

ABS Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR BAHÁ'Í STUDIES—NORTH AMERICA

ABS Annual Conference Celebrating 40 years in 2016!

We are excited to announce the dates and venue for the 2016 ABS conference. The 40th annual conference will be held in Montreal, Canada, August 11-14 at Le Centre Sheraton hotel in downtown Montreal. Save the date!

Further information about the conference and the call for breakout presentations will be announced by email soon and posted on the ABS website. The deadline for submission of proposals will be April 1.

Balyuzi Lecture

The Association is pleased to announce that Dr. Farzam Arbab will deliver the 34th Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture at the conference.

Dr. Arbab is a former member of the Universal House of Justice and founder of Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias (FUNDAEC).



Dr. Farzam Arbab

Registration and Hotel Information

Conference registration and hotel information are available on the ABS website:
<www.bahai-studies.ca/UpcomingConference>
For further inquiries, please contact the Association for Bahá'í Studies, 34 Copernicus St., Ottawa, ON, Canada K1N 7K4; tel.: 613-233-1903 or e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>.

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Place Jacques-Cartier (© Tourisme Montréal, Stéphan Poulin)

Hotel reservations must be made directly with the conference hotel, Le Centre Sheraton Montreal, 1201 Boulevard René-Lévesque O, Montréal, QC H3B 2L7. To book your room, please call the Reservations Department at 1-800-325-3535 and refer to the group name "Association for Bahá'í Studies Conference." You can also book online at:

<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/events/start.action?id=160107368&key=35EEC5C>

Room rates are CAD \$159.00 single/double (**approx. USD \$115.00**). There is an extra charge of CAD \$30 for the 3rd or 4th person sharing a room. There is no extra charge for children under 18 years of age sharing a room with parents. These rates are guaranteed only until Monday, July 11, 2016. Reservations made after the cut-off dates will be based on availability at the Hotel's prevailing rates. The conference rates are extended to three days before and after the conference dates based on availability.

New Appointments to ABS Executive Committee

In November 2015, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada appointed the membership of the ABS Executive Committee, forming a smaller five member Committee with three members in the United States and two members in Canada.

The members of the Executive Committee are:

Julia Berger, New York, United States
Geoffrey Cameron, Ontario, Canada
Mehran Kiai, British Columbia, Canada
Shabnam Koirala-Azad, California, United States
Martha Schweitz, Illinois, United States

Immense gratitude is expressed to the three members who have completed their terms of service: Lisa Dufraimont, Pierre-Yves Mocquais, and Kim Naqvi, all of Canada. They have each given many years of selfless service to advancing Bahá'í scholarship through their service on the Committee and countless associated responsibilities.



Montreal City Skyline

The *ABS Bulletin* (ISSN 0840-6138) is published quarterly by the Association for Bahá'í Studies, a nonprofit scholarly organization with 1833 international individual memberships and 113 institutional memberships. The Association promotes scholarship on all aspects of the Bahá'í Faith; holds conferences and seminars on promising research fields; and publishes books, as well as the refereed *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*.

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2016 Call for Nominations

ABS Awards for Distinguished Scholarship

Terms of Reference

The Association for Bahá'í Studies – North America (ABS) Endowment Fund was established in 2007 by anonymous donors. The purpose of the endowment is to recognize contributions to Bahá'í scholarship. All fields of Bahá'í scholarship may be considered for this award but, in accordance with the terms of this endowment, preference will be given to scholarly work that correlates the Bahá'í teachings with contemporary issues. The award is intended to stimulate and encourage research in Bahá'í studies.

Nominations will be invited from Association associates annually (see below). Awards are made on the basis of demonstrated excellence in generating Bahá'í scholarship and the names of the recipients will be announced at the Annual Conference of the Association. Both awards have an associated monetary value determined annually by the Executive Committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies.

- The first award will recognize the publication of a major study that advances our collective understanding of the Bahá'í teachings and, where appropriate, that correlates Bahá'í teachings to contemporary issues. Books must have already been published (no earlier than 2012) or been accepted for publication. In the latter case a letter from the publisher is required attesting that the book has been accepted and giving an expected date of publication. This award will be designated as the Association for Bahá'í Studies – North America Award for Distinguished Scholarship, Book Category (ABS Book Award)

- The second award will recognize the work of a graduate student who

has recently completed a graduate thesis. The student will already have graduated or his/her thesis been accepted for graduation. In the latter case, a letter from the supervisor or the person responsible for Graduate Studies is required attesting that the thesis has been accepted and indicating the date of graduation. This award will be designated as the Association for Bahá'í Studies – North America Award for Distinguished Scholarship, Graduate Thesis Category (ABS Thesis Award)

In both cases, while at levels necessarily different, the works being considered for the awards will represent significant contributions to knowledge in the field of Bahá'í Studies.

