-Bahá referred to the twentieth century as the “century of light” while also forecasting terrible trials for humanity and events of great consequence for humanity’s future. In 2001 the Universal House of Justice released an historical study of the century, noting that between 1900 and 2000 “our world underwent changes,” mostly little understood, “far more profound than any in its preceding history” and, at the same time, the Baha’i Faith emerged from obscurity, “demonstrating on a global scale the unifying power with which its Divine origin has endowed it.” In *Century of Light* we will review, in the context of the Baha’i teachings, the two processes of the disintegration of an old order and the emergence of a new order and will examine the relationship between them. Our aim will be to tap into a perspective that is “spiritually enriching” and also “of practical help in sharing with others the challenging implications of the Revelation brought by Baha’u’llah.

Department of Marriage and Family

[Link to 2019 schedule](#)

Chair: Susanne M. Alexander

Email: susanne@marriage-transformation.com

Parenting Coordinator: Chelsea Lee Smith

Email: parenting@wilmetteinstitute.org

Purpose Statement

The Bahá'í teachings refer to marriage as a “fortress for well-being and salvation” and as the foundation for a unified global society. Healthy relationships and marriages are the foundation for creating families. The process of creating and maintaining relationships requires knowledge and skills. Individuals and couples thrive when they are engaged in personal and couple growth and development founded on spiritual teachings. The Relationship and Marriage courses build capacity in the participants to make wise choices and create happy, unified marriages that are of service to those involved and outward to others.

Audience: The Wilmette Institute offers spiritually-based, practical, and participatory courses for:

- Individuals wanting to understand friendship, character, dating, and courtship
- Individuals and couples preparing for the possibility of marriage
- Married individuals and couples who want to engage in marriage building and strengthening
- Members of families and institutions wanting to support the relationships and marriages of others
- Groups of individuals or couples wanting to study and discuss materials together, either in the same geographical location or over the Internet; groups may be organized with the assistance of a Local Spiritual Assembly

Course Content: Courses include the Bahá'í Writings, relationship and marriage education materials, discussion questions and Forum, learning activities, skill-building

opportunities, videos, articles, the arts, active faculty-mentoring (available by email, videoconference, or phone as needed), and more.

365 Courses

365 courses are available on demand. Study is self-guided with mentoring support from faculty as needed. 365 courses do not have group/forum participation unless participants set up a study group. Members of institutions or their agencies that support the health of relationships and marriages in the community are welcome at any time.

DV120	Are We Ready for Marriage?
<p>Audience: <i>Couples in a serious relationship considering marrying; anyone wanting to better understand marriage preparation.</i></p> <p>You are in a serious relationship and wondering whether you can be successful together in marriage. Come explore your shared vision of a possible unified future life together. Engage in a rich learning experience about: friendship, communication, spiritual unity, being of service, equality, family life with children, money and work, marriage as a divine institution and foundation for world unity, uniting a couples' families, and parental consent to marriage. Thorough preparation for marriage helps couples establish a strong foundation.</p>	
DV121	Thinking of Relationships and Marriage?
<p>Audience: <i>Single individuals not yet in a relationship or individuals or couples in the early stage of a relationship; can be useful for others doing a relationship well-being check.</i></p> <p>You may be uncertain about being in a relationship and also be thinking, "Why get married?" Come explore and learn new perspectives and ways of preparing for positive experiences. Building a relationship can be a natural part of your life journey to establish a close connection with someone. Thinking of Relationships and Marriage? will help you navigate through a coherent process of building a friendship, assessing character, understanding male-female relationships, and being of service. Your learning will position you to make significant decisions about courtship and the broader horizon of marriage.</p>	
DV122	Enhancing Love, Friendship, and Service in Your Marriage
<p>Audience: <i>Engaged and married couples.</i></p> <p>In happy marriages, couples are intimate and loving companions who know each other well and who provide thoughtful service to each other. However, the press of busy lives can unconsciously lessen your connection. Engaged and married couples will deepen their understanding of each other with practical tools related to friendship, love, and service. You will choose couple practices to have as the culture of your marriage that enhance your unity and help you serve each other, your families, and outward to others.</p>	

DV123	Making Time and Service Choices As a Couple
<p>Audience: <i>Couples (before and after marriage).</i></p> <p>Is it possible to meet the challenge of making time and service choices as individuals and as a couple and family? Before and after marriage (and in all of life!) you face time choices. You want to stay connected with each other and your families, and you also want to be of service to your neighbors and community. We will help you understand the principles that relate to these choices and how to apply them in practical ways. We have made this course deliberately VERY SHORT for those who are time challenged!</p>	
DV124	Engaging in Parental Consent for Marriage
<p>Audience: <i>Couples who are considering asking parents for consent to marry; parents wanting to understand the teachings about parental consent; anyone wanting to know more about the subject.</i></p> <p>Engaging in Parental Consent for Marriage is a course centered in the Bahá'í belief that marriage is intended to be a unifying experience for a family. It explores the knowledge and skills needed during courtship as well as those that help build family unity throughout the process leading up to a marriage. The course covers the purpose and process of parental consent, a requirement for Bahá'í marriages; the couple's responsibilities during courtship and before asking parents for consent to marry; parental responsibilities during courtship, consent, and engagement; and building a united family.</p>	
DV125	Building Intercultural Understanding as a Couple
<p>Audience: <i>Couples at any relationship or marriage stage who want to increase their unity and harmony through better understanding of each other's culture; those who wish to provide encouragement and support to intercultural couples.</i></p> <p>It is easy to say that the oneness of humanity is a vital part of peace on the planet. It is another matter to figure out how to unify two people with different cultural backgrounds, races, or languages into a happy relationship or marriage. In Building Intercultural Understanding as a Couple, we will enhance understanding of the spiritual principles involved as well as delve into the practical, daily application of them. Practical application includes the impact of your union on your families and current or future children. Come deepen your unity along with us!</p>	
DV130	Creating Marriage Well-Being from the Beginning
<p>Audience: <i>Couples in the first five years of marriage; other couples, including engaged couples.</i></p> <p>It's fun and challenging to start and establish a marriage on a firm foundation. We invite couples in the first five years of marriage (others are welcome too, including engaged couples) to strengthen their experience of the divine institution of marriage. Baha'u'llah refers to marriage as a "fortress for well-being and salvation". Couples will have opportunities to deepen their friendship, expand communication and consultation skills, enhance spiritual and physical well-being, and establish roles and responsibilities as marriage partners.</p>	

