

# COURSE CATALOG

Jan - Dec 2026



**Wilmette Institute**



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Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission



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## Welcome from the Directors

Since 1995, the Wilmette Institute has been a center for dynamic higher education learning, bringing together diverse students and dedicated faculty committed to transformative education by offering certificate programs, online and hybrid courses, webinars, podcasts, seminars and special educational initiatives. Our transdisciplinary approach to education develops the capacity of participants to contribute meaningfully to the current discourses of society exploring both spiritual and material dimensions of our collective advancement. Our educational endeavors inspire a commitment to social change drawing upon a “Framework for Action” in the areas of community building, social action and contributing to prevalent discourses.

Today, contemporary society is increasingly afflicted by polarizing discourses and an array of social conflicts. At the WI, we believe these conditions call for the close examination of the underlying assumptions about human nature that shape our worldviews and social systems. We are dedicated to a process of social inquiry that leads to the development of an evolving framework for action that prioritizes the oneness of humanity as the central organizing principle of society.

In light of these beliefs, the pedagogy and programming of the Wilmette Institute promotes discourse and action aimed at the development of social relationships in which no individual or community is “othered.” These relationships cannot simply be demanded through protest, imposed through legislation, or conjured through media. To create these connections, we must learn through a multidimensional approach to transformative education—a form of education that builds constructive agency among the three protagonists of social change: the individual, community, and institutions. The educational processes of the WI aim to help these protagonists work together harmoniously and constantly attend to the twin principles of justice and unity. Connecting and balancing these two principles requires a new consciousness that is not imposed by the privileged few, but is developed through consensus building, non-violent cooperation, and the spiritual principle that “the purpose of justice is the appearance of unity.” As demonstrated in various contexts, lasting change is impossible without universal participation, toward a unity of thought, vision, action and purpose.

We invite youth, upper-division college students, Master’s students, and lifelong learners to explore and register in our academic programs and extension courses, where scholarship meets applied purpose. We welcome you to a learning community where people strive to be protagonists of their own spiritual and material development—ready to contribute meaningfully to public discourse, coupled with community-building and social action for the common good.

Dr. Derik Smith, Director  
Dr. Chitra Golestani, Associate Director

## Academic Calendar 2026

**Office Hours: Mondays – Fridays, 9 am to 5 pm Eastern Time**

Dec 15, 2025	Admissions Deadline for Spring 2026
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### Spring Semester, 2026

Jan 1	2026 Gregorian New Year: Administrative holiday
Jan 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
Jan 21	Instruction begins for Spring Semester 2026 courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC322 Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement</li> <li>• SC355 Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being</li> </ul>
Mar 11-17	Spring Break: Academic Holiday (Week 8)
Apr 3	Good Friday: Administrative holiday
Apr 21	First Day of Ridvan: Administrative holiday
Apr 29	Ninth Day of Ridvan: Administrative holiday
May 12	Spring Semester 2026 ends

### Summer Break, 2026

May 25	Memorial Day Holiday
May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah: Administrative holiday
Jun 19	Juneteenth Holiday
Jun 29	Admissions Deadline for Fall 2026 Semester
July 4	Independence Day Holiday
Jul 9	Martyrdom of the Bab: Administrative holiday

### Fall Semester, 2026

Aug 19	Instruction begins for Fall Semester 2026 Courses
Sep 7	Labor Day Holiday 2026
Oct 7-13	Fall Break: Academic Holiday (Week 8)
Nov 10-11	Twin Holy Birthdays: Administrative holiday
Nov 26-27	Thanksgiving: Administrative holiday
Nov 30	Admissions Deadline for Spring Semester 2027
Dec 8	Fall Semester 2026 ends
Dec 25	Christmas: Administrative holiday

## Introduction

### Our History

Learn about the [history of Wilmette Institute](#).

### Mission Statement

Equip higher education learners with the capacity to contribute to social transformation and public discourse through distinctive non-degree certificate programs grounded in an evolving Bahá'í framework for collective learning.

### Vision

The Wilmette Institute's educational framework, pedagogy, and learning processes do not claim to offer simplistic solutions to intractable social challenges. Our approach to transformative education provides learners with opportunities for critical thinking and systems thinking about the root causes of social problems; engaging holistic perspectives on social change that highlight the interconnectedness of issues to find lasting solutions. The framework guides us on a path of continuous inquiry into content and methods that enable faculty and students to draw on humanity's intellectual and spiritual heritage. On this path of inquiry, we attempt to learn systematically through an evolving, cyclical process of study, consultation, action, and reflection. We seek not only to acquire and deliver knowledge but to generate and disseminate it as a contribution to prevalent discourses in society.

The Wilmette Institute partners with like-minded institutions of higher education interested in entering into a systematic learning process focused on developing the capacity to contribute to prevalent discourses in society and engaging in social action. We work with institutional partners dedicated to longer-term processes of learning rather than sporadic events, and we cultivate inter-institutional relationships that are sustainable and mutually beneficial. Thus far, our experience collaborating with various institutions of higher education demonstrates that much is gained from the cross-pollination of approaches to transformative education and the establishment of a nexus between university initiatives and community organizations.

### Purpose

Wilmette Institute aims to offer academic programs and extension courses to upper-division college students, Master's degree students, and those interested in continuing education to foster scholarship on topics integrating relevant perspectives drawn from the Bahá'í teachings.

### Our Guiding Principles

- Human beings are essentially noble; they are capable of building an ever-advancing civilization.
- Both science and religion are essential to investigate reality.
- Systemic 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, so people become the protagonists of their own material and spiritual development.
- Universal peace and justice can be realized through a planetary consciousness of the oneness of humanity and the interconnectedness of the earth and all its inhabitants.

### **Our Institutional Goals**

The following institutional goals shape all Wilmette Institute programs and courses:

#### Knowledge:

- Demonstrate knowledge and interdisciplinary insights gained from the courses and service-learning.

#### Abilities:

- Compare and contrast Bahá'í teachings and structures to parallels in other religious traditions, ideologies, and perspectives critically and contextually.
- Analyze complex and interrelated local and global problems through critical systems thinking.
- Explore the intricate connections between spiritual and material solutions to social issues through research, praxis, and the arts.
- Engage in public discourse and social action in interfaith and intercultural contexts.

#### Application: Apply knowledge, insights, and skills to:

- One's individual reality,
- Community-building efforts,
- Participatory social action and
- Public discourse, with the goal of both spiritual and material progress.

### **Accreditation**

Wilmette Institute is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission. The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

#### DEAC Contact Information

Distance Education Accrediting Commission  
1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Email: [info@deac.org](mailto:info@deac.org)  
Phone: (202) 234-5100  
Website: [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org)



### **WI Community of Learning**

The Wilmette Institute's program is based on interactive teaching, learning, and communication. Learners, faculty, and staff are responsible for maintaining high standards of scholarship and collegiality. Faculty and learners actively contribute to one another's learning through critical dialogue, integrative learning, and collaborative learning. As learners interact with faculty and other learners, they can expect to be challenged, feel a sense of accomplishment, be treated with respect, and become part of the Wilmette Institute community. Diversity—of thought, values, and opinion—is valued at the Wilmette Institute. All members of the Wilmette Institute community are expected to respect diverse perspectives.

## Organization

### **The Board of Trustees: The National Spiritual Assembly**

Wilmette Institute is an educational agency of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States. The National Spiritual Assembly is an incorporated 501(c)3 religious nonprofit organization whose nine members are elected annually by 171 delegates elected by the Bahá'ís throughout the contiguous 48 states (Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico have separate National Spiritual Assemblies). The names of the nine board members are available upon request. The National Spiritual Assembly hires full-time and part-time staff at Wilmette Institute and supports and approves its operating annual department budget.

### **The Executive Committee**

The National Spiritual Assembly has appointed an Executive Committee to WI, consisting of the Director of the Office of Education and Schools, the Director of Wilmette Institute, and the Associate Director of Wilmette Institute. The Executive Committee meets weekly via Zoom or in-person to assist with its mission, strategic objectives, and learning outcomes. It reports quarterly to the US National Spiritual Assembly.

