



Advancing an Integrative Approach to World Peace

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace At the University of Maryland

Table of Contents	4	I. About the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace
	6	II. Academic View on Peace
	8	III. Research Themes
	12	IV. Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi
	16	V. Conferences
	20	VI. International Lectures
	22	VII. Signature Events
	26	VIII. Awards
	28	IX. Class: "The Problem of Prejudice"
	30	X. Visit Scholars and Fellows
	34	XI. Publications

I. About the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace



Join Us as We Explore the Pathways to Peace

Violence. Suffering. Environmental degradation. Gender inequality. Misogyny. Education, resource, and asset disparity. The changing nature of world order and sovereignty. The devaluation of human life and the human experience. These are among the complex challenges facing humanity—and these are just a few of the roadblocks to global peace.

Peace is more than just the absence of war; it is a state where the basic needs of every human being are addressed. While many individuals, organizations, governments, and world leaders agree that world peace should be a universal priority, the pathways to peace remain contested and unclear.

As the current holder of the **Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi** examines the challenges and barriers to creating a peaceful society, as well as the impact of globalization on world peace. She draws on the rich history and mission of the Chair, and works with international scholars, diplomats, and organizations who address the challenges of today and anticipate the opportunities of tomorrow.

Foundation and Mission

The Bahá'í Chair was founded in 1993 through a generous endowment to study major issues of world peace as presented in *The Promise of World Peace*, a statement by The Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith. Since its founding, the Chair has generated knowledge promoting the interests and well-being of humanity. It is known for excellence in education, research, publication, and for promoting solutions toward removing the obstacles to peace.

The Bahá'í Chair is an endowed academic program that advances interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. While drawing certain initial insights from religion, the program aims to develop a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies leading to the creation of a better world. For more than 20 years, the Bahá'í Chair has served as a platform from which international thought leaders convene to research, discuss, and address the ever-changing roadblocks to peace.

II. Academic View on Peace



From the twentieth century to the early decades of the twenty-first, the meaning of peace has changed significantly and expanded to include a wider spectrum of issues. Peace is no longer viewed as the simple absence of war—be it the two major World Wars, the countless regional or national conflicts, or the Cold War. Peace now concerns such issues as sectarianism, global inequality, human rights, mass executions, human trafficking, and gender inequality. It encompasses prejudice of race, religion, nation, and class, as well as the environment and access, or lack thereof, to resources. Focusing on specific conflicts between nations or groups of combatant people will not assist the larger challenge of promoting a global framework for a holistic peace.

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace is actively involved in advancing intellectual discourse on topics that are central to understanding the broader and more complex spectrum of pathways that lead to a better, more peaceful world. The program expressly focuses on spiritual and moral attributes that are the basis of propelling the world toward peace and justice. Central to exploring global peace in a

globalizing world is the consciousness of a common humanity, a single, interdependent humankind. This consciousness appreciates and embraces the widespread diversity of the global community.

In reality, however, the human rights of more than half of the world's population are not protected. Violence, conflict, and untold suffering abound throughout the world. The Bahá'í Chair believes that at the heart of these global conflicts are outdated patterns of thought, behavior, and social structures incapable of addressing the needs of an ever-changing world order.

Adopting a trifold programmatic objective, the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace is substantially contributing to: 1) the academic life of the University of Maryland community, 2) developing the momentum to systematically advance the discourse through knowledge generation and dissemination on peace studies and peace policy amongst topical stakeholders, and 3) highlighting salient features of the panoramic vision of world peace that the Bahá'í texts offer for the benefit of the intellectual life of the worldwide global community.

III. Research Themes



The Vision and Concept of Peace Adopted by the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace

Our approach is based on an understanding that the complex topic of peace calls for a comprehensive approach and intervention. Pursuing an interdisciplinary approach, the Bahá'í Chair draws upon a scientific basis of knowledge in order to advance initiatives toward structuring a more peaceful world. This point of view considers peace as more than the elimination of conflict and war or the prohibition of the weapons and methods of war. World peace is no longer examined as one part of the whole. At the center of this examination of peace is the recognition of the awareness of humanity as a single unit: a complex and highly interconnected web comprised of all the peoples of the world. The Bahá'í Chair believes that peace is best understood when examined as an all-embracing, holistic, and inclusive single planetary process. This approach is referred to as an integrative approach to peace. A process that takes into consideration and draws insights from shared human values—ethical and moral considerations that are the foundation for an education for peace. The Bahá'í Chair promotes the vision for world peace through an intensive learning process focused on **five central themes**.