DV155	Conscious Parenting of Young Children
<p>We invite you to build your capacity to offer spiritual education to children five years old and under. Topics in the course include analyzing the roles and responsibilities of parents according to a Bahá'í perspective, strengthening the ability of parents to nurture spiritual qualities in young children, creating a positive relationship between parents and children even in the face of challenging behaviors, and building family unity through engaging in spiritual practices and service together. We will also learn positive parenting practices to help children develop independence and address entitlement.</p>	
DV175	Nurturing your Báby Spiritually During Pregnancy
<p>Audience: <i>Mothers, fathers, and other family members planning for the changes ahead.</i></p> <p>Are you currently expecting a baby or planning to grow your family in the near future? This course invites participants to learn ways to nurture the spiritual well-being of a baby during pregnancy and in the parents as they experience this significant change. Topics include the role and preparation of mothers, fathers, and other family members for the changes ahead; the use of prayer and spiritual scripture throughout the experience; the marriage and family unit as the secure foundation for the well-being of the child; and the importance of building a spiritual and emotional support network for new parents. This course consists of 5 units and is available year-round.</p>	

Relationships and Marriage

Courses

DV100	What is Bahá'í Courtship and Marriage?
<p>Are you curious what it looks like to have a courtship and marriage based on the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith? This course helps introduce the spiritual concepts that underlie a couple's choices throughout marriage preparation and as they build a life together in marriage. Materials will include the importance of creating and maintaining spiritual harmony, character, friendship, consultation, family and community service, equal partnership, unity, and more. Everyone is welcome, and please invite your friends.</p>	
DV110	Creating Unity with Friendship, Fun, Social Vitality & Laughter
<p>Do you sometimes feel your life and the life of the community is a bit too intense and serious? 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages laughter, story-telling, social gatherings, and friendship. Come enjoy learning how to deepen friendships, have fun together, extend hospitality, share humorous stories, take a lighter approach to challenges, and more. Open to individuals, groups, couples, and communities. Please invite your friends!</p>	
DV115	Youth: Learning About Bahá'í-Based Relationships

<p>Young Baha'is want to have a serious relationship with a partner that is happy and fulfilling, and it's possible. However, the toxic environment around dating makes it hard to know how to apply Baha'i principles. The Universal House of Justice encourages living a full, coherent life that includes service, profession, and marriage. When you have seen poor examples of marriage and damaging divorces, it can seem difficult to move forward. On your own or with a study group, come explore the relevant teachings and discuss new approaches to finding and being with a partner. Audience: Ages 15-25.</p>	
DV135	Strengthening Married Individuals
<p>It helps marriages thrive when the individual partners are emotionally and spiritually healthy. When a marriage becomes shaky, it can help for the individuals to recalibrate their thoughts, feelings, behavior, self-respect, and spiritual practices. As individuals increase in well-being, they are equipped to help strengthen their marriage.</p>	
DV136	Re-Connecting As Marriage Partners
<p>Sometimes couples can lose their connection with each other in the course of busy married and family life. Participants will learn practical ways to move toward re-connection and unity. They will also assess and strengthen their practice of equality, justice, and respect. Couples who learn new skills and approaches can stay together for the long-term.</p>	
DV137	Responding to Difficulties in Marriage
<p>Marriage comes with normal life tests, and sometimes tests also arise between a couple. Skillful couples can navigate times of difficulties when they understand the purposes of tests, take responsibility for addressing the issues, offer and receive forgiveness, consult with each other, and learn from their actions.</p>	
DV138	Principles for Managing Money in Marriage
<p>Challenges in marriage can come from many directions, and one key area is that of money. Participants will increase their understanding of the spiritual principles that apply to financial decisions, how their past experiences with money affect them in the present, and determine and apply their current values to financial decisions.</p>	
DV140	Utilizing Consultation in Marriage and Family
<p>Couples who pray and effectively communicate and consult together find it easier to understand one another and maintain unity. Family consultation teaches children how to cooperate with others and make decisions. As skillful consultation increases in a marriage and family, conflict and disunity are less likely to arise, and unified outcomes increase.</p>	

Parenting and Family

Parenting Coordinator: Chelsea Lee Smith

Email: parenting @wilmetteinstitute.org

Purpose Statement

The Bahá'í teachings uphold the importance of raising children of good character and building unified families, calling mothers the first educators of the child and children the “most precious treasure a community can possess.” But what do these teachings really look like in a modern day context?

Counter to the common assumption that parenting skills emerge automatically once a couple gives birth to a child, raising service-oriented and resilient children requires a great deal of knowledge, reflection, and skill building. Families thrive when both the parents' and the children's growth and development are founded on spiritual teachings. The Parenting and Family courses at the Wilmette Institute aim to build capacity in the participants to make wise choices and create happy, unified homes that are of service to those involved and outward to others.

