

**OSTS Lecture, Fall of 2024, 1st term
September 23rd - October 28th**

Course A *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith (In-Class)*

Lecturer Jóhanna Jochumsdóttir

Descriptor

This course explores the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, the youngest of the world's global religions. We will look into the spiritual teachings, perspectives on human nature and the divine, and how the principle of oneness of humanity shapes community life, commitment to social and economic development, and the administrative structures of the global Bahá'í community. (58 words)

Outline

Week 1: Bahá'í Beliefs & Spiritual Teachings

In this first session, we will explore some of the basic Bahá'í beliefs, such as the oneness of God, the unity of religions, and the principle of the oneness of humanity. These will help explain the Bahá'í understanding of the human soul, life after death, and the role of prayer, meditation and fasting in developing the spiritual life of the individual. In addition, there will be an opportunity to present an overview of the Bahá'í Faith, its history and origins, and the life of its founder, Bahá'u'lláh.

Week 2: Bahá'í Social Teachings

We will study the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í Faith, such as the independent investigation of truth, the equality of women and men, the harmony of science and religion, universal compulsory education, abolition of extremes of wealth and poverty, and other principles leading humanity towards universal peace. Examples of how Bahá'ís put these principles into action in their individual and community lives will be given.

Week 3: History and Administration of the Bahá'í Faith

Participants will learn of the origins of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran and, in particular, about the life of Bahá'u'lláh, its founder, including His imprisonment and exile as a prisoner in the Holy Land. The 'Covenant' that was made with His followers to follow His son Abdu'l-Baha, and the significance of this for maintaining unity in the Faith will be explained. This will lead to an understanding of how the modern day Bahá'í community is administered through elected institutions around the world while being free of any form of clergy.

Week 4: Scriptures and Authoritative Writings

Time will be spent outlining some of the Holy Writings of the Faith, understanding how they relate to the teachings and the Administrative Order, and how Bahá'ís use them in their daily lives. Participants will have the opportunity to study some of these Writings in small groups.

Week 5: Community Building and Social Action

In this last session, the activities of the world-wide Bahá'í community will be analyzed by exploring the work of community building on a global scale, including the focus on spiritual development, education of children and youth, and social and economic development.

Bibliography

Bahá'í Faith - The Basics, by Christopher Buck
Routledge Press 2021. ISBN: 978-1-138-34616-1

Bio

Jóhanna Taherzadeh Jochumsdóttir is an historian who has taught at universities and in community education in South Africa, Israel, Ireland, the United States and England. Originally from Iceland, she lives in Old Ottawa South with her family.