Awards will be adjudicated by the Awards Adjudication Committee appointed by the Executive Committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies. The Executive Committee will review and approve the recommendation of the Adjudication Committee.

Calls For Nominations

The Association for Bahá'í Studies invites nominations for each of the two awards, the ABS Book Award and the ABS Thesis Award.

All nominations will provide the following documentation:

- A cover letter outlining the reasons for making the nomination. The cover letter should not be more than two pages long.

- A copy of the published book or of the bound thesis

- In the case of a book having not yet been published but having been accepted for publication, a letter from the publisher confirming that the book has been accepted for publication and indicating the date of publication

- In the case of a graduate student having yet to graduate but his/her thesis having been accepted for graduation, a letter from the supervisor or from the person responsible for Graduate Studies attesting that the thesis has been accepted and indicating the date of graduation.

- A resume of the nominee's curriculum vitae stressing both salient academic and service activities. The resume should not be more than one page.

Nominations with accompanying documentation should be sent to Association for Bahá'í Studies – North America, 34 Copernicus Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 7K4. Nominations can be emailed to abs-na@bahai-studies.ca or faxed to 613-233-3644 with supporting documents to follow by regular mail or courier. Nominations should be received by **15 March 2016**. Please note that no material will be returned to the person or persons submitting the nomination.

The names of the recipients will be announced at the annual conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies and recipients attending the conference will be presented with the awards at that time.

The Journal of Bahá'í Studies

The Association for Bahá'í Studies is happy to announce that the Online Book Review Repository is now available on the ABS website. We continue to add more book reviews to this site. Check it out at <http://bahai-studies.ca/publications/journal/book-reviews/> and let us know what you think!

Also, visit the "Past Issues" page of the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* on the ABS website regularly to access articles from past issues of the Journal. These articles can be viewed and downloaded at <http://bahai-studies.ca/past-issues/>

Latest issue of *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* - Vol. 25, No. 3

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Calendar of Events

ABS Education Working Group Seminar

February 13-15, 2016

Bosch Bahá'í School

www.bosch.org

ABS Medicine and Health Working Group Seminar

April 8-10, 2016

Bosch Bahá'í School

www.bosch.org

Bahá'í Chair University of Maryland

February 2, 2016 at 4:00 pm

Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois

"Why Du Bois is the Founder of American Scientific Sociology."

Professor Aldon Morris, Forrest Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Northwestern University.

April 6, 2016 at 4:00 pm

The Psychotic in Public Life:

Human Nature and Political Justification of Brutality

Professor James M. Glass, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, College Park.

<http://www.bahaichair.umd.edu/events>

Wilmette Institute Courses

2016 Courses open for registration

<http://wilmetteinstitute.org/our-courses/>

Bahá'í Presence at American Academy of Religion Conference

Nine Bahá'ís attended the American Academy of Religion (AAR), the leading annual gathering of scholars of religion, held in Atlanta November 21-24. Eight presentations related to the Faith were made to five different audiences.

On Saturday afternoon, November 21, two Bahá'ís participated in a panel on "The Politics of Engagement: Religious NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and the United Nations." The panel was a joint meeting of the "Religion and Politics Section" and the "International Development and Religion Group" of the AAR. Chairing the event was Daniel Perell of the Bahá'í International Community Office in New York. Julia Berger, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Kent and the researcher for the Bahá'í International Community, presented on "Rethinking Religion in World Affairs: The Bahá'í International Community and the United Nations," an overview of the work of the BIC and its approach to public discourse.

Ms. Berger also spoke about "Towards a New Discourse on Gender Equality: A Study of the Bahá'í International Community's Engagement with the United Nations" at a Women's Roundtable on Sunday focusing on "New Hands Tilling: Emerging Scholars' Visions of the Future of Feminist Theology." She participated in a panel discussion at the "Women's Caucus Business Meeting" on Monday morning.

On Sunday afternoon, Dr. Benjamin Schewel, a philosopher and ethicist currently living in the Netherlands, spoke about "Comparative Religious Ethics and the Problem of Forced Migration." The panel's theme was "The Ethics of Social Difference, Global

Interdependence, and Forced Migration," and was sponsored by the Comparative Religious Ethics Group of the AAR.

Sunday evening, the Bahá'í Studies Colloquy convened to an audience of ten people. Dr. Susan Maneck served as chair. Dr. Christopher White of Vassar College spoke about "Theories of Cognition, Attention, and Embodiment and the Bahá'í Obligatory Prayers." He examined research about the importance of bodily motions and engagement in remembering and appreciating truths, work that applies to Islamic and Bahá'í obligatory prayers and some Buddhist meditation practices.

Dr. Loni Bramson, a professor at American Public University System, explored "American Bahá'í Race Relations Work in the 1920s and 1930s: A Means to Develop the Bahá'í Administrative Order in the United States." She reviewed the race unity efforts that were conducted by the Bahá'ís during the era when local spiritual assemblies were being established and hypothesized that the work of organizing and conducting the conferences was an important factor in strengthening and developing these nascent institutions.

Dr. Mikhail Sergeev, a professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, then spoke about the concept of the immortality of the soul. He analyzed the proofs presented in various texts by 'Abdu'l-Bahá noting that while some of them could also be found in Plato, most were original and therefore constituted important contributions to global philosophical thought about the afterlife.

Finally, Dr. Mike McMullen, a sociologist at University of Houston Clear Lake, offered "A Snapshot of

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Bahá'í Programs for Youth and Young Adults: Data from the FACT 2015 Survey.” He summarized a recent survey of local spiritual assemblies—almost half of which responded—of their programs for young adults. The survey showed strong levels of vitality in Bahá'í communities compared to many Christian congregations, which on average are shrinking in size and losing young people in spite of numerous programs to retain them.

The presentations were followed by a business meeting chaired by Dr. Robert Stockman. There has been a Bahá'í presence at the American Academy of Religion since about 1984, but most of that time the Bahá'í program has been an “additional meeting” rather than a regular part of the AAR. The business meeting decided to apply for “group” status within the AAR so that its programs would be featured more prominently in the program book and would be seen as a regular part of the discipline of religious studies. Two co-chairs, Robert Stockman and Susan Maneck, were chosen (groups usually have two co-chairs to spread the workload).

The group chose the theme of “The Most Challenging Issue: Race and Religion” to serve as the focus of next year’s panel. It is hoped the papers can be collected and edited for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The Bahá'í Studies Group plans to focus on themes relevant to public discourse and will seek to include many people whose research focuses on other communities, but nevertheless illumines the development of the Bahá'í community in some way.

The Bahá'í presence at the AAR was rounded out by a display of about fifty scholarly works and authoritative texts in the exhibit hall, where over 100 publishers presented tens of thousands of new books and journals on religious studies. Many informal dialogues about the Bahá'í Faith occurred at the booth and free introductory literature was provided.

Ten thousand people—professors, graduate students, journalists, and clergy—attended this year’s joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion and Society for Biblical Literature.

Most came from North America, but some traveled from all the other inhabited continents. Several thousand presentations were given, mostly in hundreds of simultaneous sessions. In addition, there were films with discussion, tours of religious sites, the construction of a Tibetan Buddhist sand mandala painting, scores of banquets and receptions, the exhibit hall, and the employment center, where job interviews for university teaching positions were conducted. Next year’s AAR will be held in San Antonio, Texas, November 19-22, 2016.

Report by Dr. Robert Stockman

New Publications by ABS Associates

Brian Aull has published *The Triad: Three Civic Virtues That Could Save American Democracy* (2015)

John Kolstoe has published *The Covenant and You* (George Ronald Publisher, 2015)

Louis Venters has published *No Jim Crow Church: The Origins of South Carolina’s Baha’i Community* (University Press of Florida, 2015)



ABS Webinar Schedule

The Association is continuing to schedule webinars to engage both ABS associates and the community at large in the study and discussion of scholarly topics. For the list of upcoming webinar sessions go to the ABS website at: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/UpcomingWebinars>.

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 8:00 p.m. EST with Julia Berger

Topic: Role of Religion in Society

Religion has come to play an increasingly visible role in the construction of the modern world. Once deemed irrelevant in an avowedly secular public sphere, religion is now the focus of a growing research agenda in the social sciences. This presentation will address some of the key concepts and concerns in the contemporary study of religion in society including secularization, the question of modernity, faith-based organizations, and the debates about the nature of religion, among others. It will explore some of the limitations of current approaches to the study of religion and the promising avenues for Bahá'í engagement. The presentation will offer some insights from Ms. Berger's on-going research about Bahá'í engagement with the United Nations.

JULIA BERGER is a PHD candidate in the department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Kent (Canterbury, UK). Her research focuses on the Bahá'í community's engagement with the United Nations, and the engagement of faith-based organizations in international affairs, more broadly. From 2004-2015, she served as Senior Researcher at the Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office in New York. Ms. Berger holds an M.Ed. from the University of Toronto. She lives in Queens, NY with her husband and twin daughters.

Webinar held in January

Topic: Shoghi Effendi: The CEIO (Chief Executive and Inspired Officer) The Ultimate Example and Guide for Principled Leadership and Management

Speaker: Dr. Shaheen Tedjarati

To watch a recording of this session, please visit our Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/152761370>

To watch recordings of past webinars, go to: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/PastWebinars>

39th ABS Conference Audio and Video Recordings Available

The audio CD (MP3 format) of all the plenary talks are available for purchase for \$20.00. You can order the CDs at our online store at <<http://bahai-studies.ca/product/cd-2015-abs-conference-all-plenary-sessions/>>

Video recordings of the 39th annual conference as well as some past conferences are also available for free viewing or download on the ABS website at <<https://vimeo.com/absna/videos>>