#### *Executive Committee Members*

- Jeff Albert - Director, Office of Education and Schools
- Derik Smith - Acting Director of the Wilmette Institute
- Chitra Golestani - Associate Director of the Wilmette Institute

### **The WI Advisory Board**

Members are appointed because they are updated experts in the field of Social Transformation. The Board helps determine the appropriateness of our curricula and courses for the level and scope of the certificate program. The Board provides feedback on alignment between the mission statement, our program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, and the courses themselves. The Board is a source of external feedback on our educational activities. The Board helps WI determine that our courses are current and relevant.

#### *Advisory Board Members*

- June Manning Thomas, Ph.D., Centennial Professor Emerita of Urban and Regional Planning
- Michael L. Penn, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Department Chair, and Professor of Psychology at Franklin & Marshall College
- Erin Murphy-Graham, Ph.D., Associate Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley
- Esperanza Ochoa, Ph.D. (C), Mathematics Education Ph.D. Candidate, San Diego State University / UC San Diego

### **Faculty**

[Chitra Golestani](#), Ph.D. in Social Science and Comparative Education, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

- Areas of Expertise: Human Rights, Social Justice and Global Citizenship Education, Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice, Youth Activism, Conscious Living and Social Action

[Justin Scoggin](#), Ph.D. in Education, University of Idaho

- Areas of Expertise: Land Education, Education for Sustainable Development, Curriculum Innovation, Pedagogical Principles for Online Learning

[Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega](#), Ph.D. in Urban Education, Temple University

- Areas of Expertise: Broadened Participation in STEM, Persistence Among Underrepresented Women, Intersectional Identity

[Ymasumac Marañón Davis](#), Ph.D. in Education for Social Justice, University of San Diego

- Areas of Expertise: Transformative Processes, Oral Storytelling, Educational Justice

#### **Administrative Officers**

- [Acting Director](#) - Derik Smith
- [Associate Director](#) - Chitra Golestani
- [Chief Academic Officer](#) - Justin Scoggin
- [Registrar](#) - Nicola Casserly
- [Course Development Specialist](#) - Ymasumac Marañón-Davis, PhD
- [Digital Technology Specialist](#) - Hasti Khoshnammanesh

#### **Contacts and Responsibilities of WI Staff**

Students may seek information or support from the Academic Program Coordinator, the Registrar/Student Services Specialist, or the Associate Director. Use the table below for details about the main responsibilities of staff and faculty/instructors.

<p>Acting Director: Derik Smith  <a href="mailto:director@wilmetteinstitute.org">director@wilmetteinstitute.org</a></p>
<p>Acting Director Dr. Derik Smith guides the Wilmette Institute’s vision, mission, and strategic goals. His multiple responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the vision, mission, and goals of the Wilmette Institute are aligned with its educational activities</li> <li>• Oversee that the decisions of the Executive Team are implemented, addressing hindrances</li> <li>• Assist in forming new partnerships with like-minded institutions of higher education</li> <li>• Consult with the Academic Advisory Board and help to implement their advice,</li> <li>• Set agenda items for regular and special meetings</li> <li>• Oversee the work of the various members of the administrative team, including the Associate Director, Chief Academic Officer, Course Development Specialist, and Digital Technology Specialist. He also supervises the Office of the Registrar, Admissions &amp; Student Services, Office of Academic Affairs, and Office of Communications.</li> </ul>

Associate Director: Chitra Golestani  
[cgolestani@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:cgolestani@wilmetteinstitute.org)

The Associate Director assists the Director with various responsibilities and oversees the following areas of endeavor:

- Academic Advisory Board - Consults with the Executive Team about recommended names for the board, sets agenda items, plans meetings, and implements advice from the Academic Advisory Board.
- Office of the Registrar, Admissions & Student Services - Oversees the work of the registrar, admissions, and student services to ensure that the Institute's vision, mission, and policies are upheld. The institute believes that the accompaniment of students is essential for success; therefore, there is collaboration between the Associate Director, Registrar, and Digital Technology Specialist to ensure a meaningful and quality learning experience for students.
- Office of Academic Affairs - Ensures that the Office of Academic Affairs is conducting its responsibilities to serve the WI learning community.
- Library Services - Secures access to library services through the designated team members.
- Office of Communications - Manages internal and external communications in collaboration with appropriate team members.
- Tech Services - Oversees that the institute's tech services are secure, updated, appropriate, and functioning effectively to meet the demands of the educational activities.

Chief Academic Officer: Justin Scoggin  
[jscoggin@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:jscoggin@wilmetteinstitute.org)

The responsibilities of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) include:

- Oversee the Office of Academic Affairs, including key staff and teams (Academic Program Coordinators, Extension Course Coordinator, Course Development Specialist, Webinar Task Force).
- Lead the Course Development and Assessment Team, Curriculum Committee, and Professional Development Committee.
- Supervise the design, development, and implementation of certificate programs, learning outcomes, academic policies, and handbooks.
- Ensure curriculum development, academic quality, and coherence between the mission statement, programs, and course outcomes.
- Guide faculty professional development, including hiring, support, and evaluation processes.
- Serve as the Compliance Officer and support the development of WI's emerging pedagogical model.
- Participate in strategic agreements and relationship-building with universities and other educational institutions.

**Course Development Specialist:** Ymasumac Marañón-Davis, PhD (C)[ymaranon@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:ymaranon@wilmetteinstitute.org)

The Course Development Specialist works with the Chief Academic Officer on curriculum and course development.

- Contributes to the Curriculum Committee developing and evaluating program curricula
- Participates on the Course Development and Assessment Team, identifying course learning outcomes, course development, and evaluation
- Creates and nurtures a pedagogical structure of learning
- Develops and supports professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- Coaches faculty to work with WI's emerging pedagogical framework
- Assists Wilmette Institute administrative team in organizing a strong process of organizational learning

**Digital Technology Specialist:** Hasti Khoshnammanesh[hmanesh@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:hmanesh@wilmetteinstitute.org)

- Manages Moodle and oversees its maintenance
- Coordinates instructors of extension courses in developing learning materials and adhering to the course management protocols
- Creates designs and illustrations for marketing campaigns
- Uploads new content for new and updated courses
- Coaches faculty in Moodle editing
- Reviews course materials for accessibility, readability, consistency, and balance
- Collects and distributes Course Statistical Report and Analysis
- Manages digital marketing and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Manages and maintains Wilmette Institute's Google Workspace and public website
- Edits and proofreads the Newsletters

**Registrar & Student Services:** Nicola (Niki) Casserly[learn@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:learn@wilmetteinstitute.org)

Phone: (847) 733-3466 (leave a message)

- Course schedule/Student Queries about courses
- Changes to course dates and mentoring assignments
- Issues WI email addresses and uploads faculty and instructor bios and CVs
- Public Website: updates courses and webinars; creates and updates other pages as needed
- Maintains the Course Catalog & Student Handbook
- Assists students with login (Moodle)

- Manages Zoom accounts; assists faculty with Zoom
- Manages YouTube channel; uploads Zoom recordings to YouTube
- Prepares faculty training videos and coaches faculty in Moodle
- Collate/advise faculty on student statistics (demographics & feedback)
- Newsletter Chief Editor: oversees editorial team, publishes monthly Newsletter and weekly News at a Glance

### Partnerships and Affiliations

The Wilmette Institute formalized a partnership with North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a public historically Black university located in Durham, North Carolina, aimed at advancing social transformation through education. [The signing ceremony](#) on October 9, 2024, marked the official beginning of a five-year collaboration. NCCU is recognized as the nation's first public liberal arts institution for African American students. NCCU, with its motto "Truth and Service" holds similar values to the Wilmette Institute, making it an ideal partner. This partnership reflects a commitment to fostering educational initiatives that promote social change and community engagement through offering courses, advancing research, strengthening contributions to public discourse, and cultivating student engagement with the local community and beyond.

The Wilmette Institute is pleased to be an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, California, since January 2021. GTU is a consortium of 5 Protestant, 2 Catholic, and 1 Unitarian schools; six centers for the study of Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Theology and the Natural Sciences, Arts and Religion, and Values, Ethics, and Culture; and six affiliated institutions, four of which are respectively dedicated to Buddhism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Swedenborgianism, and the Bahá'í Faith. Wilmette Institute currently offers several courses per semester at GTU.

See more at [our Affiliate page on the GTU website](#).

