

Social Transformation Certificate Program

Wilmette Institute Mission:

The mission of Wilmette Institute is to offer a quality academic non-degree certificate program and courses through online education in a Bahá'í approach to Social Transformation. Wilmette Institute offers distinctive learning experiences characterized by action and reflection that aim to raise capacity in learners from diverse populations. We seek to understand how a Bahá'í perspective, applied to prevalent discourses, helps build a more compassionate, just, and inclusive society.

Guiding Principles:

- Universal peace and justice will be established through the realization of the oneness of humanity and interconnectedness of the earth and all its inhabitants.
- Both science and religion are essential for sustainable development and prosperity of all.
- Systemic social problems require a holistic approach to discover lasting solutions.
- Scholarship does not begin and end with words but combines theory and praxis in study, consultation, action, and reflection.
- Sustainable social change requires human capacity development for people to become protagonists of their own material and spiritual well-being.

Social Transformation Certificate Program

The Wilmette Institute offers a graduate-level (open to upper-division undergraduate students) certificate program in Social Transformation. Learners explore racial unity, non-adversarial social change, education, and sustainable development by looking at the root causes and underlying assumptions of current prevalent discourses on these multifaceted issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. The program challenges participants to move beyond analyzing problems to fostering solution-based thinking, drawing upon a conceptual framework for action centered on the oneness of humankind.

Partnerships and Affiliations

[NCCU \(North Carolina Central University\)–5-Year Memorandum of Understanding](#)

The Wilmette Institute collaborated with stakeholders at NCCU to explore the role of the arts in addressing social issues. This partnership led to a theatrical production highlighting mass incarceration and later expanded into interdisciplinary faculty engagement. In 2024, Wilmette Institute representatives visited NCCU to strengthen collaboration, culminating in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with university leadership.

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, is a consortium of religious studies institutions with a shared library and academic programs. As an affiliated institute, the Wilmette Institute offers accredited courses each semester, available to students across the consortium.

Read more: [Partnerships](#)

Social Transformation Certificate Program: (Participants can take any 3 courses from the following list)

- Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being
- Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact
- Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World
- Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement

Apply Now: The Wilmette Institute invites prospective students to apply for our **graduate-level certificate program**, which is currently offered tuition-free. We are seeking students interested in committing to complete the program and provide meaningful feedback on each course.

Calendar: The [academic calendar](#) is based on a semester system (16-week courses starting in January and August each year).

Requirements: Applicants should either have a prior bachelor's degree or be a student in an undergraduate program at the junior or senior level. The Wilmette Institute will support students who wish to petition their institution of higher education to obtain credit.

Benefits: Students can work with dedicated and experienced faculty and like-minded students in a participatory and engaging format. They will be afforded the opportunity to apply theory into practice by contributing to social discourse. Those who complete the program can use the certificate for professional and personal development.

Course Descriptions:

Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact

This course explores the history, theory, and practice of nonviolent social change and community building. As students reflect on how to become effective protagonists of social change, we will explore the following questions: How has the philosophy of nonviolent social change contributed to societal development? What is the inner dimension of social change as well as collective outward change? In the pursuit of peace and justice, how can the means we

employ become fully coherent with the ends we seek? What is the role of knowledge, learning, training, and capacity building in processes of social change? What can be gleaned from the experience of the international Bahá'í community building and framework for action? Participants will contribute to public discourse and community-building efforts through dynamic discussions, analysis, research, and presentations.

Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement

This online course will examine how individual and collective transformation toward an anti-racist society necessitates the reconstruction of race and Blackness in the U.S. The course will explore some of the most significant manifestations of racism, root causes of issues presented with an interdisciplinary lens and a unique Bahá'í perspective. Units will explore a solutionary approach to the following topics: constructions of race and the oneness of humankind; stereotypes and cultural appropriation; colonialism and slavery; Civil Rights Movement; segregation, gentrification, environmental racism, and reparations; Prison Industrial Complex and Black Lives Matter; Black women in the U.S.; racism and technology; and constructive resilience and community building. Participants will acquire the capacity to apply this knowledge to their academic work, lived experiences, community building, and social discourse.

Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World

This course critically examines theoretical underpinnings, spiritual and material frameworks, local and global applications of sustainability, and human prosperity. We will take a critical look at a variety of vital topics through the interplay between the spiritual and material dimensions of sustainability: systems approaches; science and religion as coherent knowledge sources; reciprocity and restorative justice for the land; profit motive and consumer culture; climate; equity and the human face of sustainability; food, agriculture, and animal welfare; and the "green" future. This course will hone in on two discourses around sustainability and development: 1) The United Nations 2030 Agenda, a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals; 2) Bahá'í inspired framework that fosters human prosperity holistically with various actors on local, national and international levels as protagonists of their own development. Participants will acquire the capacity to apply their knowledge to their lives and community and contribute to public discourse. This interactive course will utilize a combination of assessment methods with varying requirements for graduate and undergraduate students.

Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being

In this course, participants will gain an academic and experiential appreciation of the centrality of education in building a prosperous society. During the course, participants will

walk with a local educational endeavor to apply concepts they are learning in the course to practice in the field through dialogue and collective reflection. Within the experience gained, participants will consider education founded upon several key ideas, including a nobility-based approach to students; how multiple ways of knowing and being nourish material and spiritual aspirations; how capacity building relates to community building; and how academic and grassroots endeavors can be mutually beneficial. Participants learn to read their reality in relation to educational endeavors and together engage in a pedagogy of social transformation in light of local and global trends in education.

Q and A:**What is unique about the Wilmette Institute Graduate-level Certificate program?**

The Wilmette Institute offers a certificate program (non-credit bearing) to equip participants to meaningfully contribute to public discourse on important issues of our time from an interdisciplinary perspective. The pedagogy offers participants opportunities to apply theory into practice through the process of consultation, action, reflection, and study (CARS) with their cohort and in their communities in a space that is dynamic, stimulating, and supportive.

What is the workload like for each course?

Each 16-week, 135 clock hour course will have readings, videos, and/or podcasts for each unit. Participants will post at least once a week in the forum on an aspect of the course materials with a question or comment, participate in a weekly Zoom discussion session, and do a final project of their choice.

Are the courses synchronous and asynchronous?

Courses are both online and synchronous. Participants will be participating in a Zoom discussion each week for two hours where there will be insights from the faculty and discussion with the group.

How long will it take to get the certificate?

The certificate requires the completion of three courses, designed to be completed in two years.

Do I have to take all four courses for the certificate?

Taking one or two courses in the series may be permitted, but in order to obtain the Wilmette Institute Graduate-level Certificate, three courses must be completed.