1) Structural Racism and the Root Causes of Prejudice

The existence of racial inequalities and prejudice is one of the impediments to a peaceful society. This is the drive behind the Bahá'í Chair's thematic focus on structural racism and the ways in which the oppression and suppression of any one people in any society ultimately leads to the oppression of everyone in that society. Poverty, discrimination, segregation, and all forms of inequality hold back the advancement, prosperity, and well-being of the whole.

Structural racism limits us all. Without addressing the fundamental inequalities caused by the structure of our society, there is no hope for improving community, national, and international relations. By investigating the underlying structural challenges to equality and equal opportunity for all, the Bahá'í Chair continues to ask: what is required for us to collectively remake and restructure a more just and equitable society?

2) Human Nature

The foundation of the study of human nature has been based on the fundamental question of whether humans are inherently selfish, nasty, and brutish, or social, cooperative, and concerned with the welfare of others. Watching the news today, one would be inclined to believe the former—corruption and unethical conduct is pervasive, conflict and contestation are ongoing, and the failure of humans to consider the well-being, security, and prosperity of others is notable. However, for every example of humans acting from pure self interest there are further examples of people acting from comparative

interest, the difference in the cost to themselves and the cost to another. At times people are even motivated to act by factors other than self interest. It is therefore even more important to understand both the creation and transmission of values, ethics, and a sense of responsibility for others, from one generation to the next. In our increasingly interconnected and globalized world—where problems cannot be resolved by individuals or individual nations—there is an urgent need to understand what drives human nature and what helps us decide whether to act in an ethical manner, or not.

3) Empowerment of Women and Peace

Women are a key part of removing barriers to global peace. Women's full participation in constructing a different world in which they have full equality of education and opportunity and an equal voice in decision-making is required in order to create sustainable social order. Our understanding of how to remove the obstacles that prevent women's full participation as equal to men in every arena in life will ultimately eradicate the biggest obstacle to women's rights, which is the problem of all forms of oppression. The Bahá'í Chair believes that the removal of this oppression is the personal responsibility of all people, not just women, Conflict can be reduced and the likelihood

of peace increased when people of all genders—along with the different challenges and experiences they face—are viewed as equal. In order to create a holistic approach to peace, we must actively seek to remove the long history of oppression and dysfunction perpetuated by the current patriarchal system. There should be efforts to facilitate collaboration between people, rather than the ongoing tendency for segmentation into different groups which enforces the status quo. We need to understand how the current system enables those in power to maintain their hierarchy and control over the oppressed and how that system can be altered or transformed to ensure the inclusion of all.

4) Frontiers of Global Governance

The decline in strong global leadership, on the part of those elected to govern, contributes to the growing chaos and anarchy throughout the world. Increasing fragmentation and polarization both within and between nation-states directly impacts global instability. What seems like a paralysis of will among the leaders of the world has created a dangerous vacuum, which if unattended has the potential to thrust the international community into further disorder and potential collapse.

By engaging with the challenges of governance on a global scale, the Bahá'í Chair is working to establish a framework for addressing these challenges and the questions they raise. These include:

- What values do we want our global system of governance to serve?
- How can we bring together leaders to define these values in a rigorous manner?
- How can leaders be encouraged to collaborate more willingly and effectively?
- Is it possible to conceive of new forms of more compassionate, just, and fair governance on a global scale?
- How can we improve leadership at the global level to ensure that new forms of governance are equitable for all?

5) Overcoming Challenges in the Globalization of the Environment

Global climate change is the biggest challenge facing our world today. A global policy is required in order to address the challenge of climate change and environmental sustainability. While there are technical solutions to reduce the effects of climate change, what we actually require is a non-technical solution—one that shifts a fundamental shift in human values, morality, and the way that we interact with and view the environment.

The structural inequality of climate change needs to be recognized, with over 50 percent of the world's population living in poverty and over 1 billion people going hungry. The industrialized and developed nations will also need to recognize that their consumption of the earth's resources and the emissions created by this consumption are negatively impacting not only their own populations but populations across the globe.



IV. Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi

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An all-embracing,
holistic, and inclusive
single planetary process

Hoda Mahmoudi holds the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, College Park. As holder of this endowed academic program since July 2012, Mahmoudi collaborates with a wide range of scholars, researchers, and practitioners to advance interdisciplinary examination and discourse on global peace. She promotes a sound scientific basis for knowledge and strategies to explore the role of social actors and structures in removing obstacles to peace and creating paths to a better world.