Audience: The Wilmette Institute offers spiritually-based, practical, and participatory courses for:

- Individuals wanting to study parenting and raising children within a spiritual context
- Individuals interested in building skills to face the challenges of modern day parents using a Bahá'í perspective
- Parents who want to engage in practices that uplift the spiritual atmosphere in their homes
- Members of families and institutions wanting to support parents in their role of raising the next generation of humankind
- Groups of individuals wanting to study and discuss materials together, either in the same geographical location or over the Internet; groups may be organized with the assistance of a Local Spiritual Assembly or other entity

Course Content: Courses include the Bahá'í Writings, parent education materials, discussion questions and forums, learning activities, skill-building opportunities, videos, articles, the arts, mentoring by email, and more.

Courses

DV156	Helping Families Navigate Media and Screen Time
<p>Do you want more tools to help your child navigate society’s intense media environment? In today’s world socializing, personal expression, and dating often occur between texts and social media, raising new challenges and opportunities for children and teens. This course is aimed at parents, caretakers, and educators of children up to 15 years old and offers a safe space to critically examine the role screen time plays in their family. It will help participants learn how to address the common media-related issues facing their children and guide them to apply Bahá’í principles to their time online.</p>	
DV157	Communication Skills for Spiritually Minded Families
<p>Family unity is linked to the quality of respectful and effective communication between all family members. Inspired by quotations from the Bahá’í Writings as well as stories from the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the course materials invite you and your family to explore different techniques for communicating effectively, understand the importance of encouragement, foster a learning mode, and implement and carry out family meetings. This course is appropriate for those with children 14 years old and under.</p>	
DV160	Fostering a Bahá’í Identity in Families
<p>How can we help children place love for Bahá’u’lláh and the desire to be of service to others as the foundation of their lives? This course enables parents to explore how they can foster a child’s connection to the Bahá’í Faith through developing spiritually uplifting routines at home, engaging in service within the home as well as in their communities, and aligning family activities with the current goals of their communities. Participants will be given positive parenting tools inspired by the Bahá’í Writings as well as hands-on strategies for implementing spiritual practices at home. Materials are suited for those with children 14 years old and under.</p>	
DV161	Celebrating the Bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb with Children
<p>This course is designed to help parents, teachers, and other adults share the Bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb with children so that they will understand the significance and feel the spirit of this very special Holy Day. Course materials include stories, printable activities, craft ideas, and songs. Participants will receive inspiration and practical resources to celebrate this special occasion in a fun and uplifting way with children at home and in the community.</p>	
DV170	Embracing a Spiritual Identity of Motherhood
<p>Come be inspired as a mother to embrace the noble role you have in raising your children while also maintaining the sacred space for nurturing your own independent spiritual identity. The course will utilize the arts as well as call upon stories of Bahá’í women in history to help you analyze the social forces playing on your decision-making processes, examine the dichotomies facing mothers in modern day society, redesign</p>	

the definition of what “service” and “motherhood” are, develop a positive mindset, and create a vision for your family based on your spiritual reality as a woman and mother.

DV180	Raising Spiritual Families
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In the first five years after a child is born, parents go through many phases, and spiritual principles apply throughout. Topics in the course include understanding and organizing the roles and responsibilities of parents according to Bahá’í teachings, establishing the marriage and family unit as the secure foundation for the well-being of the child, expanding the ability of parents to nurture spiritual habits and qualities in young children, creating a positive relationship between parents and children, and building family unity through engaging in spiritual practices and service together. The course includes both spiritual perspectives and practical tools.

Department of Religion, Philosophy, & Theology

[Link to 2019 Schedule](#)

Co-Chairs: Dr. Moojan Momen and Dr. Mikhail Sergeev

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Purpose Statement

The department teaches courses in the various religions of the world (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions, and native American approaches to the sacred), their scriptures, and their divisions (such as Shi’ism, Shaykhism, and Sufism), usually with a Bahá’í perspective included at some point in the course. It also offers a few courses on the Bahá’í Faith itself where the Faith is being considered from a religious studies perspective.

Courses

RL105	Bahá’í Spirituality
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How does Bahá’í spirituality help us develop mental clarity, spiritual awareness, inner calm, and even physical health? In Bahá’í Spirituality we will begin with a discussion of prayer and meditation in comparative perspective. Then we will consider the distinctive elements of Bahá’í prayer and meditation; the artistry of bodily postures and divine verses blended in the obligatory prayers; the history and significance of the Greatest Name and its use in prayers and meditations; the spiritual and physiological benefits of fasting; and how fasting might promote self-control and restraint. We will read and discuss insights from recent studies in medicine, psychology, and other

scholarly fields to aid us in understanding how Bahá'í spirituality can lead to profound experiences of peace, encouragement, and joy.

RL110 **Judaism for Deepening and Dialogue**

Judaism, the oldest of the Semitic religions, can be said to be the mother Faith of Christianity, Islam, the Bábí Faith, and the Bahá'í Faith. In Judaism for Deepening and Dialogue we will focus on the eternal spiritual teachings that, according to the Bahá'í writings, all religions share. We will also explore Jewish theology and principles; Jewish history--Biblical, post-Biblical, modern, and modern sectarian; post-Biblical literature; the Jewish calendar, prayer, and life-cycle rituals; and Jewish/Bahá'í dialogue. Our aim is to study Judaism for the purposes of deepening (acquiring a better understanding of the basics of another divinely revealed religion and, by comparison, of the Bahá'í Faith) and dialogue (sharing one's faith perspective with people of other religions in an informed and respectful manner).

RL113 **Exploring the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament**

The Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) is a collection of writings sacred to Jews and Christians. It includes historical accounts, prophetic utterances, sacred stories, poetry, hymns, and a variety of other material. Composed over one thousand years by innumerable authors, it was assembled into a single collection after the year 70 CE. From its inception the emerging Christian community accepted the Hebrew Bible as scripture, although initially the canon was fluid, as the complete list of included books was not settled until the third or fourth century CE. In Exploring the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) we will survey the Hebrew Bible's major books (including selections from the Pentateuch, the earlier and later prophets, the Psalms, and other writings) in the light of progressive revelation and in the historical contexts that they depict. We will also compare the Hebrew Bible with Bahá'í scripture, paying particular attention to passages in the Hebrew Bible that have been "unsealed" (authoritatively interpreted) by the Bahá'í revelation. Studying the Hebrew Bible in the light of the Bahá'í writings aims to confirm one's faith and to provide opportunities for sharing the Bahá'í revelation with others.

