

Scientific and Spiritual Dimensions of Climate Change

Many Ways of Using the Course Materials

The materials of this course can be used in many different ways. It is for the users to decide what is relevant in their situation and to adapt them to their own circumstances, interests, and needs. Here are just a few ideas to stimulate your own creative thinking.

While the course is designed for group study, it works equally well for **individuals** to read, either from “cover” to “cover”, or any unit of specific interest. It can also serve Baha’is as a resource for public discourse.

Each study group has specific interests and circumstances, and there may be time restraints. Some groups may be able to study the course systematically from the beginning to end. Many groups may like to shorten the materials or focus on specific topics. For example:

- A group wants to study climate change and its spiritual dimensions but does not have much time to get together. Such a group may like to skip Units 1 and 2.
- A group may be specifically interested in discussing the relationship between science and religion and may choose to only study Unit 2 on that topic. Another group may like to get together to discuss Materialism and Consumerism. It may choose to read Unit 6 Part 1, Section 4: *Spirituality as Opposed to Materialism* and Part 2 on *Materialism*.
- A Jewish or Christian group may like to end their study with the discussion of Unit 9 *Reasons for Hope*, Part 1 *The Role of Religious Communities* because some of the content in the second part of Unit 9 and Unit 10 may be of more interest to Baha’i communities.
- Baha’i groups may like to have the priorities of the Nine-Year Plan in mind, namely social action, public discourse and community building. The course materials can be used for devotional gatherings, and its content can be discussed with youth groups. All units can provide inspiration and materials for public discourse, and the last Unit 10 can contribute to efforts in social action.

How much time does it take to study the course materials? This will depend on how much of the materials the group wants to discuss and how it conducts its studies. If a group decides to systematically go through the whole course, it may take about 14 or more sessions of 2 hours each.

Some units provide a short version for those groups who have limited time.

There are **creative ways to save time** and simultaneously build capacity. For example, small sub-groups or individuals could study certain sections before a group meeting and then make a brief presentation to the group. Such presentations may include the arts.

For studying the materials in a group setting, it is best if all participants have their own **paper copies of the materials**. Each unit is available as a pdf file for easy printout. Printing double sided saves trees. You can also print on paper that was previously used one sided.

The Role of the Facilitator

The **first task** of the facilitator is to help the group get together and to organize the time and place for the meetings. You can also be instrumental in creating an atmosphere where everyone is welcome and where different opinions may be expressed without fear of judgement or ridicule.

The **role of the facilitator** is

- To ensure that everyone gets to participate in reading and discussing.
- To keep the group focused on the materials to be studied.
- To keep track of time so that the material is covered in a timely manner.
- To prepare for the study by looking through all the materials ahead of time to be able to make good decisions about the allocation of meeting time.
- To encourage the group to consult about and carry out a service project.

You don't need to be an "expert" on climate change to facilitate this course.

It is also possible to have two facilitators who plan the study together and take turns during the sessions.

If possible, ask the participants to read the brief **Introduction** before the first class.

Perhaps you can begin each meeting with a **prayer** (in an interfaith setting alternating religious traditions if possible) and/or a short piece of music. Try to give all participants a chance to offer a prayer throughout the course.

As there are plenty of materials to cover, encourage the participants to **focus** on the topic. It is desirable that, while reading the materials, participants add comments and engage in short discussions. Such discourse will make the study lively, interesting and meaningful. However, it may often be necessary to remind the participants to keep these discussions short so that you will be able to read through the materials in a timely manner.

One important aim of the course is the **understanding** of the scientific concepts and the meaning of the sacred texts. A few paragraphs in the materials may be difficult to understand with just one reading. You may help the understanding of the participants by posing a key question, by asking someone to summarize the paragraph, or simply by suggesting reading the paragraph a second time.

Some practical ideas to encourage service and community engagement:

Encourage the participants to practice public discourse by discussing climate change with their family members or friends. This could happen very informally, or they could create a presentation on the causes or/and impacts of climate change to a circle of friends, or a youth group. Such presentations could also focus on spiritual/ethical dimensions of climate change such as climate justice, the interconnectedness of human life with nature, or the importance of good environmental governance including on the global level. Such a project would give the participants some practice explaining what they have learned so far. They could do this individually, or present together, for example by distributing the topics among themselves.

Encourage the group to engage in a **community service project**. Apply the ideas for consultation and decision-making, which are discussed in Unit 7 section 6 and in Unit 10. Consider the special circumstances of your group such as time constraints, special interests, and talents, as well as the needs of your community. Remind the group to keep the project small and simple enough so that you can carry it out with joy.