In 2017, Mahmoudi and the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program received the University of Maryland President's Commission on Ethnic and Minority award for its outstanding work on structural racism.

The Bahá'í Chair believes that peace is best understood when examined as an all-embracing, holistic, and inclusive single planetary process. This approach is referred to as an integrative approach to peace. A process that takes into consideration and draws insights from shared human values, ethical and moral considerations which are the foundation for an education for peace. The Bahá'í Chair promotes the

vision for world peace through an intensive learning process focused on five central themes: Structural Racism and the Root Causes of Prejudice, Human nature, Empowerment of Women and Peace, Frontiers of Globalization and Governance, and Overcoming the Challenges in the Globalization of the Environment.

In particular, Professor Mahmoudi advocates a broad concept of peacemaking—which she refers to as a “worldview approach”—that draws insights from all cultures.

Before joining the University of Maryland faculty, Mahmoudi served as the coordinator of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, from 2001 to 2012. Previously, Mahmoudi was dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Northeastern Illinois University, where she was also a faculty member in the department of sociology. Mahmoudi served as vice president and dean of Olivet College, where she was instrumental in an institutional transformation that generated national recognition.

Dr. Mahmoudi has published widely in such leading journals as *Organizational Studies*, *Group and Organization Studies*, and the *International Review of Modern Sociology*. Additionally, she has several upcoming edited volumes.

Systemic Racism in America: Sociological Theory, Education Inequality, and Social Change

This volume is under contract with Routledge Press and will be edited by Rashawn Ray and Hoda Mahmoudi. It will feature papers from highly recognized scholars in the field of racism and race relations, and will be published in early 2022.

The Future of Humanity: The Challenges of Global Peace and Security

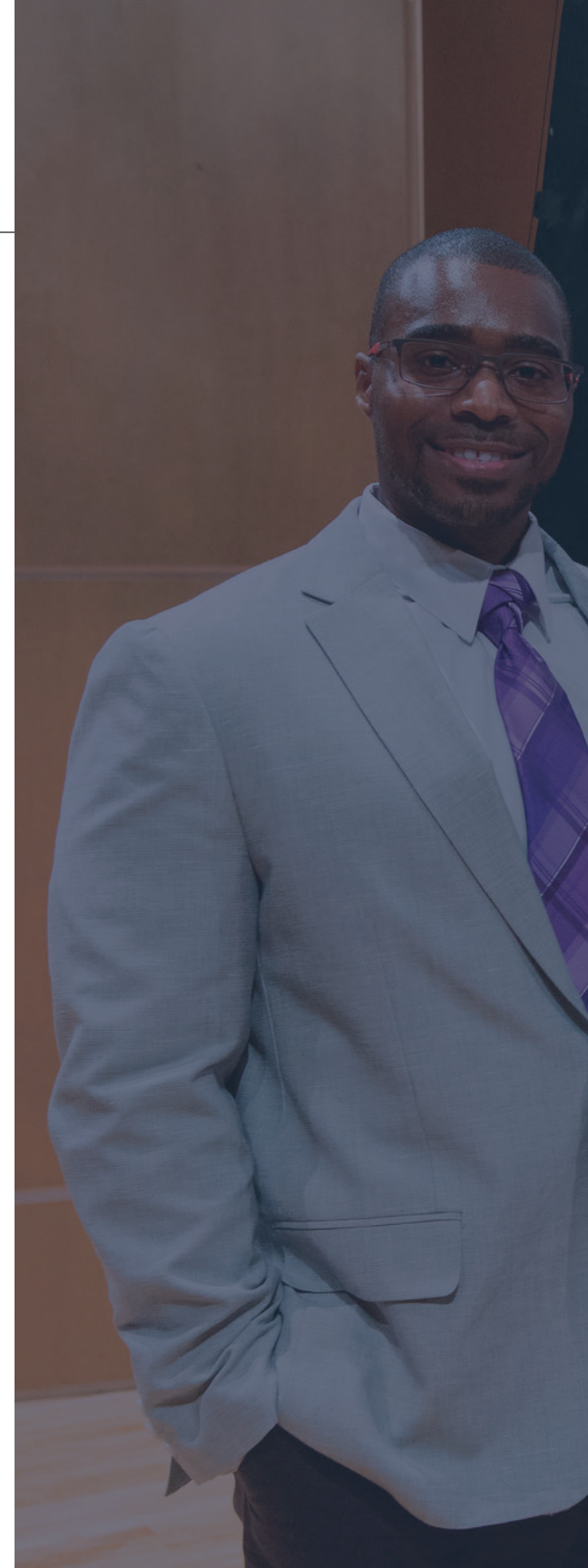
This volume will be published by Routledge and will be edited by Hoda Mahmoudi, Michael Allen, and Kate Seamen. It will contain papers presented at the Future of Humanity Conference in October 2018 and will be published in early 2022.