RL117 **Exploring the Book of Isaiah**

The book of Isaiah is one of the longest and most complex prophetic works in the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament). Probably composed in stages by different individuals or groups of individuals, the oldest section traces back to Isaiah ben Amoz, who lived in the eighth century BCE. The book contains what many consider to be the oldest clear statement of monotheism and also promises the coming of a Kingdom under a messiah. Many peoples, throughout the millennia, have interpreted the prophetic passages many ways. The Bahá'í Faith offers new interpretations of some of the passages in Isaiah, and Bahá'ís infer other interpretations. In Exploring the Book of Isaiah we will undertake a careful reading of the text to understand its historical nature and to put Bahá'í interpretations in an historical context.

RL120 **Christianity for Deepening and Dialogue**

In Christianity for Deepening and Dialogue we will look at the development of Christianity: the historical Jesus; the formation of the Bible; the development of Mediterranean Christianity and its later split into Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism; the rise of Protestantism and the modern age; and the vast diversification of Christianity throughout American history. We will explore the immense diversity of modern Christianity and the difficulty of crafting a single approach to them all. We will look at some basic Christian teachings—incarnation, sin, and grace—and such concepts as the trinity, the Eucharist, baptism, the kingdom of God, faith in miracles, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. We will study Christianity for the purposes of deepening and dialogue—that is, for understanding the basics of Christianity as a divinely revealed religion and for learning how to share the Bahá’í perspective with a variety of Christians in an informed and respectful manner.

RL122	Exploring the New Testament
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The Christian New Testament is a collection of chronicles and letters that pertain to the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, known as Christ. Composed by numerous writers, the works were accepted as a sacred collection in the third and fourth Christian centuries. In Exploring the New Testament, we will study the New Testament’s major books in the light of progressive revelation and in their historical context. We will cover the Gospels; writings attributed to James, Jude, Paul, and Peter; the Book of Revelation; and specific themes in the New Testament. We will also briefly examine the vast Christian literature that did not become part of the approved “canon” now known as the New Testament. Our study of the New Testament is for the purposes of deepening and dialogue—that is, for understanding the basics of Christianity as a divinely revealed religion (and, by comparison, the Bahá’í Faith) and for learning how to share the perspective of the Bahá’í Faith with a variety of Christians in an informed and respectful manner.

RL123	Exploring the Book of Revelation
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The Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) holds a unique position as the only prophetic book in the Christian New Testament. The prophetic vision opens with a statement of its authority, a vision to John of Patmos from God transmitted by means of Jesus Christ and an angel. Its rich symbolism has been the object of study by Christians, both scholarly and popular, giving rise to many views of the future and the end times. Its language and symbolism owe much to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and likewise shares motifs with later revelation in the Holy Qur’an and the Bahá’í writings. In Exploring the Book of Revelation we will explore the contents of this fascinating sacred vision in the context of progressive revelation, highlighting its links to both former and later sacred texts. The Bahá’í Faith offers new interpretations of some of the passages in the Book of Revelation, and individual Bahá’í scholars infer other interpretations. In this course we will undertake a careful reading of the contents of this sacred text to understand its historical nature, emphasizing those passages for which authoritative interpretations are given by Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

RL130	Introduction to Islam
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In Introduction to Islam we will begin with a survey of the life of Muhammad, a Manifestation of God, and a review of the origins, development, and content of the Qur’an, including the teachings and practices of Islam. We will then examine the Sunni/Shiite split over issues of succession and authority and discuss Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, and the Sufi poetic tradition. Finally, we will turn to contemporary Islam and to Islam and other religions, including the Bahá’í Faith. With ongoing anti-Islamic sentiment throughout the world, there is no better time to improve our understanding of one of the world’s most important and influential religions and to prepare for

discussing it with Christian and Muslim friends and neighbors.

RL132 **Introduction to Shi'i Islam**

Shoghi Effendi states that the Bahá'í Faith started as “a heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of the Shaykhi school of the Ithna-'Ashariyyih sect of Shi'ah Islam” (God Passes By xii). He also says that Bahá'ís “must strive to obtain, from sources that are authoritative and unbiased, a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam--the source and background of their Faith” (The Advent of Divine Justice 75: 74). In this course we will focus on Shi'ism and, especially, on the Ithna-'Ashariyyih (or Twelver) school of Shi'ah Islam. We will also examine the history of this sect and its distinctive teachings. In particular, we will look at the split into Sunni and Shi'ah in Islamic history, the history and doctrine of the Imamate, the Twelfth Imam, and the developments in Shi'ism (especially the Shaykhi movement) that led to the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths. The primary text for this course is Moojan Momen, Introduction to Shi'i Islam (George Ronald or Yale University Press, 1985); new and second-hand copies can be obtained from Amazon, and second-hand copies, from ABEbooks and AddALL.com.

RL133 **Introduction to Shaykhism**

In this Introduction to Shaykhism we will explore the history and teachings of a community whose founders and ideas were essential to the rise of the Bábí Faith. In two units we will read and discuss biographies of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. In additional units we will examine their teachings, focusing particularly on their concept of God. Throughout the course, we will explore the relationship of Shaykhism to Shi'ite Islam and to the Bábí Faith as well as the role its founders played as forerunners of and preparation for the Báb. Many of the readings will come from the brilliant work of the French scholar A. L. M. Nicholas, available in English translation or summary, but we will also use the works of other Shaykhi scholars.