The Wilmette Institute has collaborated with the [United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities](#) (UTS) since 2017. Our articulation agreement with the United Theological Seminary was renewed in 2019, and we have offered six credit-bearing courses to their master's students.

## Social Transformation Certificate

### Purpose Statement

The Social Transformation certificate program aims to facilitate gaining knowledge and insights, exploring personal and collective transformation through a Bahá'í framework, and contributing to an evolving public discourse on significant social issues. This program will also equip students to apply a process of study, consultation, praxis, and reflection in social action endeavors. Students will be able to effectively analyze the root causes of global issues through solution-based critical systems thinking and explore the prerequisites for building a just and peaceful society.

### Program Learning Outcomes

Program Outcomes	Learning Outcomes
Analyze local and global issues through critical systems thinking	Engage in state-of-the-art thinking about social issues from physical sciences, social sciences, and spiritual writings
	Gain an appreciation for the intimate connection between local and global challenges
	Relate the inherent interconnectivity of social issues through systems thinking to their local and global contexts
Explore the intricate connections between spiritual and material solutions to personal prosperity and social issues through research, praxis, and the arts.	Engage in our twofold moral purpose - a reciprocal process of personal and collective transformation
	Critically examine root causes for issues and explore lasting solutions
	Engage in a process of study, consultation, action, and reflection to address interconnected social issues
Engage in public discourse and social action on significant social issues.	Develop an attitude of learning with and from others through genuine dialog

	Identify effective means to contribute to the unfolding public discourse conducive to race unity and human prosperity.
	Engage effectively in social action that enables people to become protagonists of their own personal and collective development

### Certificate Completion Requirements

WI's Social Transformation Certificate program currently offers four courses. To receive a certificate of completion, students must successfully complete any three program courses (with a Proficiency or High Proficiency grade) in any order within two years from the registration date of their first course.

### Courses

#### Course Characteristics

- Wilmette Institute courses are only offered online.
- Courses have asynchronous and synchronous components. All courses require a one-and-a-half to two-hour video conference over Zoom per week, which are the only specific times students must log in. Days and times for the video conferences will be announced before the course begins, but they are usually held on Wednesdays (could be Tuesdays or Thursdays) at 5:00 pm Pacific time.
- Courses usually begin (Moodle opens for students) on Wednesdays (could be Tuesday or Thursday) at noon Pacific time. Each weekly unit begins (opens for students) and ends (assignments are due) on Wednesdays at noon Pacific time.
- Wilmette Institute uses a semester system, so courses last 16 weeks.
- Students must take the Wilmette Institute Orientation: First Look. This orientation is offered online, is self-paced, and takes approximately 4 to 6 hours. Students should complete the orientation before the first unit of the course in which they have registered.

#### Courses Offered

- SC315 Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact
- SC322 Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement
- SC330 Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World
- SC355 Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being

#### Course Descriptions and Faculty

SC315	Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact (135 Clock Hours)
Faculty: <a href="#">Chitra Golestani</a> , <a href="#">Justin Scoggin</a> , <a href="#">Ymasumac Marañón-Davis</a>	

This course examines social change through historical analysis in dialogue with a coherent framework for action. Students investigate dimensions of transformation through principles including humanity's collective maturity, universal participation, and coherence between material and spiritual prosperity. Emphasis is placed on articulating how social change is a long-term, collective learning process requiring systematic approaches rather than isolated actions. Students explore how effective changemakers embody social change by aligning vision, strategies, and actions with an evolving, coherent framework. Through analysis of and involvement in nonviolent, grassroots movements, students learn to apply these principles to local efforts to engage in public discourse.

SC322	Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement (135 Clock Hours)
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Faculty: [Ymasumac Marañón-Davis](#), [Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega](#)

This online course is the first in a three-part series that explores racism's complexities and the path toward unity through the Bahá'í Framework for Action. This framework, rooted in decades of global community building and social action, provides a lens to address systemic issues, highlighting principles like oneness and justice. This course will center Blackness as pivotal to understanding race relations and foreground Latine and Indigenous perspectives to address broader racialized experiences and collective healing. Spread across ten units, students will examine key elements of the framework, engage with relevant discourses, and apply their learning in their communities in the course project to foster unity and healing. The course focuses on process and coherence, avoiding a deficit framing of communities, centering instead on the telling of their own stories and experiences in pursuit of humanity's oneness. This journey seeks to understand racism and actively contribute to its elimination. Participants will build the capacity to contribute to race-related discourses in their academic work, lived experiences, and community-building efforts.

SC330	Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World (135 Clock Hours)
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Faculty: [Justin Scoggin](#), [Ymasumac Marañón-Davis](#)

This graduate-level course critically examines theoretical underpinnings, spiritual and material frameworks, and local and global sustainability applications. 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 United Nations 2030 Agenda. Students will experience the birth and development of the environmental justice movement through the story of Hazel Johnson. This course will unpack three principles of an evolving framework for learning as they pertain to the natural world: the oneness of humanity, humanity's movement toward its collective maturity, and coherence between the spiritual and material. Participants will be able to apply their knowledge to their own lives and community and, therefore, contribute to public discourse about environmental stewardship.

SC355	Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being (135 Clock Hours)
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Faculty: [Justin Scoggin](#), [Ymasumac Marañón-Davis](#)

In the Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being 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.

All faculty are available by appointment. Appointments can be made by reaching out to the faculty member's email address.

### **Minimum Course Enrollment Threshold Expectations**

The Office of Academic Affairs establishes minimum course enrollment threshold expectations that represent a strategic balancing of best practices in teaching and learning, faculty availability and workload, and available fiscal and physical resources. Enrollment policies may be amended from time to time to reflect current Institute conditions.

The Registrar reviews course enrollments and reports to the Chief Academic Officer how many students have enrolled to determine if the minimum threshold has been met, as enumerated below. When a course is shared, enrollment will be determined by aggregating the total number of students in the course. There is recognition that circumstances can arise that necessitate

offering, within reasonable tolerances, sections that do not meet the minimum threshold expectation. This could include courses required to ensure timely certificate completion, courses requiring special learning spaces, and those generating other strategic issues.

Minimum Enrollment Expectations for the Social Transformation certificate courses: 5 students.

Appropriate steps will be taken to minimize the cancellation of courses due to unmet minimum enrollment.

### **Tuition-Free Program**

The Social Transformation Certificate Program is provided at no cost. There are no fees or tuition charges associated with this program.

Wilmette Institute's academic admissions process is a holistic strategy that considers the primary goal of ensuring every applicant is a strong fit to complete the certificate program and mutually advance the applicant's personal learning, service, and career objectives. Traditional competitive measures of academic achievement (e.g., GRE, GPA) are not prioritized. Rather, a rigorous consideration of an applicant's unique life experiences, aspirations, and communication skills factor in calculating student and program "fit." For more information, see [a description of our tuition-free strategy](#).

### **Cancellation and Refund Policies**

A student has the right to cancel their Enrollment Agreement at any time. A student's notice of cancellation must be received by the WI in writing via email to [learn@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:learn@wilmetteinstitute.org). Cancellation is effective on the date the written notice of cancellation is sent. Notice of Cancellation is effective if it shows that the student no longer wishes to be bound by this Agreement or to continue their attendance in the Program at Wilmette Institute. If the student cancels their Agreement, the student shall not be liable to WI. Students are not charged fees or tuition. Therefore, cancellation shall have no monetary refund impact.

As Wilmette Institute does not charge tuition or fees for this program, refunds are not applicable for any cancellation or withdrawal activity. WI offers no Financial Student Assistance, does not participate in Title IV, and does not offer institutional scholarships, institutional discounts, institutional (non-Title IV) financial assistance, or payment plans.

## Admissions

### Admission Requirements

An Applicant to the WI Certificate Program must meet all the following minimum qualifications:

1. Must be 18 or older.
2. Completed or currently enrolled in an accredited bachelor's degree program with two years of study completed (Junior or Senior status). Transcripts required.
  - a. For education completed outside the United States, see International Education Policy below.
3. Currently reside in the U.S. or Canada, where WI is authorized by a state educational authority (see list of currently approved states)
4. English Language Proficiency (for applicants whose primary language is not English and their higher education degree was not completed in English, see the English Language Proficiency Policy below)
5. To enroll and remain in the WI certificate program, applicants and students must confirm that they are not taking more than twelve units per quarter or semester in another institution of higher learning. An applicant's / student's transcript is required to confirm compliance. If incompliant, the applicant/student will not be allowed to enroll until the Admissions Officer verifies compliance.
6. Identity verification is required for applications. Student identification will be verified during the admission interview. During the interview, a current government-issued photo ID must be shown, and the date of birth and state of residence must be accurate to ensure the integrity of the student's permanent record. Once enrolled, the student information system database (Populi) captures this verification data.