Infrastructure, Wellbeing, and the Measurement of Happiness

This volume will be published by Routledge and will be co-edited by Hoda Mahmoudi and Jennifer Roe. It will feature papers presented during the Infrastructure and Happiness Conference of April 2019 and will be published late in 2022.

Women in a Changing World: Exploring New Paradigms for Peace

This volume is under review with Routledge and will be edited by Hoda Mahmoudi, Jane Parpart, and Kate Seaman. It will feature papers presented at the Women in the World Conference in September 2019 and will be published in early 2023.





V. Conferences



Infrastructure and
Happiness Conference
April 2019

This conference aimed to create a rich dialogue layering, debating, and, at times uniting, diverse perspectives concerning the many changes facing cities and urban populations. It brought together decision-makers and thought leaders from many disciplines and sectors to synthesize strategies for achieving happier cities.

Women in the World:
Time for a New
Paradigm for Peace
September 2019

Women continue to face obstacles to their equal participation in all areas of daily life, political, social, and economic. This conference sought to widen and deepen our understanding of women in relation to the inequalities they face, based not only on gender, but on race, class, religion, and more. It also sought to highlight the progress that women have made, and how this contributes to more peaceful and prosperous societies. Scholars and practitioners from across the globe, gave a wide range of perspectives and experiences, examined crucial questions, and offered new ideas and solutions to increase the role of women moving forward.

Global Climate Crisis:
Seeking Solutions
April 2020

This conference brought together leading scholars from a diverse range of disciplines to discuss how we can come together to find solutions for the existential environmental threats facing the planet. By approaching the problem from different perspectives, the speakers addressed key questions surrounding the science, ethics, and implications of climate change.

Global Climate Crisis
Conference: Seeking
Environmental Justice
and Climate Equality
September 2021

This conference brought together leading scholars from a range of disciplines to discuss solutions to the climate crisis. By approaching climate justice from the perspective of environmental justice, the speakers illuminated our common human challenges and provided a comprehensive overview of where we were, where we are, and where we must go to address the deeply human issues of climate change.

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be a sky pusher.

A photograph of two women at a podium. The woman on the left, with short grey hair and glasses, is wearing a leopard-print jacket and is speaking into a microphone. The woman on the right, with dark hair, is wearing a red dress and a black blazer, and is smiling. The background is a blue wall with a red banner at the top. The text 'VI. International Lectures' is overlaid on the image.

VI.

International Lectures

Dr. Mahmoudi was invited to give a lecture on “Tolerance in the UAE: Histories and Reflections on Religious Tolerance and the Modern Nation-State,” November 13-14, 2017, at New York University in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. This conference featured scholars discussing religious tolerance in the UAE and tolerance, secularism, and the role of religion in the modern nation-state.

Dr. Mahmoudi was invited to give a lecture on “The Art of Living and Advancing a Holistic Civilization Through Sustainable Development” at the fourth Nishan Forum on World Civilizations in Qufu in the Shandong province of China, November 16–17, 2016. The forum brought together scholars, diplomats, and civil society representatives from

China and abroad with the aim of advancing a global conversation about common values and ethics. The theme of the forum, “Traditional Culture and Ecological Progress-Marching Towards A Green and Simple Life,” was intended to promote dialogue on sustainability. More than 250 participants attended the forum from dozens of countries and regions around the world. Mahmoudi also gave several other lectures in China. Focusing on the theme of “An Integrative Approach to World Peace,” she spoke to a group of scholars at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, as well as to students at Shanghai Normal University and Dezhou University. University leaders at Dezhou University honored Mahmoudi’s visit by officially appointing her as professor emeritus in the political science department.

VII. Signature Events



As part of its trifold objective, the Bahá'í Chair specifically invites academics and practitioners to address the major barriers to global peace. These luminaries provide inspiration and direction to students, academics, and leaders seeking to find solutions to the world's great challenges. Significant challenges to peace are examined in lecture presentations, at symposia and conferences, and through courses that explore such general themes as climate change, food and water security, racism and the root causes of prejudice, gender equity, globalization and governance, and inequality. These events have historically drawn extensive audiences, and serve as a focal point for international dialogue.