RL134 **Introduction to Sufism**

Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam concerned with describing the nature of and developing a deep personal relationship with God. Sufis created a vast literature in poetic and essay form about the human relationship with God, developed important ideas and terms to describe it, and wrote ecstatically about the experience itself. In the process they discovered important insights into the meaning of many Qur'anic passages. The language they developed provided the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh with a powerful vocabulary and a set of metaphors to express their revelation. In Introduction to Sufism we will study the origins and development of the Sufi tradition and its foundational role for understanding many Bahá'í texts.

RL135 **Exploring the Qur'an**

The Qur'an is the divine revelation on which the religion of Islam is based. Shoghi Effendi has emphasized the importance of Bahá'ís' studying the Qur'an: “They must . . . approach reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas the study of the Qur'an which, apart from the sacred scriptures of the Bábí and Baha'i revelations, constitutes the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated Repository of the Word of God” (The Advent of Divine Justice 49). In a letter written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi advises “the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'an, as the knowledge of this sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand and intelligently read, the writings of

Bahá'u'lláh" (Directives of the Guardian 63). In Exploring the Qur'an, we will examine Baha'i references to the Qur'an and study a summary of the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam. Then we will study how the Qur'an describes itself and delve into several topics in the Qur'an: the nature of God; divine unity; the Prophets of God; and the Latter Day. Finally, we will discuss some Qur'anic verses as they relate to the Bahá'í Faith.

RL140 Hinduism for Deepening and Dialogue

In Hinduism for Deepening and Dialogue, we will examine the complex of beliefs and practices that constitute "Hinduism," numerically the world's third largest religion, and one of the oldest. We will begin with an overview of Hinduism, including the problem of defining what it is. After reviewing its history and sources of authority, we will explore central Hindu concepts (the nature of the divine, the self, and the soul; Krishna and the "avatara" doctrine; concepts of karma and rebirth); Hindu ethics and social structures; and Hindu practices (yoga, meditation, laws, worship, festivals and holy days, diet). A comparison with Bahá'í views will be threaded throughout. Last, we will examine Hinduism in the modern world, its spread from the place of its birth in the Indian subcontinent, and the growth of the Bahá'í Faith in India. We will be studying for two purposes: deepening in the basics of Hinduism as a divinely ordained religion and its relationship to the Bahá'í Faith and preparing for dialogue and service with adherents of Hinduism.

RL150 Buddhism for Deepening and Dialogue

In Buddhism for Deepening and Dialogue we will survey the life and teachings of the Buddha, the development of His ideas, and the widespread dissemination of Buddhism over much of Asia and, since the late nineteenth century, to the West. We will also read some Buddhist texts and examine similarities and differences between Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith (and other religions), including the emphasis both place on personal transformation. The course will deepen your understanding of an important religion that began in India and will prepare you for discussing spiritual concepts and practices with Buddhist friends and neighbors. All readings for this course will be provided online, with no purchase of books required.

RL160 Chinese Religions for Deepening and Dialogue

In this course we will cover the rise and development of the Taoist and Confucian traditions; explore their ideas, values, and practices; consider the ways they are being modified and applied in the modern world; and examine their similarities to and differences from the Bahá'í teachings. By studying Chinese thought and values, Baha'is should obtain a greater appreciation of the Bahá'í Faith and acquire experience in relating the Faith to Chinese people in an informed and respectful manner.

RL166 Indigenous Perspectives on the Sacred

In Indigenous Perspectives on the Sacred (formerly titled Native American Religion and Spirituality), we will examine the common threads found in indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices and the universal message of Bahá'u'lláh. We will explore how Native American teachings and values reflect some of the more salient teachings and principles of the Bahá'í revelation and in so doing will also inquire into how culture shapes our perceptions of reality and seek to gain insights into our inherent cultural biases. We will cover a range of topics: the historic culture clash between indigenous peoples and settlers; the use of language and symbolism in intercultural

communication; the impacts of colonization and Christianity in the colonization process; and the effect both have had on native religion and spirituality and the implications for the spread of Bahá'u'lláh's message in indigenous communities. In our readings, discussions, and consultations, we will strive for expansive thinking and will also revisit 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement about the importance of the original inhabitants of North America and the Lakota prophecy about the rise of the Seventh Generation, reframing these statements in the context of the current Five Year Plan (2016-21).

Department of Social Transformation

[Link to 2019 Schedule](#)

Chair: Vasu Mohan

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Purpose Statement

The department explores the application of the Bahá'í teachings to the various problems of society.

Courses

SC115	The Bahá'í Faith and Social Change
<p>This course considers some of the most controversial issues of the day -- politics, economics, human rights, the environment -- and what can be done about them from the point of view of the Bahá'í Faith. It provides an overview of the Bahá'í perspective on the nature, purpose and evolution of society; the role of the individual, the community and its institutions in carrying forward an 'ever-advancing civilization'; and the value of social action. Each unit provides an introduction to the Bahá'í texts and principles on the topic, the tools used by Bahá'ís to translate these into their own thinking, social discourse and action, and case studies of the implementation of these at the grassroots. It examines the Bahá'í view of history, its understanding of the role of religion in social evolution, its conceptualization of the direction of social progress and how the Bahá'ís are engaging in social action at present, using the tools of education and training, reflection, service to humanity and consultation. Course participants will be encouraged to make use of what they learn in the conversations they have with others and as they participate in public discourses in spaces such as interfaith meetings or meetings or conferences of civil society organizations. Individual units look at power, politics, governance and law; economics, work and business, poverty eradication and wealth; human rights, gender equality; justice, eliminating prejudice; the environment; unity, peace, development; education, service to humanity, consultation.</p>	
SC121	The Equality of Women and Men

In The Equality of Women and Men we will aim to acquire a thorough understanding of the Baha'i principle of the equality of women and men and to explore its application in personal development, family life, the workplace, and Bahá'í communities and in engaging with public discourses. We will address topics such as the nature of human identity and the acquisition of self-knowledge; equality in the family; transforming economic structures and processes; women's role in building peace and governance; eliminating violence against women; men and boys as partners in achieving equality; and the important role played by the media. We will draw on the Bahá'í writings, social science and policy research, and analysis and commentary from a variety of sources. Special emphasis will be placed on champions of equality from Baha'i history, including `Abdu'l-Bahá, and case studies of successful initiatives and communities working toward gender equality in the private and public spheres. Participation from both male and female learners is strongly encouraged to maximize opportunities for learning.