### International Education Policy

Wilmette Institute can consider applicants whose qualifying education was completed outside the United States, if they demonstrate educational equivalency to enrollment in an accredited bachelor's degree program with at least two years of study completed. These applicants must have their educational credentials evaluated by a qualified agency with expertise in the education practices of the country of educational origin. Acceptable transcript evaluation agencies are member agencies of the [National Association of Credential Evaluation Services](#) or the [Association of International Credential Evaluators](#), such as the [World Education Services](#). Transcripts must be delivered and translated according to the chosen agency's requirements and the evaluation must result in Wilmette Institute's receipt of an evaluation package directly from the evaluating agency.

### English Language Proficiency Policy

For applicants whose primary language is not English and whose higher education degree was not completed in English, additional documentation is required to confirm language proficiency. Wilmette Institute accepts the following English Proficiency Assessments (minimum scores indicated):

- 60 on the paper-delivered Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT),
- 71 on the Internet-Based Test (iBT),
- 6.5 on the International English Language Test (IELTS),
- 50 on the Pearson Test of English Academic Score Report,

- 100 on the Duolingo English Test,
- 55 on the 4-skill Michigan English Test (MET),
- 650/LP on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE),
- 650/LP on the Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE).
- A minimum score on the College Board Accuplacer ESL Exam Series as follows:
  - ESL Language Use: Score of 85
  - ESL Listening: Score of 80
  - ESL Reading: Score of 85
  - ESL Sentence Meaning: Score of 90
  - ESL Writeplacer: Score of 4
  - Comprehensive Score for all exams of 350
- A minimum grade of Pre-1 on the Eiken English Proficiency Exam,
- A minimum B-2 English proficiency level identified within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards and assessed through various ESOL examinations, including the University of Cambridge, or
- A transcript indicating completion of at least 30 semester credit hours with an average grade of “C” or higher at an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the International Handbook of Universities where the language of instruction was English.

### **Admission by Exception and Special Talent**

Wilmette Institute allows the Admissions Committee to admit students by exception or special talent who demonstrate the potential to succeed in the WI certificate program but do not meet all the eligibility requirements for admission. All applicants will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee on a case-by-case basis, valuing the merits of each independently of the others.

### **Application Process**

1. Applicants complete and submit the Online Admissions Application Form found on the WI website, which includes the following information:
  - a. Applicants submit names and contact information for academic and personal references and their relationship to the applicant. The Admissions Officer and/or the Admissions Committee will determine if it is necessary to contact the references.
  - b. Applicants must compose and submit an Admissions Essay based on one of five topics selected by the applicant.
  - c. Applicants fill in an Admissions Survey. The survey aims to gather additional information to help determine fit for the program.
2. In case of an incomplete application, the Admissions Officer will follow up with applicants to indicate missing information, submission channels, and deadlines. An exception to this rule may be made for official university transcripts if obtaining them will make the student miss the application deadline. In this case, acceptance into the

- program will then be provisional, and students will be required to send in an official transcript before starting the second course in the program.
3. Often, the Admissions Officer supports applicants with pre-admission counseling. The Admissions Officer is available to prospective students for consultations over the phone or through Zoom by appointment.
  4. Once all required admissions documentation is submitted, the Admissions Office will schedule an interview with the applicant. The Assistant Director or the Chief Academic Officer will conduct the interview.
  5. If the application is 100% complete before the submission deadline, the Admissions Officer will submit admissions documentation for each applicant to the Admissions Committee for final admissions decisions, which are communicated to the Admissions Officer in writing.
  6. The Admissions Officer communicates admissions decisions and next steps with all applicants in writing through official channels (email).
  7. The key next step is for the student to sign the Enrollment Agreement, in which the institution requires students to affirm receipt of the catalog and other institutional documents that disclose the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and institution prior to completing the enrollment process.

### **Admissions Application**

The application helps us assess the potential of applicants to successfully complete the Social Transformation certificate program. The application contains four sections:

1. An introduction that provides information about the program and the admissions process.
2. Program details and educational experience. In this section, applicants confirm which semester they can begin their studies, provide information and transcripts from their previous academic experience, and confirm their plans to transfer WI credits to another institution.
3. References and Essay. In this section, applicants provide information about their references, which must be academic or professional. Applicants can also submit a reference who is a member of the Auxiliary Board (a Bahá'í institution). In this section, applicants also submit their application essays.
4. Survey about the candidates' interests and expectations for the program.

### **Admission Interview**

The admissions process involves one formal interview with the candidate over the phone or via Zoom. However, the Admissions Officer may hold a preliminary, less formal interview to resolve specific questions or issues with the candidate's application. The Admissions Officer can take notes and use this information to complement the application to provide more complete information for the admissions committee.

The interview begins after the applicant shows a current government-issued ID during the video conference, and the interviewer can determine if it is a valid ID for the applicant.

### **Final Decision**

The Admissions Officer will submit only completed applications to the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee will make the final decision regarding admissions for all applicants. Emails will be sent out individually as decisions are made.

### **Credit Transfer**

WI does not accept transfer credits from other institutions.

### **Note on Transferability of Clock Hours and Certificates Earned at Wilmette Institute**

The transferability to an institution of higher learning of the certificate and/or clock hours students earned at Wilmette Institute is at the complete discretion of the institution to which students may seek to transfer. If the clock hours and/or certificates earned at WI are not accepted at the institution where a student seeks to transfer, the student may be required to repeat some or all of the coursework there. For this reason, students should ensure that their attendance at WI meets their educational goals.

## Technology Requirements

See the [Community & Technology Requirements](#).

### Required Skills and Equipment

All students must have a broadband Internet connection and a computer or laptop with up-to-date software. The Moodle course management platform works online and can be easily accessed on either a Windows PC or a Mac. Each student must have an email address to be assigned a Wilmette Institute email address (typically [firstinitiallastname@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@wilmetteinstitute.org)) for all correspondence related to WI courses. Basic computer and Internet browsing skills are required of all students. A webcam and microphone (or headset) for your computer is recommended.

#### Students should be able to:

- send/receive email and send attachments via email
- find resources through search engines
- use a word processor
- use presentation software (preferred for extension courses; required for college credit courses)
- be self-directed in learning new technology skills, such as following a handout or a step-by-step video tutorial

#### Hardware Requirements:

- PC or Mac with Fast Processor (laptops are fine, but Chromebooks may have issues connecting on Zoom)
- Monitor, Speakers & Microphone (may be built-in for laptops)
- Headset (useful if you have to study in a room with other people around you)
- Webcam (required for video conferences over Zoom)

#### Software Requirements:

- PC: Windows 8.1 or Above
- Mac: OS 10.14 or Above
- Browser: most recent release of Chrome or Firefox

#### Internet Connection Standards:

Test your Internet speed using [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net). Recommended speeds:

Ping response—less than **100ms**

Download speed—minimum **10Mbps**

Upload speed—minimum **2Mbps**

#### Additional Considerations:

- Using a shared Internet connection (other household members using the Internet) will impact connectivity
- Wireless connections are less robust; wired connections are recommended unless the Internet speed is well above the minimum required

- Your Internet speed may vary throughout the day based on the usage of other customers registered with your Internet Service Provider.

## Academic Policies

### Satisfactory Academic Progress

Wilmette Institute's Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy measures student progress toward certification completion by tracking:

- The number of completed courses in relation to the two-year time frame that students have to complete the certificate.
- Successful completion of courses with a Proficiency or High Proficiency grade.

WI's Social Transformation Certificate program currently offers four courses. To receive a certificate of completion, students must successfully complete any three program courses (with a Proficiency or High Proficiency grade) in any order within two years from the registration date of their first course. Wilmette Institute grades do not correspond to grade point averages (see Grading Policy).

Wilmette Institute offers a minimum of two courses per year, following the Academic Calendar published on the WI website. Students must actively register for each course they wish to take by completing a registration form available on Moodle.