**Recent Lectures and
Symposia:**

• "The Colors of COVID-19: Confronting Health Disparities
During a Global Pandemic"

February 2021

*Professor Stephen B. Thomas, Professor, Health Policy and
Management and Director, Maryland Center for Health Equity*

• "What thwarts and enables feminist activism around the
world?"

March 2021

Alice Evans, Lecturer, King's College London

• "Sharing the burden: Archival traces of Israeli women's peace
activism"

March 2021

*Dr. Sarai B. Aharoni, Lecturer, Gender Studies Program, Ben-
Gurion University of the Negev*

• "Anti-Asian Violence in Context: Historical Roots and
Contemporary Connections"

April 2021

*Janelle Wong, Professor of Asian American Studies, American
Studies and Government and Politics, the University of Maryland.*

• "Decoloniality, ontology and the structure of racism"

April 2021

Professor Everisto Benyera, Associate Professor of African Politics, Department of Political Science, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

• "The 7th Annual UMD Environmental Justice and Health Disparities Symposium"

August 2021

Cecilia Martinez, Council for Environmental Quality, Senior Director for Environmental Justice

• "Reading Monuments, Marking Turf and Embedding Memories"

September 2021

Kirsten Mullen, Folklorist, Founder Artefactual, Founder Carolina Circuit Writers

• "'Breaking the Spell of the Welfare State? ': Public Culture in Neoliberalism's Gender Regime"

September 2021

Professor Angela McRobbie, Professor Emeritus, Goldsmiths University of London and Professor of Cultural Studies, Coventry University UK

VIII. Awards



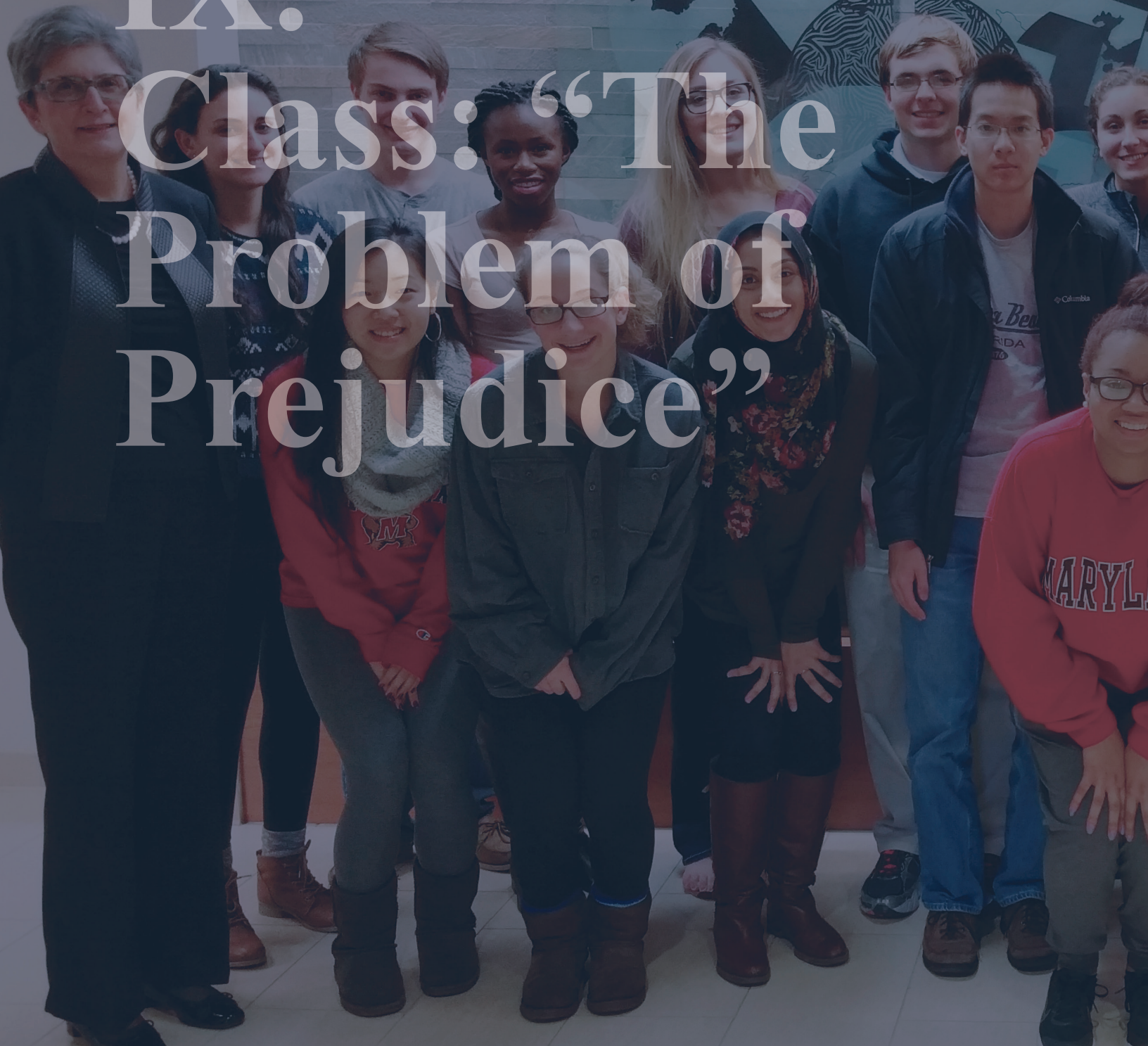
Dr. Mahmoudi was recognized at a ceremony in November 2016, awarding her the 2016 recipient of the Outstanding Honors Faculty Award. She was honored in appreciation of her popular Honors College seminar, as well as her conferences and events on timely topics of interest to the entire international community, featuring highly renowned guest speakers.

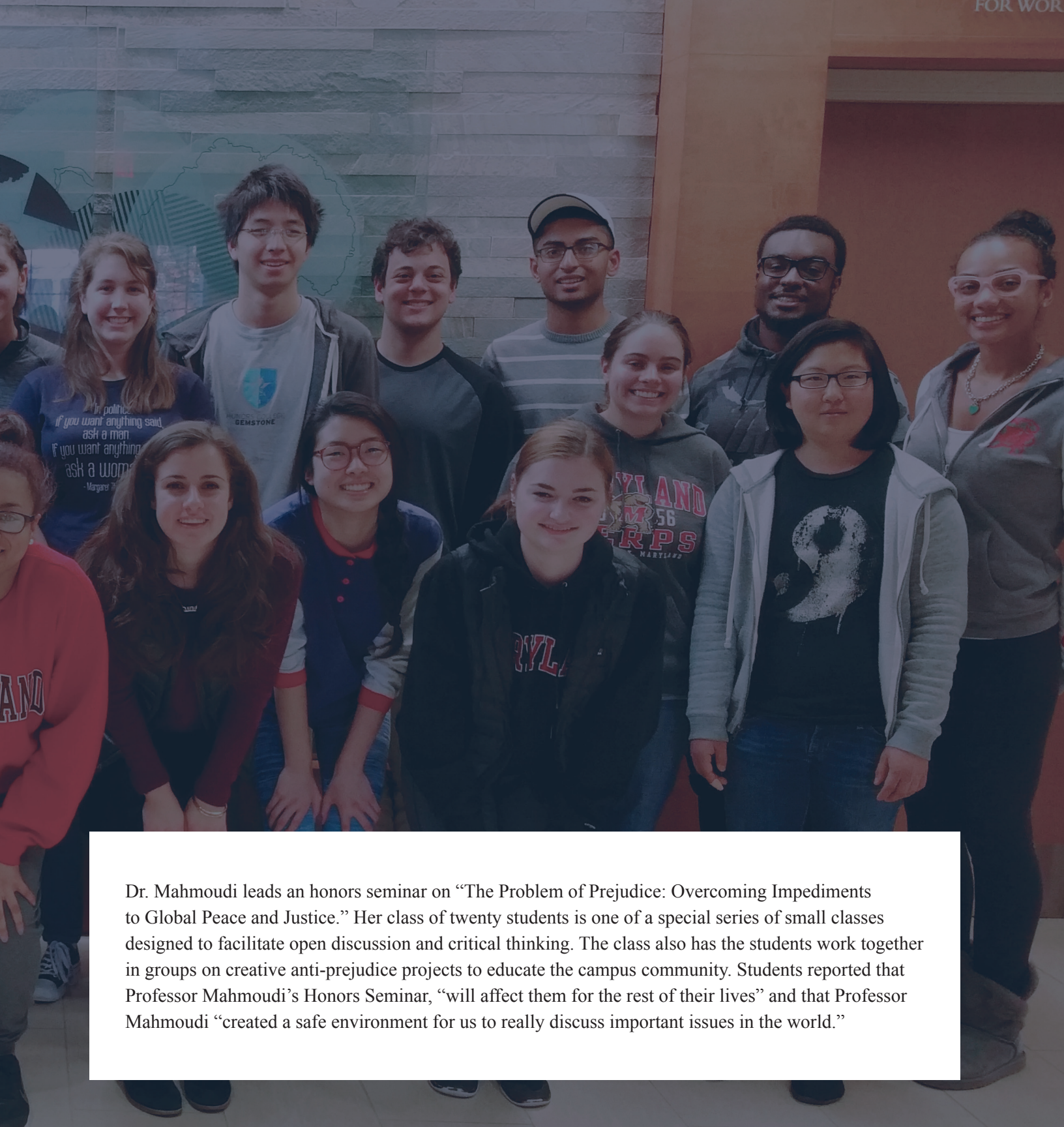
The University of Maryland recognized Dr. Mahmoudi and the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program for their outstanding work on the issue of structural racism in society. The President's Commission on Ethnic and Minority Issues presented the honor, the 2017 Non-Instructional Unit Service Minority Achievement Award, at a ceremony on May 15, 2017. In a letter announcing the award, the committee noted:

“The University is very pleased to recognize the Chair’s many outstanding accomplishments and contributions, particularly its series exploring structural racism and the root cause of prejudice. Your programming has been rigorous and relevant to ethnic minority issues and you have made it widely available.”

IX.

Class: "The Problem of Prejudice"





Dr. Mahmoudi leads an honors seminar on “The Problem of Prejudice: Overcoming Impediments to Global Peace and Justice.” Her class of twenty students is one of a special series of small classes designed to facilitate open discussion and critical thinking. The class also has the students work together in groups on creative anti-prejudice projects to educate the campus community. Students reported that Professor Mahmoudi’s Honors Seminar, “will affect them for the rest of their lives” and that Professor Mahmoudi “created a safe environment for us to really discuss important issues in the world.”



X. Visiting Scholars and Fellows

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace hosts visiting scholars to conduct research on topics relating to the programmatic themes, in relation to advancing the process of peace building.

Tiffani Betts Razavi (Israel, 2021)

She is a Visiting Research Professor at the University of Maryland Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and a senior staff writer for *The International Educator*. Dr. Razavi holds a doctorate in psychology from the University of Oxford. She was a Research Associate and Tutor in Psychology in Oxford University's Department of Experimental Psychology. She then held a Lectureship in organizational behavior, psychology and management at the University of Southampton. Since 2003, she has served as a curriculum development coordinator at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel for a worldwide program of education based on spiritual values. She is a Board Director of the Overseas Schools Assistance Corporation, a US-based non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of international education. As a senior staff writer for *The International Educator*, her articles curate research findings and global trends for educators.

Sarah June Benjamin (United States, 2017)

She served as the 2017–2018 writing fellow at the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program, and was a Juris Doctorate graduate and Master of Arts candidate at American University. As a refugee from the Liberian Civil War, she holds an interest in the rights of women and children in conflict zones. Prior to this role, Benjamin has served with the Washington College of Law War Crimes Research Office, Washington College of Law Human Rights Clinic, Tahirih Justice Center, and North Carolina Justice and Unity Initiative on matters regarding human and humanitarian rights. Benjamin worked on a publication with Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi on the intellectual contributions of Bahá'í scholarship, and a larger volume discussing Bahá'í tenets that outline world peace and its relationship to current peace theory.

Sharath Patil (United States, 2017)

He was a fellow on economics and trade at the University of Maryland's Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program. He was a second-year law student at the University of Oregon's School of Law and has a bachelor of science in supply chain management from Arizona State University. Patil spent the summer of 2017 as a judicial intern in the chambers of the Honorable Judge Jennifer Choe-Groves at the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York City. Patil is passionate about the ability of sustainable and resilient global supply chains to serve as a force for development and a bridge for peace.

Dr. Shahrzad Sabet (United States, 2017)

She was an assistant research professor at the University of Maryland's Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program. Previously, she was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and a senior research fellow at Princeton University's Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance. Sabet is a specialist in international political economy with training and research interests spanning political science, economics, political philosophy, and psychology. Sabet's current research combines her empirical study of globalization and identity with questions of political philosophy.

Dr. Nicole des Bouvrie (Germany, 2016)

She was a visiting scholar at the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace program at the University of Maryland in 2016. After she finished her PhD in philosophy, art, and critical theory at the European Graduate School in Switzerland, she worked as a freelance philosopher and as a post-doc researcher at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. Bouvrie wrote her dissertation on the "Necessity of the Impossible," thinking about radical change and how the prevalent epistemic structures of power are limiting reality and the possibilities of change. She is coauthoring a book focused on the problems in language and communication with regard to shared understanding between individuals and the ability to have better consultation.

Dr. Rashid Ahmad (Pakistan, 2014)

He published a paper in the journal, *Al-Idah* (2015), on "Doctrine of Peace: An Islamic Perspective; an Analysis of the Hindrances in the Peace Making Process." During his time at the Bahá'í Chair, Dr. Ahmad conducted research on a series of topics related to Islam and peace that he intends to publish in academic journals over the next few years. His hope is to eventually compile the published journal articles into a volume.

Dr. Zhang Jin (China, 2013–2014)

He edited a publication titled, *The Study of Datong Ideas* (Datong is a Confucian term that refers to Great Community, also described as the universal spread of Truth). The book includes some of the concepts and principles that the Bahá'í Chair promotes in relation to advancing the process toward a more peaceful world.

Dr. Xu Hong (China, 2013–2014)

She published a book that examines new religions in China and features the social teachings of the Bahá'í Faith in relation to peace. A second publication, also by Xu Hong, is close to completion and has been supported by the National Social Science Foundation in China. This volume examines the social issues advocated by the Bahá'í Chair that reflect some of the Bahá'í perspectives about peace, along with those from other religions. Two organizations and their work on world peace are featured in this volume. These are the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and the Institute for Global Civilization. The latter, based in China, is devoted to dialogue among the different religions and cultures.

Dr. Janet Khan (Australia, 2013)

She conducted an extensive survey of academic sources examining perspectives and themes relevant to the study of world peace. Dr. Khan was instrumental in developing a working document outlining, from the Bahá'í Chair's perspective, a conceptual framework for the academic study of peace.

OF
XII.
WORLD
PEACE

Publications

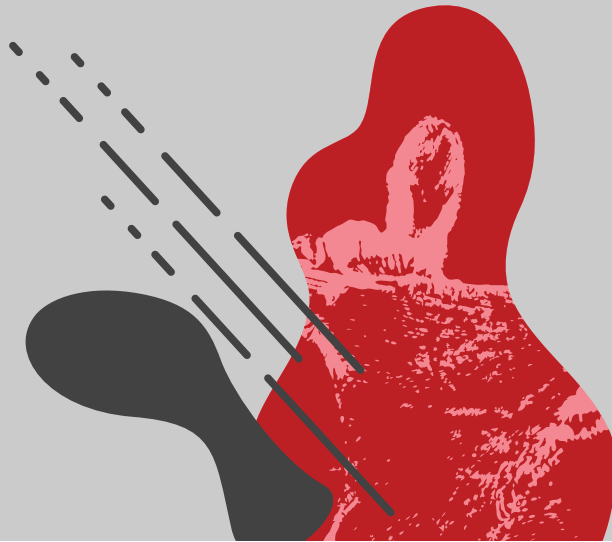
A Letter by the Universal House of Justice
to the Peoples of the World
30th Anniversary Special Edition



The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace
University of Maryland, College Park

Recent Publications:

- Hoda Mahmoudi, Alison Brysk, and Kate Seaman (eds.), *The Changing Ethos of Human Rights*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021.
- Hoda Mahmoudi, "Peace is Everything: An Examination of the Bahá'í Faith's Concept of Peace," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, Volume 72, Issue 3, 2020.
- Janet A Khan and Hoda Mahmoudi, *A World Without War: 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Discourse for Global Peace*, Bahá'í Publishing, 2020.
- Hoda Mahmoudi and Michael Penn (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Dignity and Human Rights*, Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019.
- Hoda Mahmoudi, "Freedom and the Iranian Women's Movement," *Contexts*, Volume 18, Issue 3, 2019.
- Hoda Mahmoudi and Steven Mintz (eds.), *Children and Globalization: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Routledge, 2019.
- Kate Seaman, "Networking Responsibility: Regional Agents and Changing International Norms," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, Volume 25, Issue 1, 2019.
- Carla Barqueiro, Kate Seaman, and Katherine Teresa Towey, "Regional Organizations and Responsibility to Protect: Normative Reframing or Normative Change?" *Politics and Governance*, Volume 4, Issue 3, 2016.
- Bani Dugal, Ulrich Gollmer, and Hoda Mahmoudi, *Voices from Religions on Sustainable Development*, Chapter 12, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), 2016.
- Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace (Special Edition)*, College Park: University of Maryland, 2015.
- Hoda Mahmoudi, *Vision and Prospects for World Peace: Proceeding of the Inaugural Lecture*, College Park: University of Maryland, 2013.



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