SC122	Racism in America: The Most Vital and Challenging Issue
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This course will examine racism and racial prejudice in American society in some of its most serious manifestations, explore the content and significance of relevant Bahá'í authoritative texts, and consider how Bahá'ís can initiate meaningful conversations and public discourse in a variety of contexts. It will explore definitions of race, racism, and prejudice, and examine such subjects as colonialism and slavery; the prison industrial complex; Black Lives Matter and policing issues; white privilege and bias/stereotyping; segregation, gentrification, and reparations; black women and social justice; and the Civil Rights Movement. Ultimately, participants will acquire tools to apply this knowledge to Bahá'í community life and to use it in social-action projects.

SC130	Sustainable Development and the Prosperity of Humankind
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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 Baha'i 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.

SC135	Climate Change
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Climate change is a major issue of our times. The nations of the world, in the Paris Agreement of 2015, have committed to keeping global warming well below a dangerous level, although they are far from being on track to do so. Despite partisan political debate, the defiance of vested interests, and distorted public perceptions, the science is unequivocal that global warming is real and is caused by human activities. The recent evidence is alarming. Climate change is not only a scientific but a deeply spiritual and ethical challenge. This course on Climate Change provides a basic scientific understanding of the causes and impacts of climate change,

discusses its ethical challenges, and relates them to the spiritual teachings of the world's religions, particularly the Bahá'í Faith. It will help you consider changes in your lifestyle to bring greater coherence to your life and show you how to incorporate environmental and social responsibility in Bahá'í core activities and community gatherings. It elevates public discourse above partisan politics by introducing spiritual responses to the climate crisis and demonstrating how the harmony of science and religion can be applied for the well-being of humankind. The course includes many optional resources for those who wish to delve more deeply into climate-change issues.

SC136	Bahá'í Perspectives on Agriculture and Food
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Bahá'u'lláh described agriculture as a "a vital and important matter" that was foremost among the principles "conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world" (Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas 90, 89). Yet current agricultural policy often prioritizes yield and profit over health, sustainability, and sociocultural features of rural communities, while the poor struggle to even feed themselves, and climate change makes farming increasingly unpredictable. These and other factors threaten food security. In Bahá'í Perspectives on Agriculture and Food, we will examine the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith on agriculture, food, and rural development; relate these teachings to contemporary public discourse on these issues; and suggest ways in which agricultural activities can be incorporated into core activities, community-building, and emerging social action.

SC138	Sustaining 11 Billion People: Challenges for an Ever-Advancing Civilization
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Baha'u'llah stated that, "All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization." Based on the book ELEVEN, this course investigates issues and principles involved for individuals, communities, and institutions in contributing to a sustainable civilization with 11 billion people, the UN population projection for 2100. Given that civilization is already unsustainable, what changes are needed to ensure that humanity can advance with an additional 4 billion people? Key to this process will be an ethical revolution that will reinforce efforts to reduce humanity's ecological footprint by seeding a new global culture. Sustaining 11 Billion People: Challenges for an Ever-Advancing Civilization shows how the principles and plans of the Baha'i Faith directly address these fundamental concerns.

SC140	The Promise of World Peace
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In 1985 the Universal House of Justice issued The Promise of World Peace, the first in a series of ground-breaking documents which addressed humankind's situation and needs. Thirty-one years later the message enshrined in The Promise of World Peace, known to many as "the Peace Message", is as cogent and urgent as ever. The world is increasingly embroiled in conflict, whether "hot" or "cold". Conflicts over territory, conflicts surrounding nationalist ambitions, conflicts that claim religious inspiration, tribal conflicts, conflicts of all kinds increasingly involve terrorist organizations, fundamentalist religious and ideological groups, nationalist groups, and so on, and are ever more intractable. As the Universal House of Justice wrote in 1985: "Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behaviour, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth. At this critical juncture when the intractable problems confronting nations have been fused into one common concern for the whole world, failure to stem the tide of conflict and disorder would be unconscionably irresponsible." Much progress has been made in seeing the challenges facing humanity as "one common

concern for the whole world", but, sadly, the governments of the world and the United Nations have failed to stem "the tide of conflict and disorder". In our study of *The Promise of World Peace* we will consider what changes have taken place in the world situation since 1985, for good and for ill, and we will familiarise ourselves with the document's themes and arguments so that we can draw on them in our contributions to public discourse and our conversations with those we encounter in our daily lives. We will learn to think positively as we recall the words of the House of Justice: "Far from signaling the end of civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled will serve to release the 'potentialities inherent in the station of man' and reveal 'the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality'."

SC145 Applying Bahá'í Principles to Discourses on Governance in the United States

The Universal House of Justice has commented on the breakdown of trust and collaboration between the individual and institutions of governance because of the corrupt practices of partisan politics. This "broken" state of American democracy is the subject of numerous books and articles. Bahá'ís have something to contribute to this discussion, for the Bahá'í electoral process with its consultative approach to decision-making and Bahá'í efforts in developing human resources and building communities constitute a living model of democratic life. In *Applying Baha'i Principles to Discourses on Governance in the United States* we will explore how Bahá'ís might contribute to discourses on governance in a way that speaks the language and engages the concerns of scholars, activists, and other people of good will working for civic renewal in the United States.

