



University Graduate Seminar Announcement – 2016

Discourse and Social Transformation: Achieving Coherence

The Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP) is dedicated to building capacity in individuals, groups and institutions to contribute to prevalent discourses concerned with the betterment of society. Drawing on both science and religion as two complementary systems of knowledge and practice, the Institute fosters the creation of learning environments where knowledge and experience can be shared and systematized. Principles, concepts and approaches that are relevant to the advancement of civilization and inspired by Bahá'í teachings are explored through processes of study, reflection, and consultation that are grounded in practice.

ISGP will offer an intensive seminar for young adults who are interested in exploring how they can effect social change by participating more coherently in the discourses of society. The seminar will be from **18 to 29 December 2016**, at the Tambach Seminar Centre in Tambach-Dietharz, Germany. Participants will be asked to meet their own transportation costs for the seminar. In addition, a fee of €449, due shortly after acceptance to the seminar, will cover printed materials used at the seminar, lodging, and three meals per day.

Prerequisites for the seminar include:

- (a) Completion of a bachelor's degree prior to attending the seminar.
- (b) Completion of the online course *Contributing to the Advancement of Civilization: Towards a Framework – Unit 1: Justice and the Oneness of Humankind*. This course is offered through www.lazoslearning.org. It is eight weeks long and requires approximately 15 hours of study per week. Additional information about enrolling, fees, and satisfactory completion of the course can be obtained by visiting the website.
- (c) Background reading of selected texts, for all participants, before the start of the seminar. These readings will be sent to participants several weeks before the seminar.

A detailed description of the seminar follows, and a separate application form is attached. Because of the high number of applicants and the limited spaces available, selection will be made within a matrix that maximizes the diversity of the participants. Preference will be given to participants who are under 35 years old and who have completed their bachelor's degree at least one year prior to the seminar. Applications received after **1 June 2016** will not be considered.



University Graduate Seminar – Background and Description

Many of the efforts made by Bahá'ís to contribute to the advancement of civilization fall into three broad areas of endeavor: the expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í community, social action, and participation in the discourses of society.

The first of these areas, expansion and consolidation, is the one in which the Bahá'í community has gained the most experience to date. This endeavor is now characterized by systematic processes that include structured approaches to learning about growth within a coherent framework through which we strive to continually refine and improve our methods.

Social action is an area that ranges from individual and small-group initiatives that address specific social needs in the wider community to complex programs of social and economic development. Systematic and coherent approaches are gradually emerging in this area as well.

Participation in the discourses of society is an area in which individuals, groups, and agencies of the Faith work within their respective spheres of influence to contribute to positive change in prevailing patterns of thought, communication, and practice that contribute to shaping society. Systematic and coherent approaches also need to be developed in this area.

The purpose of this seminar is to create an intensive learning environment within which university graduates can explore how, as individuals or through collaborative efforts, they can exercise initiative in the latter of these three areas of endeavor: participation in the discourses of society. The challenge we will explore is how to exercise such initiative in a manner that is characterized by internal coherence as well as coherence with the other two areas of endeavor.

The need to develop more coherence within and among these areas of endeavor was alluded to by the Universal House of Justice when it stated, in its Riḍván 2008 message:

As you continue to labour in your clusters, you will be drawn further and further into the life of the society around you and will be challenged to extend the process of systematic learning in which you are engaged to encompass a growing range of human endeavours. In the approaches you take, the methods you adopt, and the instruments you employ, you will need to achieve the same degree of coherence that characterizes the pattern of growth presently under way.

This seminar is being offered in response to this need. It is open to young adults who have completed undergraduate degrees in diverse fields of study and are considering graduate studies, are part way through their graduate studies, are in the earliest stages of their careers or are engaged in other forms of service to humanity.