The Registrar notifies students via email when registration opens for upcoming courses and follows up with students who do not register. Follow-up communication includes reminders about completed courses, outstanding requirements, and the timeframe to complete the certificate. The Registrar also provides support to troubleshoot issues impacting registration. If the two-year timeframe is approaching, the Registrar sends a reminder to students with the official program completion date and options to fulfill outstanding requirements. These options consider completed courses, outstanding courses, and the Academic Calendar for future course offerings.

WI does not accept transfer credits from other institutions. No credits earned at other institutions will be considered in Satisfactory Academic Progress calculations.

The Registrar evaluates satisfactory academic progress for students enrolled in certificate programs at the end of each term. If students are unable to meet minimum standards for progress (e.g., insufficient remaining terms to complete program requirements), the Registrar notifies them that they can no longer register for courses in the Social Transformation Certificate program. Students in this situation may reapply to the program by completing the admissions process. The Admissions Committee determines whether to accept the student into the program and which credits, if any, to accept from the previous attempt.

### Grading Policy

#### Grading Philosophy

Wilmette Institute is committed to high academic standards that reflect real-world demands for excellence. Upon reflection on how student learning outcomes can best reflect our mission, the Wilmette Institute has adopted a model that focuses faculty and student attention on success and the willingness and capacity to make improvements to achieve success. It has also

eschewed failure as an academic standard. Our rubrics focus on student competency in building the capacities set out in the course learning outcomes, avoiding the success/failure academic performance model. Academic performance is therefore evaluated using “proficient” for those able to demonstrate the identified capacities and “emerging proficiency” for student work that still needs improvement to achieve proficiency as described in the course learning outcomes. We also use “high proficiency” for student work that demonstrates superior competency regarding course learning outcomes.

All certificate courses at Wilmette Institute are offered at the graduate level. The grading descriptors for all courses are: “High Proficiency” (HP), defined in traditional terms as a minimum of 90%; “Proficiency” (P), defined in traditional terms as between 80% - 89%, and “Emerging Proficiency” (EP), defined in traditional terms as 79% and below.

### **Pass/Fail Grading System - Grade Equivalency Chart**

<b>Emerging Proficiency (EP)</b>	<b>Proficiency (P)</b>	<b>High Proficiency (HP)</b>
79% and below	80 - 89%	90% and above

### **Grade Point Averages**

Wilmette Institute does not calculate or report Grade Point Averages. GPA is not a factor in determining satisfactory academic progress, graduation, or financial aid (WI does not offer financial aid). GPA on transcripts from other institutions is not a factor in determining admission. Wilmette Institute will report percentage and qualitative grades (Emerging Proficiency, Proficiency, High Proficiency) on transcripts. Institutions receiving WI transcripts for credit can use the percentages to calculate student GPAs according to their methods.

### **Course Completion**

A student must achieve either Proficiency or High Proficiency to successfully complete a course.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is only counted towards the synchronous elements of a course, that is, through the regular video conferences held with students. Asynchronous elements are “counted” by their completion.

All students enrolled in online coursework are expected to participate actively in the course. If a faculty member prefers to count attendance for asynchronous elements of hybrid courses, “participation” is defined as the student’s virtual presence for and participation in discussions, activities, and related forms of electronic contact occurring in a course’s learning environment(s): e.g., participation in on-line discussion about academic matters, media viewing, group activities, whole class or one-on-one chat, and completion and submission of assignments. Broad discretion regarding the required frequency and quality of a student’s participation rests with the lead faculty and should be delineated in the course syllabus.

### **Assessment of Papers and Projects**

Students will receive detailed information on the assessment methods in the course syllabus. The Wilmette Institute does not use standardized examinations that require proctors. Make-up assessments are at the discretion of the faculty.

### *Course Project*

At the end of each term, projects or papers are required in all courses. Details about projects or papers and partial and final due dates are published in the syllabus. Projects and papers must be submitted before the due date. If a student has a reason for delay, a reasonable compromise with their instructors can be discussed and recorded with the Office of the Registrar.

### **Special Grades**

The following non-numerical grades may also be assigned:

#### *D = Drop*

Students can drop a course within two weeks of the first day of class by notifying the faculty of their decision in writing.

#### *W = Withdrawal*

If a student decides to remove themselves from a course more than two weeks after the first day of class but during the first half of the course by writing a letter to the Registrar justifying their decision, they receive a withdrawal (W) on their transcript. If no letter is written or if a student withdraws from a course after its midpoint, then the student will receive an “Emerging Proficiency” grade.

A “W” is awarded to students who notify the Registrar of their desire to formally withdraw from a course after the drop period and before the course's midway point. The W is included in the student's transcript unless it is replaced by a grade on a subsequent attempt. Withdrawal policies and deadlines are outlined in the Admissions package.

#### *AU = Audit*

At the option of the Program Coordinator, a course may be audited with the permission of the course faculty.

Enrollment as an auditor is subject to the permission of the instructor, provided that enrollment in a course as an auditor shall be permitted only after students otherwise eligible to enroll have had an opportunity to do so. Auditors are subject to the same fee structure as Certificate Program students, and regular class attendance is expected. Once enrolled as an auditor, an individual may not change to regular student status unless such a change is requested no later than two weeks into the course. An enrolled student may not change to audit after the fourth week of instruction.

An auditor is a student who enrolls in a course for informational purposes only. Regular attendance is customary and expected, but an auditor does not complete assignments, participate in class discussions or forums, or complete course projects.

#### *I = Incomplete*

The symbol "I" (Incomplete Authorized) indicates that some required coursework has not been completed and evaluated during the course due to unforeseen but fully justified reasons, and that there is still a possibility of passing the course. It is the student's responsibility to bring pertinent information to the faculty member's attention and to determine from the faculty member the remaining course requirements that must be satisfied to remove the Incomplete. A final grade is assigned when the work agreed upon has been completed and evaluated. An "I" (Incomplete Authorized) should not be assigned when it is necessary for the student to attend additional class meetings to complete the course requirements. When assigning an "I" grade, faculty will complete an online contract visible to the student, indicating assignments needing to be completed to meet the terms of the contract. An Incomplete must be made up within the time limit specified by the instructor when the completed "I" grade is assigned. The time limit may not extend beyond 3 months. If the instructor does not specify a time limit, then the student must meet the conditions specified by the instructor within 3 months from the day grades are due on the Academic Calendar (the last day of the term), the same term in which the "I" grade was assigned. This limitation prevails whether or not the student maintains continuous enrollment.

Failure to complete the assigned work within the stipulated time frame will result in an Incomplete being converted to an "Emerging Proficiency."

## Student Integrity and Academic Honesty Policy

### Student Integrity

The Wilmette Institute's online program is based on interactive teaching, learning, and communication. Learners, faculty, and staff are responsible for maintaining high standards of scholarship and collegiality. Faculty and learners actively contribute to one another's learning through critical dialogue, integrative learning, and collaborative learning. As learners interact with faculty and other learners, they can expect to be challenged, feel a sense of accomplishment, be treated with respect, and become part of the Wilmette Institute community. Diversity—of thought, values, and opinion—is valued at the Wilmette Institute. All members of the Wilmette Institute community are expected to respect diverse perspectives.

### Academic Honesty

Students are expected to conduct themselves with the highest ethical and academic standards and to commit no acts of cheating, plagiarism, or falsification of records.

Definitions: Cheating is an act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means; plagiarism is the act of taking ideas, words, or specific substance of another and offering them as one's own; falsification of records is a misrepresentation of statements in submitted records.

As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities. One of those responsibilities is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. Students must not submit work that reproduces ideas, words, or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgment. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following:

- Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
- Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
- Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
- Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.

If a faculty member suspects plagiarism after researching, s/he should present the evidence to the Associate Director. Together, they will consult with the student to determine whether a simple error was made, whether the plagiarism policy was not understood, or whether the plagiarism was deliberate. Penalties for the first violation can range from a 0 on that assignment to an "Emerging Proficiency" grade for the entire course. The penalty for a second violation can range from an "Emerging Proficiency" grade for the entire course to expulsion. The penalty for the third violation is expulsion.

### ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, and Academic Integrity

Students who use Artificial Intelligence algorithms such as ChatGPT and similar tools on assignments without administration or faculty permission or who use them improperly violate the Institute's academic integrity rules.

Since its launch by OpenAI in late 2022, ChatGPT has inspired many questions related to academic integrity. Like most tools, ChatGPT (and other artificial intelligence products) can be

used for good and bad purposes. There are legitimate ways to use these tools for research, and there are ways to use them to cheat on academic work.

**Students who use ChatGPT and similar programs improperly** are seeking to gain an unfair advantage, which means they **are committing academic dishonesty**. It is generally accepted that if AI text check programs detect that over 25% of the submitted text is generated by AI, it fits the definition of plagiarism because it is not an original work.

## Student Conduct

Every time a student takes a course, they are required to read the following information and indicate that they have read it. [WI Communication Etiquette Guidelines](#) (February 2024)

*The Wilmette Institute aims to provide innovative and transformative learning experiences that build capacity in learners to contribute to prevalent public discourses from a Bahá'í perspective through study, consultation, action, and reflection to students seeking to make the world more compassionate, just, and inclusive. Positive learning experiences emerge from inquiry, consultation, and reflection. Successful courses cultivate meaningful relationships among participants, faculty, and the surrounding community. Within our courses, we seek to establish a positive, safe, and mutually supportive learning environment.*

*There are many opportunities for meaningful interactions in our courses: through video conferences, forums, email, private messages, and opportunities to have significant and uplifting conversations with people in our families and communities. Our learners seek to participate in and contribute to positive interactions and learning environments. Nevertheless, race and other social issues are discussed in all of our courses, and it is important to establish from the beginning how to address such issues in ways that are uplifting and supportive. For this reason, we would like to share the following guidelines for interactions with peers and faculty to facilitate positive learning environments and avoid conflict. By participating in our courses and interacting with others, you agree to follow these guidelines.*

*There are two parts to these guidelines. The first outlines ideas about creating and participating in spiritually distinctive spaces. The second outlines concrete recommendations for participating in forums and video conferences.*

## Spiritually Distinctive Learning Spaces

Wilmette Institute aims to create spiritually distinctive learning spaces. To explore what these learning spaces look like, carefully read the following quotes from the Universal House of Justice and one from the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. Although these quotes are not necessarily about formal spaces of learning, they can be instructive regarding meaningful learning environments.

"What is imperative is that the quality of the educational process fostered at the level of the study circle rise markedly over the next year so that the potential of local populations to create such dynamics is realized. Much will fall on those who serve as tutors in this respect. Theirs will be the challenge to provide the environment that is envisioned in the institute courses, an

environment conducive to the spiritual empowerment of individuals, who will come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning, as protagonists of a constant effort to apply knowledge to effect individual and collective transformation."  
*(Ridvan 2010, Universal House of Justice)*

"Ultimately, the power to transform the world is effected by love, love originating from the relationship with the divine, love ablaze among members of a community, love extended without restriction to every human being. This divine love, ignited by the Word of God, is disseminated by enkindled souls through intimate conversations that create new susceptibilities in human hearts, open minds to moral persuasion, and loosen the hold of biased norms and social systems so that they can gradually take on a new form in keeping with the requirements of humanity's age of maturity. You are channels for this divine love; let it flow through you to all who cross your path. Infuse it into every neighborhood and social space in which you move to build capacity to canalize the society-building power of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. There can be no rest until the destined outcome is achieved."  
*(22 July 2020 – To the Bahá'ís of the United States)*  
[www.bahai.org/r/870410259](http://www.bahai.org/r/870410259)

"To create a just society begins with recognition of the fundamental truth that humanity is one. But it is not enough simply to believe this in our hearts. It creates the moral imperative to act, and to view all aspects of our personal, social, and institutional lives through the lens of justice. It implies a reordering of our society more profound than anything we have yet achieved. And it requires the participation of Americans of every race and background, for it is only through such inclusive participation that new moral and social directions can emerge."  
*(National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, June 19, 2020, Statement on Current Conditions and the Path Towards Racial Justice)*

"Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved." "Each one should endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement..."  
*(Quotes from Shoghi Effendi as included in the July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, letter of the Universal House of Justice).*

Let's employ Bahá'í consultation by calling people in, not out, when they say something that may trigger us.

"It is not possible for you to effect the transformation envisioned by Bahá'u'lláh merely by adopting the perspectives, practices, concepts, criticisms, and language of contemporary society. Your approach, instead, will be distinguished by maintaining a humble posture of learning, weighing alternatives in the light of His teachings, consulting to harmonize differing views and shape collective action, and marching forward with unbreakable unity in serried lines."  
*(Universal House of Justice, 22 July 2020 – To the Bahá'ís of the United States).*

Here are a few phrases drawn from the quotes to help students think about Spiritually Distinctive spaces. Students may want to choose a few from these to work on during the course.

- Moral imperative to act
- Endeavor to develop and assist the other toward mutual advancement
- Inclusive participation
- Affected by love
- Enkindled souls
- Love ablaze
- Build capacity to canalize
- Love originating from the relationship with the Divine
- Reordering of our society on a more profound level than anything we have yet achieved
- Channel for divine love
- Intimate conversations where love flourishes
- Humanity is one
- Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other

### **Concrete Recommendations for Participating in Forums and Video Conferences**

We generally recommend assuming that faculty and peers have a pure motive. WI attracts diverse audiences—age, race, gender, culture, experiences, education levels, language, and beliefs. There may be large cultural differences in the group of participants. WI courses often take on challenging social issues that some are more experienced with and sensitive to than others. Seek to appreciate and be enhanced by the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives of participants. Of course, feel free to share your thoughts, but also listen intently to learn from others.

### **Web-based Forums have Unique Limitations**

Written communication lacks body language, which opens the possibility of misinterpretation. Unfortunately, a humorous tone may be interpreted as condescending or insulting. “Emoticons” may help, but sometimes they don’t. Be aware of the limitations inherent in written communication and try to be clear, open, and friendly. Be as courteous and polite as possible. If a misunderstanding arises, be prepared to explain in other words and apologize when appropriate, privately or publicly.

### **Initial Forum Posts**

Forum posts display an understanding of the readings, other resources, and underlying concepts. Posts integrate personal perspectives or experiences to support important points. We suggest that everyone send their messages to the forum in a detached manner without expecting responses

### **Forum Responses**

In addition to responding “I agree” or “good point,” response posts actively stimulate and sustain further discussion by building on peers’ responses, including building a focused perspective around an issue or asking a new related question, or making a thought-provoking statement supported by personal experience or related research. Responses are posted in a timely fashion.

### **Emotional or Controversial Topics**

If we were sitting in a classroom and an emotionally difficult subject came up, the instructor could gauge the class's reaction by body language. If someone looks upset but doesn't seem to want to speak, the teacher can help the person express his or her thoughts. But if someone in an online forum is angry, no one else will know until they say so. This can result in a very unsatisfactory discussion. Swearing, insults, and other nastiness are highly inappropriate and, in extreme cases, could result in someone being removed from a course.

Curse words and racial slurs—even in reported text—should be strictly avoided. If you doubt the appropriateness of a post, please consult your faculty mentor before posting. We also urge people who are feeling upset to send a private message to their faculty before posting to everyone. Even a mildly angry posting to the forum can cause some sensitive students to refrain from posting.

### **Non-Academic Dismissal**

Wilmette Institute is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and fostering a respectful academic community. Students who fail to adhere to the Student Integrity and Academic Honesty policy above, including acts of dishonesty, plagiarism, or falsification of records, may face non-academic dismissal from the program.

## Student Identity Verification Policy

Student identification will be verified during the admission interview. During the interview, a current government-issued photo ID must be presented, which must accurately reflect the date of birth to ensure the integrity of the student's permanent record. Once enrolled, the student information system database (Populi) captures this verification data.

All faculty must verify in their courses that each student receiving a grade in the course is the one who registered for the certificate program. The Wilmette Institute registrar will provide faculty with photographs of all certificate students. During the first video conference offered in a course, faculty should match students' faces with their photos. Faculty must immediately report anomalies in this process to the Student Services Coordinator.

Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action, including loss of online privileges and other sanctions deemed necessary. Any student found to have permitted another person to represent them for any portion of an online course will be subject to dismissal from the course and may not be permitted to take any other online courses at or through Wilmette Institute.

Additionally, in compliance with these federal requirements, Wilmette Institute has adopted the following policy elements:

1. There are no fees associated with the verification of student identity.
2. At its discretion, personally identifiable information collected by Wilmette Institute may be used as the basis for identity verification.
3. All enrolled students will be given a unique student ID number, e-mail account, and username login for all courses and correspondence while enrolled in the Wilmette Institute certificate program. The student will set up their own unique password, which will remain available for one year after completing the certificate program.
4. All online courses are offered through the learning platform Moodle, which students will access with their unique WI username and password. All WI Moodle users must comply with online etiquette, a policy located in the Student Handbook on the WI website. Students are held responsible for knowledge of the information contained within this policy. Failure to read the guidelines, requirements, and regulations will not exempt students from responsibility.
5. WI's Student Information System, Populi, provides WI admin, faculty, and instructors access to class rosters, including student photos associated with their name and account. The Moodle Learning Management System also provides student photos associated with their visible profile and in forum discussions. Live audio and video of students interacting in the course is also a feature of WI courses. As technology and personal accountability are not absolute in determining a student's identity, faculty members are encouraged to use these technologies and to design courses that use

- assignments and evaluations that support academic integrity.
6. All WI users are responsible for maintaining the security of usernames, passwords, and any other assigned access credentials. Access to usernames and passwords and any other access credentials may not be shared or given to anyone other than the user to whom they were assigned to for any reason.
  7. Unauthorized use of a WI username belonging to another WI user, unauthorized reading, use of, or deletion of private files or email belonging to another user, sharing user IDs and passwords with other users or any other person, and any attempt to circumvent system protection and security features are prohibited.
  8. Instructors will emphasize the WI academic honesty policy in their syllabi and may utilize available plagiarism identification tools to verify student identity.
  9. WI complies fully with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provisions, 20 U.S.C. 1232g. This act protects the privacy of student information in distance education by requiring, with certain limited exceptions, that the student's consent must be obtained before disclosing any personally identifiable information in the student's education records.

## Student Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

### Privacy Rights and Responsibilities

Wilmette Institute is committed to maintaining the privacy of all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) it collects from its students. All Students have the right to ask Wilmette Institute what pieces of personally identifiable information it holds and to ask that the information be removed from its databases. All students also have a responsibility to play their part in maintaining the privacy of information supplied to them in the course forums. While course materials are generally free for students to use (with appropriate credit) in preparing and enhancing devotional materials, presentations to local communities, and art projects, forum discussions should be kept completely private. Other students' ideas, comments, questions, etc., should never be shared outside the course platform without explicit consent.

Wilmette Institute maintains strict confidentiality and security of records in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), in addition to other federal and state laws.

Wilmette Institute student data is contained in three main places.

### Populi Student Information System

Populi is a comprehensive cloud-based platform for higher education institutions, offering integrated solutions for student information management, learning management, and administrative functions. Wilmette Institute's Populi account houses academic and demographic information on all Wilmette Institute certificate students. [Populi's data security measures](#).

### Moodle Learning Management System

Moodle was first released as an open-source platform in 2001. It is a widely used educational software and the most customizable and trusted learning management system. The Institute's Moodle website is hosted and supported by [Moodle US](#). [Moodle privacy notice](#).

Each Wilmette Institute student is issued an account or "profile" in Moodle. Moodle displays the student's name, institutional email address, and location (no street address or zip code) from Populi in their profile. This information is shared by default with all participants in the students' courses. The student may choose whether or not to post their photograph and other personal information in their profile and whether or not to share their email address with students in the wider Wilmette Institute online learning community.

Moodle Forums and Moodle Messaging: As students participate in courses, they may share additional personal information in the course forums (open to all students in the course) and through the Moodle messaging system to individual faculty members and students. Students may also email the faculty privately outside of Moodle. By participating in the forums, students commit to adhering to our [communication etiquette guidelines](#) and fostering a welcoming environment that values and respects diverse perspectives. Breaches of privacy and etiquette within Moodle or suspicious/unlawful transmission of Moodle data outside of Moodle should be reported immediately to the Office of the Director.

**Google Workspace and online application form**

Google Workspace is a suite of cloud-based collaboration and productivity tools, including Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, and more, designed to facilitate communication and teamwork in a professional setting. [Google Workspace for Education privacy notice](#).

Certificate students initiate their application through a Google Form survey; successful candidates proceed to a Zoom interview, with the Google form gathering supplementary details such as date of birth, a scan of their driver's license, or other photo identification. The Institute securely stores the data collected, including the application process and related surveys, within its Google Workspace, accessible exclusively to Wilmette Institute staff. Publicly available survey data and student statistics are presented in overall statistical summaries, ensuring that any released anecdotal information remains unlinked to personally identifiable details without the explicit consent of the survey respondent.

Student information may be exchanged via email among students and shared with Wilmette Institute staff and faculty; all staff, faculty, and students must utilize WI institutional email addresses (@wilmetteinstitute.org) and are obligated to implement fundamental security measures to safeguard the privacy of their email accounts.

## Grievance Policy

### Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure

Any Wilmette Institute certificate program student who believes that he or she has been subject to an improper decision on an academic matter may file a grievance to obtain an independent review of the allegedly improper decision, followed by corrective action if appropriate. An academic grievance is a written complaint made to the Academic Program Coordinator of Wilmette Institute concerning an academic decision made by a person or group acting in an official WI capacity that directly and adversely affects the student as an individual in his or her academic capacity.

This grievance procedure applies only in those cases involving a perceived academic impropriety arising from a decision taken by (1) an individual faculty member or researcher, (2) a department or program, (3) a committee charged to administer academic policies of a particular department, or program, or (4) the Registrar. For any other grievances, please refer to the Non-Academic Grievance Policy above.

The Office of the Director is available to all Wilmette Institute students, faculty, and staff to discuss and advise on any matter of WI concern and help expedite the resolution of such matters. All final decisions are made by the WI Executive Committee and issued by the Office of the Director.

### Academic Grievance and Appeal Procedures

1. Informal Attempts at Resolution: The student should first discuss the matter, orally or in writing, with the individual(s) most directly responsible. If no resolution results, the student should consult the individual at the next administrative level, such as the Academic Program Coordinator. At this stage, the Academic Program Coordinator may inform the Office of the Director that the consultation is taking place and may solicit his or her advice on ensuring adequate steps are taken to achieve a fair result. Efforts should be made to resolve the issues at an informal level without the complaint escalating to the status of a formal grievance.

### The Filing of an Academic Grievance

1. If informal means of resolution prove unsatisfactory, the student should submit in writing a statement of the decision that constitutes the subject matter of the dispute, the grounds on which it is being challenged, and the reasons why the grievant believes that the decision was improperly taken. The statement should also include a description of the remedy sought and the informal efforts taken to date to resolve the matter. It is at this point that the complaint becomes a formal grievance
2. The grievance document should be submitted to the Academic Program Coordinator. A grievance must be filed promptly, no later than 30 days after the end of the academic term in which the adverse decision occurred or should reasonably have been discovered. Except in extraordinary circumstances, delay in filing a grievance will constitute grounds for rejection of the grievance.
3. The grievance process does not relieve the student from their obligation to meet course or certificate requirements. The student should continue to fulfill course and certificate

requirements following submission of the grievance and throughout the time required for the decision on the grievance. Additionally, the grievance process does not pause or otherwise delay departmental actions taken for academic or other reasons that may impact student status or other WI services or resources.

### **The Response to an Academic Grievance**

1. The Academic Program Coordinator will review and consider the grievance. They may attempt to resolve the matter informally or make whatever determination of the grievance he or she deems appropriate. In appropriate cases, they may remand the grievance to a lower administrative level (including the level at which the grievance arose) for further consideration.
2. The Academic Program Coordinator may also refer the grievance, or any issue therein, to any person who will consider the matter and report to the Office of the Director as the latter directs. The Academic Program Coordinator will inform the grievant (and the party against whose decision the grievance has been filed) in writing of any referral of the matter and will specify the matters referred, the directions to the person or persons to whom the referral is made (including the time frame within which the person is to report), and the name of that person.
3. In undertaking the review, the Academic Program Coordinator may request a response to the issues raised in the grievance from any individuals believed to have relevant information, including faculty, staff, and students.
4. Should attempts to resolve the matter informally not be successful, the Academic Program Coordinator will decide the grievance and will notify the grievant (and the party against whose decision the grievance has been filed) in writing of the decision reached on the grievance and the grounds for the decision at the earliest practicable date after his or her receipt of the grievance.
5. Except in extraordinary circumstances, no more than 60 days will elapse between filing a grievance and the decision rendered by the Academic Program Coordinator. If, because of the absence of key persons from the campus or other circumstances or exigencies (including those due to breaks in the academic calendar), the Academic Program Coordinator decides that rendering a decision on that schedule is not possible, they shall inform the grievant (and the party against whose decision the grievance has been filed) of that in writing, explaining the situation and providing an estimate of when a decision can be expected.

### **The Filing of an Appeal**

1. If the grievant is dissatisfied with the decision reached on the grievance, he or she may appeal in writing to the Office of the Director.
2. The appeal must specify the particular substantive or procedural bases of the appeal (that is, the appeal must be made on grounds other than general dissatisfaction with the decision). It must be directed only to issues raised in the grievance filed or to procedural errors in the grievance process, not new issues. The appeal must contain the following:
  1. A copy of the original grievance and any other documents submitted by the grievant in connection therewith.
  2. A copy of the initial determination made.
  3. A statement of why the decision was not satisfactory to the grievant.

3. The grievant will file his or her appeal at the earliest practicable date after the grievant's receipt of the initial decision. No more than 30 days should elapse between the transmittal of the Office of the Director's decision on the grievance and the filing of the appeal. Except in extraordinary circumstances, delay in filing an appeal will constitute grounds for rejection of the appeal.
4. The appeal process does not relieve the student from their obligation to meet course or degree requirements. The student should continue to fulfill course and degree requirements following submission of the appeal to the Office of the Director and throughout the time required for determination of the appeal. Additionally, the appeal process does not pause or otherwise delay WI or departmental actions taken for academic or other reasons that may impact student status or other WI services or resources.

### **The Response to the Appeal**

1. The Office of the Director may attempt to resolve the matter informally or will consult with relevant staff members who shall consider the matter and report back to the Office of the Director as the latter directs.
2. The Office of the Director will decide the appeal and will notify the grievant (and the party against whose decision the grievance has been filed) in writing of the determination made and the grounds for the decision. The decision of the Office of the Director on appeals is final.
3. No more than 45 days will elapse between filing the appeal and the decision by the Office of the Director. If, because of the absence of key persons from the campus or other circumstances or exigencies (including those due to breaks in the academic calendar), the Office of the Director judges that rendering a decision on that schedule is not possible, they will inform the grievant (and the party against whose decision the grievance has been filed) of the fact in writing, explaining the situation and providing an estimate of when a decision can be expected.

### **Standards for Review and Procedural Matters**

1. The review of grievances or appeals will usually be limited to the following considerations:
  1. Were the proper facts and criteria brought to bear on the decision? Were improper or extraneous facts or criteria brought to bear that substantially affected the decision to the detriment of the grievant?
  2. Were there any procedural irregularities that substantially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the grievant?
  3. Given the proper facts, criteria, and procedures, was the decision one that a person in the position of the decision maker might reasonably have made?
2. The time frames set forth herein are guidelines. They may be extended by the Office of the Director at their discretion.
3. Questions concerning the filing and appeal of grievances should be directed to the Office of the Director.

### **Non-Academic Grievance Procedure**

If, for any reason, a student has a complaint, grievance, or dispute with the Wilmette Institute, the student has the right to seek a satisfactory resolution through the following process:

**1) Notification** – The student must submit a written letter or email to: Associate Director, Wilmette Institute, Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201; [cgolestani@wilmetteinstitute.org](mailto:cgolestani@wilmetteinstitute.org). The letter/email must state the basis for the complaint, grievance, or dispute, provide details of the matter, and describe the requested remedy. The Associate Director shall respond with a decision in writing within 15 days of receipt of the written letter or email.

**2) Appeal** – If the student is unsatisfied with the response, they may appeal in writing via mail or email within a 30-day period to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, Kenneth Bowers, secretary, Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201; [secretariat@usbnc.org](mailto:secretariat@usbnc.org). Failure to submit an appeal letter within the 30-day period will indicate that the student has accepted the initial decision as final, and the matter shall be closed. Upon submission of the appeal letter, the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly shall review the grievance and render a decision. The decision of the secretary shall be final.

Students still dissatisfied with any action or decision of the Wilmette Institute may also elect to contact the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Their Institutional Complaint System may be found here: <http://complaints.ibhe.org/>.

## **Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, and Harassment Policy**

Wilmette Institute encourages diversity and provides equal opportunity in education, employment, its programs, and the use of its facilities. Employment decisions at the Institute are based on merit and qualifications. The Institute does not discriminate in educational or employment opportunities or practices based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, veteran's status, age, disability, height, weight, marital status, political belief, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law. The following general policy statements apply:

1. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing student-related equality matters currently rests with the Associate Director.
2. All members of the Wilmette Institute community are required to comply with these Codes of Practice and with the relevant legal requirements and are expected to assist in the removal of any unlawful discriminatory practices that may exist in the Institute by drawing them to the attention of the Associate Director.
3. All students should be made aware of the Institute's Statement of Policy and of these Codes of Practice. Students will have access to the documents via the Moodle learning platform, the Institute's website, and the Registrar/Student Services office.
4. No applicant or student will be treated less favorably on grounds of age, caste, color, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion, belief or lack of belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other criterion accepted as irrelevant by the Institute.
5. The Institute welcomes applications from people with disabilities and will put in place reasonable adjustments to enable students to access the full range of educational provisions offered by the Institute. See the section on Accessibility.
6. Applicants for admission to the Institute's courses who are unsuccessful in their application have a right of complaint (on procedural irregularity, prejudice or bias, or extenuating circumstances). Information about the complaints procedure is available from the Associate Director.
7. The Institute will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that its publicity material, events, and information services are accessible to all.
8. The Institute will promote equality of opportunity through its educational provision and its approach to teaching and learning through course design, delivery, and assessment.
9. The Institute is committed to equality through access to and fair treatment in its services and the facilities it offers to its students and employees. Where a service cannot be offered to all who wish to use it, any restrictions on access, or any decision to restrict

access, will be reasonable and lawful.

10. The Institute will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate access by students with disabilities to teaching and learning, whatever the level of the course or the mode of provision, to assessment, and the full range of educational and other facilities and services to ensure their full participation in the learning community.

11. The Institute will use inclusive language in its publications and other communications.

## Student Services

### Change of Contact Information

All students must maintain updated contact information with the Registrar.

### Orientation

Students are highly encouraged to take the Wilmette Institute Orientation Course: First Look. This course is offered online, is self-paced, and takes approximately 4 to 6 hours. Students should complete the orientation course before beginning WI coursework.

WI does not issue student identification cards or offer graduation ceremonies, career services, or honor societies.

WI does not offer academic counseling or placement services.

Student Services maintains contact with program alumni to keep them informed and involved in WI activities.

## State Licensure

Wilmette Institute operates in the State of **Illinois** under a formal exemption from the Illinois Private Business and Vocational Schools (PBVS) Act as an institution that only offers religious and theological instruction (Section 30 of the Act) (Ill. Admin. Code Title 23 Sec. 1095.20(3)(1)).

Additionally, Wilmette Institute only enrolls students who reside in other states where it is either explicitly approved to do so, exempt from state regulation, not under the jurisdiction of state licensing boards, or does not require specific authorization, namely:

- **California:** Exempt from state regulation, according to documentation from the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE).
- **Colorado:** Exempt under CRS 23-64-104 for tuition-free programs.
- **Georgia:** Exempt per Georgia Code 20-3-250.3(a)(2) for non-degree, no-fee educational offerings.
- **Hawaii:** No jurisdiction over out-of-state online education providers without a physical presence in the state.
- **Missouri:** No certification or exemption required if the institution lacks physical presence and offers fully online programs.

- **Montana:** No unified regulator for non-degree career programs; oversight applies to degree-granting institutions only.
- **Texas:** Exempt under Texas Education Code, Section 132.002(a)(3), for non-vocational courses.
- **Virginia:** Non-degree schools without a physical location in the state can operate without further action from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).
- **Other states include:** Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Wyoming.