SC150 Building a World Federation: The Key to Resolving Our Global Crises

As humanity passes through stages of collective growth and moves toward integration and unity, it finds itself caught in the thick of many painful and seemingly intractable challenges that mark a turbulent adolescence--crises such as climate change, financial upheavals, proliferation of nuclear weapons, gross human-rights atrocities, and mismanagement of critical natural resources. In *Building a World Federation: The Key to Resolving Our Global Crises*, we will examine how we can solve these and similar problems using 'Abdu'l-Baha's advice offered a century ago about establishing collective decision-making and implementing institutions that can and should evolve into a world federation of nation-states. We will also explore the lessons we can usefully glean from the American experience of establishing a federation as well as from Europe's ongoing experiment as it moves toward deeper integration. Finally, we will learn how to respond effectively to skeptics who argue that creating a global federation is a pipe-dream because nations will never be willing to cede sovereignty, and we will equip ourselves with ways to allay fears that such a move will lead to an abusive world government that is so excessively centralized that it will not heed the voices of diverse populations and minorities and will trample upon their rights.

SC155 Developing the "Gems of Inestimable Value": Educating Through the Bahá'í Revelation

The goal of this course is to introduce learners to the guidance contained in the Writings of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith on education and to implement activities in formal and informal educational settings. Through a structured study of both Bahá'í and secular sources, learners will increase their understanding of the unique wisdom found in the Bahá'í Faith as it applies to both the education of children and the lifelong learning of everyone. Topics include defining the meaning of education from the Bahá'í perspective, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Four

Criteria of Comprehension," combining material, human and spiritual education, and promoting education that unifies in secular or morally challenging environments. This course will appeal to educators at every level of experience. Learners will engage in conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive learning activities which will provide tools to address social action and social discourse methods in order to improve education and society.

SC160	Economics and Community Building
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Economics and Community Building is designed to prepare learners to take action in community-building and economic development. We will analyze the world's economic conditions through an in-depth study of the Bahá'í Writings and recent letters from Bahá'í institutions, as well as secular sources, and plan strategies for implementing their guidance to develop economic activities with moral and spiritual foundations. Topics include the economic significance of justice, economic well-being and prosperity, the impact of oneness on economic life, village and community economics, and applying the learning from the course.

SC165	Economic Justice in a World of Injustices
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The topic of economics is vast and complex. It is commonly assumed that the economic health of a society is accurately represented by indices such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and that the human experience is all but irrelevant. Many people are intimidated by economics and some view it as problematic to the forward progress of humanity and the planet. In this course, however, we will view economics and economic justice from a totally different perspective: through the lens of distributive justice.

According to the Bahá'í Writings, economic progress is perpetuated by justice. Issues of economic justice are fundamentally about the ethics and moral foundation of income distribution. Distributive justice is often considered not to belong to the scope of economics, but there is actually an important body of literature in economics that addresses normative issues in social and economic justice.

SC170	Achieving Moral Excellence in Business
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Offered in collaboration with the Baha'i inspired organization ebbf (Ethical Business Building the Future, ebbf.org), Achieving Moral Excellence in Business allows learners to explore and redefine the fundamentals of a new business and management paradigm founded on revolutionary spiritual and moral principles drawn from the Baha'i Revelation. To provide a contrast, we will first review current understanding of business ethics and then challenge commonly held assumptions in business and management. We will take time to rethink the purpose of business, examine the meaning of such spiritual and moral values as unity, justice, nobility, and service, and explore how these values and operational principles such as consultation apply in a business environment. We will then explore groundbreaking concepts of leadership, power, and corporate governance.
Audience: The course should be of interest to anyone interested in starting a business, improving their business, transforming their work environment, providing innovative and transformational consulting services or sharpening their social entrepreneurship skills.

Independent Sections

[Link to 2019 Course Schedule](#)

The Arts and Writing

The section offers courses that help people express their understanding of the Bahá'í Faith in prose, poetry, commentary, music, painting, and other arts.

Courses

AL120	The Bahá'í Faith and the Arts
<p>In The Bahá'í Faith and the Arts we will explore the purpose of the arts from a Bahá'í perspective. Among other topics, we will discuss how art and religion have harmonized and conflicted in the past; how the Bahá'í dispensation will be similar to and different from the past; the artist as a person with an important gift to share with the world; and how the Bahá'í writings encourage artists. We will also consider how to reframe imagination, creativity, and risk-taking within a Bahá'í context; how to prioritize the positive aspect of creativity to enhance our lives, our communities, the Bahá'í Faith, and the future; and how to develop a serviceable language about the arts that enables us to integrate the arts more fully into Feasts, Holy Days (particularly the 2019 bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb), core activities, commemorations, and so on and to include more people in art making and appreciation of the arts.</p>	
AL121	The Arts and Community Building
<p>The Arts and Community Building is based on Jenina Lepard's book, <i>The Fashioner: Reflections on the Role of Music and the Arts in Building a Global Community</i>. We will take a theoretical look at the role of the arts in society and in the Bahá'í Faith specifically as well as a practical look at how we can utilize various arts in core activities, feasts and holy days, and other aspects of Bahá'í life. During the final two weeks of the course, learners will complete a final project based on their own ideas for incorporating the arts in at least one core activity.</p>	
AL122	Gifts of the Spirit: The Spiritual Practice of Creative Writing
<p>In this course, students will work one on one with a mentor who is a published author and experienced editor to design and complete a creative project in the form of poetry, fiction, a personal essay, or a memoir. In preparation for embarking on this project, students will explore various practical and aesthetic questions relating to writing, such as 1) how should one approach creative work as a writer? 2) what is the relationship between writing and spiritual practice? 3) what kinds of subjects should one choose to write about? 4) how should one use language? 5) what is the role of the writer in the community? and 6) how does one live a productive writing life? The goal of this course will be to complete a literary project and also to understand what kind of work must be done in order to achieve publication. Some of the work produced</p>	

in this course may be considered for the online journal of the arts at <http://www.elixir-journal.org>.

