

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026



Wilmette Institute



www.wilmetteinstitute.org



learn@wilmetteinstitute.org



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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

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 offers academic programs 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 "Framework of Action".

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 transdisciplinary insights gained from the courses and service-learning.

Abilities:

- Compare and contrast underlying material and spiritual ideologies, traditions, 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, research,
- public discourse, with the goal of both spiritual and material progress.

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 on-going operations and 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 - 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, PhD
- Harvey McMurray, PhD
- Erin Murphy-Graham, PhD
- Esperanza Ochoa, PhD (C)

Administrative Officers

- [Acting Director](#) - Derik Smith, PhD
- [Associate Director](#) - Chitra Golestani, PhD
- [Chief Academic Officer](#) - Justin Scoggin, PhD
- [Registrar and Student Services](#) - Nicola Casserly, MSc
- [Curriculum Development Specialist](#) - Julia Berger, PhD
- [Technology and Communications Lead](#) - Hasti Khoshnammanesh, MSc

Contacts

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.

Acting Director: Derik Smith
director@wilmetteinstitute.org

Acting Director Dr. Derik Smith guides the Wilmette Institute’s vision, mission, and strategic goals. His multiple responsibilities include:

- Ensure that the vision, mission, and goals of Wilmette Institute are aligned with its educational activities
- Oversee that the decisions of the Executive Team are implemented, addressing hindrances
- Assist in forming new partnerships with like-minded institutions of higher education
- Consult with the Academic Advisory Board and help to implement their advice,
- Set agenda items for regular and special meetings
- Oversee the work of the various members of the administrative team, including the Associate Director, Chief Academic Officer, Course Development Specialist, and Digital Support Associate. He also supervises the Office of the Registrar, Admissions & Student Services, Office of Academic Affairs, and Office of Communications.

Associate Director: Chitra Golestani
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 Support Associate 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

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.

Curriculum Development Specialist: Julia Berger

jberger@wilmetteinstitute.org

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

1. Contributes to the Curriculum Committee developing and evaluating program curricula
2. Participates in the Course Development and Assessment Team, identifying course learning outcomes, course development, and evaluation

3. Creates and nurtures a pedagogical structure of learning
4. Develops and supports professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
5. Coaches faculty to work with WI's emerging pedagogical framework
6. Assists the Wilmette Institute administrative team in organizing a strong process of organizational learning

Technology and Communications Lead: Hasti Khoshnammanesh

hmanesh@wilmetteinstitute.org

- Manages Moodle operations, maintenance, course setup, and content uploads
- Provides Moodle and educational technology training and support to faculty and students
- Reviews course materials for accessibility, readability, consistency, and balance
- Manages and maintains the public website, including content, SEO, and website security
- Manages Wilmette Institute's Google Workspace and library technology systems
- Develops and implements the Institute's Technology Plan
- Creates and manages digital marketing campaigns, promotional materials, and social media platforms
- Manages the Institute's podcast and other audio and video content
- Develops technology- and accreditation-related materials
- Collects and distributes the Course Statistical Report and Analysis
- Edits and proofreads newsletters and other communications

Registrar, Admissions & Student Services: Nicola (Niki) Casserly

learn@wilmetteinstitute.org | Phone: (847) 733-3466

- Manages Academic Calendar and Certificate Course Registration
- Responds to student queries about courses, schedules, and policies
- Conducts Admissions Interviews, reports to and consults with Admissions Committee
- Enrolls new students and tracks satisfaction, completion, and persistence rates, and other student metrics
- Manages Student Information System (Populi); Prepares and delivers Certificates and Transcripts
- Manages Alumni Companion initiative; accompanies alumni companions and matches students to companions
- Issues WI Google accounts and email addresses and uploads faculty and instructor bios and CVs
- Public Website: assists with updates of courses, podcasts, and alumni spotlight pages; creates and updates other pages as needed
- Contributes to maintenance of the Course Catalog & Student Handbook
- Creates and assists students with Moodle accounts; contributes to creation and maintenance of Moodle training videos and Orientation
- Manages Zoom accounts; assists faculty with Zoom

- Manages YouTube channel; uploads Zoom recordings to YouTube
- Collates and advises academic staff and faculty on student demographics & feedback
- Newsletter Chief Editor: oversees editorial team, publishes Academic Newsletter

Confidentiality and Privacy Policies

- [Student Confidentiality and Privacy Policies](#)
- [Website and General Privacy Policy](#)
- [Terms and Conditions for Students](#)

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.

Read more: [Partnerships](#)

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 dialogue
	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

Program Requirements

To complete the Social Transformation Certificate Program, students are required to successfully complete any three 3-clock hour courses in any order.

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, the only specific times students must log in. The days and times for the video conferences will be announced prior to the course beginning, but they are typically held on weeknights (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays) at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time.
- Courses usually begin (Moodle opens for students) on Wednesdays at noon Pacific time. Each weekly unit begins (becomes visible for students) and ends (assignments are due) on Wednesdays at noon Pacific Time.
- Wilmette Institute uses a semester calendar for its courses.
- Students must 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 as part of the first unit of the course for which they have registered.

Courses Offered

- STC311 Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact
- STC321 Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World
- STC331 Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement
- STC341 Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being

Course Descriptions and Faculty

STC311	Catalysts of Social Change: Knowledge, Action, Impact (135 Clock Hours)
Faculty: Chitra Golestani , Justin Scoggin , Julia Berger	
We have seen many examples of dramatic change in human societies - some for the better, some for the worse, but how can society change in ways that benefit everyone? Amidst today's multiple, overlapping, and growing crises, learning to become protagonists of enduring widespread change is one of the most consequential capacities of our time. This course examines social change through historical analysis in dialogue with a Framework for Collective Learning — a set of principles for reading history and shaping collective action. Students investigate dimensions of transformation through principles including collective social maturation, universal participation, and coherence between the inner and outer dimensions of individual and collective flourishing. 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 align vision, strategies, and actions with an evolving, coherent framework. Through analysis of and engagement with local changemakers, students build the capacity to contribute to public discourse — understanding that shifting how people see and think about the world is itself a significant act of social change — in their communities, academic work, and daily interactions.	

STC321	Sweeping Changes in Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World (135 Clock Hours)
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.	
STC331	Redefining Race: Pathways to Collective Advancement (135 Clock Hours)
Faculty: Ymasumac Marañón-Davis , Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega	
This online course explores the complexities of racism and paths toward unity. We will use a Framework for Collective Learning rooted in decades of global and domestic community building and social action to provide a lens for addressing systemic issues and highlighting principles, such as interconnectedness and justice. We recognize that racism has stratified all of humanity, with Blackness serving as a barometer against which all peoples are held in tension. For this reason, this course will respond to a broader scope of discourses about race to acknowledge the prejudice aimed at all groups who have been racialized and the contributions of those groups to the race unity discourse. Students will apply their learning in their respective communities in a project to foster dialogue, understanding, and mutual learning. Our focus is on process and coherence, avoiding deficit framing of communities and centering instead on the telling of people's own stories and experiences in pursuit of transcending racializations. Students will build the capacity to contribute to race-related discourses in their academic work, lived experiences, and community-building efforts.	
STC341	Transforming Education: Knowing, Learning, and Being (135 Clock Hours)
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 engage in a local educational endeavor, applying concepts learned in the course to practice in the field through dialogue and collective reflection. Within the experience gained, participants will consider education founded upon three principles: universal participation, coherence between the material and spiritual, and learning as a mode of operation. Applying these principles to education brings to light several key concepts, including prosperity building, constructive agency, reading the reality of current educational issues in the United States, fugitive pedagogies, 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 an educational endeavor they have chosen, and, together with their classmates, engage in learning about a pedagogy of social transformation in light of local and global trends in education.

Faculty Directory

See [the list of our academic faculty](#). Faculty members are available for appointments, which can be scheduled by contacting them via their email addresses.

Student Conduct

See also [Community & Technology Requirements](#)

Student Expectations and Academic Honesty

Student Integrity and Academic Honesty

Students are expected to graduate from the Social Transformation Certificate Program in no more than two years after the first day of their first course. To graduate from the program, students must pass (with a grade of Proficiency or High Proficiency) any three courses, which can be taken in any order. Wilmette Institute does not calculate Grade Point Average or require a minimum GPA for graduation. Wilmette Institute does not have a leave of absence policy. Rather, students may pause their studies and may begin again at any time at their own discretion by notifying Student Services of their decisions. Students may request an extension to graduate through an email to Student Services in which they justify their request.

Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, and Harassment

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. The Associate Director is responsible for monitoring and reviewing student equality matters.
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 removing 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 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 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 for students with disabilities to teaching and learning, regardless of the course level or mode of provision, to assessment, and the full range of educational and other facilities and services, ensuring their full participation in the learning community.
11. The Institute will use inclusive language in its publications and other communications.

Registration

The Wilmette Institute's Social Transformation Certificate program currently offers four courses. To earn a certificate of completion, students must successfully complete any three program courses, in any order, within two years from the start of their first course. Multiple courses may be offered simultaneously, and at least two courses are scheduled each year, according to the Academic Calendar available on the WI website. This schedule allows students flexibility in selecting the courses that best fit their needs and timelines.

Students are required to complete a registration form for each course they wish to attend. The registration form is available on Moodle and includes a menu for students to select their desired course(s). It also allows students to update their personal information, such as their home address, and confirms compliance with state enrollment requirements.

The Registrar will notify students via email when registration opens for upcoming courses and provide reminders to encourage timely enrollment. Students who do not register for a course will receive follow-up communication, including a summary of their completed courses, outstanding requirements, and their remaining time frame for program completion.

If the two-year completion timeframe is approaching, the Registrar will send a final reminder outlining the student's options to fulfill their program requirements. This notification will account for courses already completed, remaining requirements, and the Academic Calendar for future course offerings.

For additional details, please refer to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress policy](#).

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." Financial aid is not a major factor, as we have prioritized reducing the stress and strain associated with student debt. For more information, see [a description of our tuition-free strategy](#).

Nearly all course academic resources are available to students as hyperlinks at no cost. Faculty occasionally assign resources that are unavailable on the Internet, which students should obtain through WI library services, rental services, or purchase. Resources that must be rented or purchased will be avoided or kept to a minimum. Failure to rent or purchase an assigned academic resource will never affect student grades. Resources that must be obtained through library services, rented, or purchased will be highlighted in the course syllabus and will include exact costs where applicable.

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. Cancellation is effective on the date the written notice of cancellation is sent. Notice of Cancellation is effective if it indicates that the student no longer wishes to be bound by this Agreement or to continue attending 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.

For a description of auditing a course, withdrawals, and incompletes, please refer to our [Grading Policies](#).

State Licensure

As Wilmette Institute is seated in Evanston, Illinois, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has granted Wilmette Institute an exemption under the criteria outlined in Section 21095.20, subsection b.), of the 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1095 to offer noncredit courses on religion and theology. This exemption applies only to our extension courses.

Illinois Board of Higher Education
1 North Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 333
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1377
Phone: (217) 782-2551

Credit Transfer

WI does not accept transfer credits from other institutions.

Notice Concerning Transferability of Clock Hours and Certificate 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. Those requiring an official transcript from WI before completing the program will be charged a \$25 fee.

Academic Resources

- [Clock Hour Policy](#)
- [Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy](#)

Academic Calendar

See the complete [Academic Calendar](#).

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

Technology Requirements

See [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) 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 certificate 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. 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

WI community of learning

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 Wilmette Institute. All members of the Wilmette Institute community are expected to respect diverse perspectives.

Student Services

Change of Contact Information. All students are required to maintain updated contact information with the Registrar. WI does not issue student identification cards or offer graduation ceremonies, career services, or honor societies.

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 offer academic counseling or placement services.

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

Educational Technology Tools

The Wilmette Institute utilizes three primary technological tools for its courses: Moodle, Google Workspace (including other Google products), and Zoom.

Moodle

Moodle is the Learning Management System used to deliver Wilmette Institute courses. In other words, it is the platform where participants interact with the content, other participants, and the instructor. All instructors must learn to use Moodle. There are training videos, and our Registrar offers training sessions.

Follow the links below to learn which tools WI uses and how to use them.

1. [Community and Technology Requirements](#)
2. [Moodle Tutorials](#)
3. [Moodle FAQs](#)

[Moodle Training videos](#) on various topics are available on our website, and the Registrar can provide support. A subset of the training videos is incorporated into Section 1 of a self-study orientation module called "First Look: An Orientation on the Wilmette Institute's Approach to Learning," which is mandatory for all faculty.

Google Workspace

Wilmette Institute hosts its email domain on Google servers, resulting in @wilmetteinstitute.org email addresses functioning as Gmail accounts. This configuration grants users access to an array of powerful educational tools within Google Workspace. Beyond the conventional email functionality, these tools encompass versatile applications such as documents, spreadsheets, slides (equivalent to PowerPoint), forms (for surveys), sites (for creating websites), YouTube, calendars, maps, and more.

As an example, Wilmette Institute courses are collaboratively developed using Google Docs. Once finalized, these courses are then uploaded to Moodle. Using your institutional email address or any Gmail account, individuals can easily and dynamically collaborate on Google Docs. Faculty members can leverage Google Docs to foster collaboration among participants for assignments and offer student feedback. A link to helpful [Google Workspace tips](#) is available in the resources section of Moodle.

Zoom

Wilmette Institute has multiple Zoom accounts that faculty can use for video conferencing. WI provides training videos to help learn to use it quickly. Faculty must have regular video conferences with all students, as these interactions provide a valuable opportunity to integrate course readings and other resources cohesively, aligning with course learning outcomes. WI ensures students who miss a live video conference can access the recorded sessions. These recordings are available on Moodle's course page and accessible through Wilmette Institute's YouTube channel, offering flexibility in reviewing missed content.

A link to [Zoom tips and tutorials](#) is available on each course's main page on Moodle, and it can also be accessed through the [Moodle Tutorials](#) page on the website.

Podcast catchers

Nearly all WI courses use podcasts for academic resources, as they can be a great source of information and analysis. Most podcast episodes can be played directly from the podcast's website. However, it is more convenient to download an episode on one's phone to listen to in the car or while walking or doing house chores. To download a podcast episode, you will need a podcatcher. We will cite only a few examples: The most popular one for Apple users used to be called iTunes and is now called Apple Podcasts. You can download it from iTunes and then search for the podcast and specific episode to download. For Android users, there are many options. One great option is Pocket Casts, which can be downloaded from the Google Play Store. Once downloaded, you can search for a specific podcast and episode to download. If you need further assistance with this technology, please do not hesitate to ask our Digital Technology Specialist.

Library Services

Wilmette Institute provides faculty and students with access to professional academic library resources and services that support undergraduate- and graduate-level research across a wide range of disciplines.

Through its membership in the Library and Information Resources Network (LIRN), a consortium that provides access to peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary scholarly content, the Institute offers

access to the LIRN ProQuest Core Package, including ProQuest Central, a comprehensive research database.

Enrolled students can access these resources, along with training materials, through the LIRN library portal using their Wilmette Institute email credentials, as well as through the WI Library page on Moodle. These resources and services are intended to support curriculum development, academic inquiry, and the advancement of research skills.

Faculty and Students can access the library, guides, and tutorials for its use on the [Library Services](#) page of the WI website.

Grammarly Premium

Wilmette Institute provides [Grammarly Premium](#) as a subscription-based tool for all faculty members and students. Additionally, complimentary tools can be accessed on the web, such as [Copyscape](#) and WCopyfind, valuable resources for detecting plagiarism in student papers.

Grading

The following is an excerpt from the [Wilmette Institute Grading Policies](#). Please review the policies for further details.

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

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

Communicating grades with students

Student grades for each course will be published for individual viewing on the course website in Moodle no later than ten days following the conclusion of a course. If students experience difficulties with final grades posted to their official university record, they should contact their instructor first and then the Registrar to review the situation. After the certificate program, WI will issue a transcript for each student.

Course Completion

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

Wilmette Institute Email Accounts

[WI email policy](#). Wilmette Institute institutional email accounts for administrators, staff, faculty, and students are activated based on user eligibility. The assigned email account is the end-user's primary email account for official academic and administrative communication.

Procedures for Publishing Policy

WI does not operate a press or publish its own books or other academic materials for the public, but it actively publishes newsletters, webinars, podcasts, and various resources for internal use.

Newsletters are monthly publications emailed or mailed to a subscriber list (that anyone can join). Faculty, staff, or students who want to submit content for the newsletter must submit their piece to the Newsletters and Social Media Assistant for review and approval.

Internal Publications, such as fact sheets and other academic materials, are crafted by departmental specialists. Initially, the author uses templates to incorporate text, photos, and graphic elements, ensuring the content flows coherently. Once the template is completed, it is forwarded to the Marketing and Social Media Officer, who edits the materials and ensures that it complies with all relevant copyright laws. Following this, a graphic artist steps in to perform an art check, adding a layer of visual refinement to the publication.

Webinars and Podcasts are initiated by the Webinar Task Force, which takes charge of approving the speaker and the theme for each webinar and providing the speaker with essential orientation regarding expectations and guidelines. The actual webinar is conducted on Zoom and is simultaneously broadcast live on WI's YouTube channel. The Web Video & Audio Assistant manages the live broadcast, responding to messages and tackling any technical issues that arise. Post-event, the Web Video and Audio Assistant edits the recording, enriching it for publication on WI's YouTube channel, accompanied by a detailed description of the webinar and the speaker. This recording is also published on the Wilmette Institute website by the Registrar. The audio version of the webinar was distributed across various major podcast platforms, ensuring a wide reach and accessibility for WI's audience.

Complaint/Grievance Policy

Here is the complete [Complaint / Grievances Policy](#), with details about the procedures to follow to file a complaint.

It is organized in two parts: general and academic grievances. Here are summaries of both.

General Grievances

If, for any reason, a student has a complaint, grievance, or dispute with 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 postmarked no later than 30 days after the occurrence to the Associate Director, Wilmette Institute, Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central St., Evanston, IL 60201; cgolestani@wilmetteinstitute.org. The letter 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 in writing within 15 days of receiving the written letter or email.

2) Appeal – If the requested remedy is denied, the student may appeal in writing via mail within an additional 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. Failure to submit an appeal letter within the additional 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 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/>.