AL123	Writing About the Writings: The Art and Craft of the Personal Reflection Piece
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In the past, the practice of exegesis, or drawing the meaning out of scriptural texts, has been the province of scholars specially qualified to produce scholarly commentary. In Writing about the Writings: The Art and Craft of the Personal Reflection Piece, however, students will engage in a different kind of exegesis with the goal of writing a more informal and accessible kind of commentary that does not require scholarly background—the personal reflection piece. The assumption behind the course is that all readers have a share in the multiplicity of meanings, which, according to `Abdu'l-Bahá, are embedded within scripture. The purpose of the course is to empower readers of Bahá'í scripture to share their insights into the Bahá'í writings in the context of the personal reflection piece, a form of commentary that does not employ the conventional apparatus of scholarship, such as research, critical analysis, and familiarity with other commentary on the same texts but, rather, simply embodies the individual reader's thoughtful response to a given passage, tablet, or longer work by the Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, or `Abdu'l-Bahá. You will learn the art and craft of writing such a personal reflection piece by receiving instruction from faculty as well as feedback from fellow students.

AL124	The Seven Valleys and the Arts of Transformation
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The purpose and method of this course is to actively use the arts to explore the path of spiritual development as presented in Baha'u'llah's The Seven Valleys, which describes the states and stations of spiritual progress. Each week, the learner will be responsible for reading materials related to these stages, and exploring topics and questions through an artistic expression, such as a poem, drawing, or music, along with a caption and/or succinct explanation (up to 50 words). At the end of the course the learners will be asked to present an essay, collage or portfolio of art created in the course or an artwork that summarizes what they learned and how this experiential process affected their personal growth.

Bahá'í Community and Administration

The section explores aspects of Bahá'í community life and administration in order to help improve one's understanding of them and develop skills to improve their functioning and effectiveness.

Courses

Courses in the 300 series can be taken at the college-level or can be audited

CA105	The Badi' Calendar
<p>The Bahá'í Faith has a unique calendar of 19 months of 19 days each, plus 4 or 5 days of Ayyam-i-Ha to bring the length of the year up to a full solar cycle. Through this calendar, "sacred moments are distinguished, humanity's place in time and space are reimagined, and the rhythm of life recast." The Universal House of Justice, in a letter dated July 10, 2014, has called "upon the Baha'is of the East and West to adopt . . . the provisions that will unite them in the common implementation of the Badi' calendar." The House of Justice has also fixed the start of the year on the first day of spring as it occurs in Tehran. In The Badi' (Baha'i) Calendar we will consider the purpose and nature of calendars in general, the organization of the Baha'i calendar (created by the Báb and called the Badi' calendar), the spiritual significance of the names of "the periods and cycles, months and days" in the calendar, and the purpose and timing of Baha'i holy days. We will also compare the Baha'i calendar to the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic calendars.</p>	
CA110	The Mashriqu'l-Adkar: Dawning Place of the Mention of God
<p>Baha'u'llah, in His Kitab-i-Aqdas, instructed Baha'is to build Houses of Worship, which are dedicated to the praise of God: "The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits." This course will examine the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar; explore authoritative texts by Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice about the institution; review the completion of continental Houses of Worship in Turkmenistan, the United States, Uganda, Australia, Germany, Panama, India, Samoa, and Chile and the development of the next seven local and national Houses of Worship now being planned; and explore how the devotional character of a future House of Worship in your community can evolve and flourish.</p>	
CA125	How to Organize and Maintain a Bahá'í Archives

Organized by the United States National Baha'i Archives and taught by three Bahá'í archivists, How to Organize and Maintain a Bahá'í Archives will introduce local and national Baha'i archivists to principles that will help them to organize and maintain their collections. Registration for the course is open to local and national Bahá'í archivists (and to others only by permission of the National Archives). The course will include activities requiring access to archival materials in a Baha'i archives. Two units will cover basic archival principles; the acquisition, arranging, and processing of records and personal papers, including electronic records; nonpaper materials, including digital assets; reference services; exhibits; quarters for housing archival materials; and preservation. Another unit will involve your working on an archival project: either a survey of your archives or advanced work on a project of your choosing. A final unit will guide you through a final report and proposal to your Local or National Spiritual Assembly.

CA145

**An Excellent and Priceless Heritage:
The Three Covenants of the Bahá'í Faith**

This course will be an exploration of the three successive Covenants in this Dispensation. We will first examine the Covenant of the Báb which prepared the way for Bahá'u'lláh. This will be followed by a study of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant establishing 'Abdu'l-Bahá as His Successor - a Covenant which He described as "an excellent and priceless Heritage." Then we will make a careful examination of what Shoghi Effendi termed "the twin Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" – so closely integrated that he referred to "their Book" and "their Will". The last part of the course will focus on how these twin Covenants establish the Universal House of Justice as Head of the Faith. We will study the emphatic promise of divine guidance "that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body" receives from the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; examine the sacred documents granting it broad authority; and through the assurance in these documents develop greater confidence in following its guidance, and learn to never be swayed by any challenges posed to its sphere of authority or to its guidance.

CA342

Bahá'í Institutions, the Community, and the Individual

Every society has three "protagonists": the individual; the community; and the institutions of government and civil society. These protagonists are all too often in conflict, pursuing their own interests, rather than acting for the well-being of all. But the Bahá'í community is learning--with the guidance of the Universal House of Justice--about a new conception of the protagonists and the transformation of their relationships to ones "characterized by cooperation and reciprocity." Through this course we will study the nature of the three protagonists, their roles and relationships. Enriched by our deeper understanding, we will be better equipped to play our parts in the building of the new civilization envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh.