The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace had another successful 2016 academic year! Hosting two conferences, six lectures and symposia, and teaching a seminar on “The Problem of Prejudice,” the Bahá’í Chair has explored some of the most timely and relevant topics facing America and the world.

Our ongoing in-depth exploration of five programmatic themes—structural racism and the root causes of prejudice, empowerment of women and peace, frontiers of globalization and governance, human nature, and the environment in a globalizing world—continue to increase our understanding about how to remove the barriers to world peace. In 2016, the Bahá’í Chair invited twenty-five distinguished scholars representing multiple disciplines to offer lectures on some of the most important topics related to peace.

Students on campus are enthusiastically engaged in the work of the Bahá’í Chair. Prior to the lectures, symposia, or conferences sponsored by the Chair, students organize “thought walls”, a bulletin board set up in the busy center of campus, where they ask students to write their reflections about the theme of the upcoming lecture. These themes have focused on racism in America, gender inequality, the meaning of peace, and human nature and violence. Some of our students make regular contributions to our blog concerning a variety of peace related matters, book reviews, and other reflections whilst other students are engaged in research projects relevant to the theme of world peace.

The Bahá’í Chair pursues an integrative or inclusive approach to world peace. The planet and humanity as a whole, falls under the umbrella of this holistic approach to peace. This is why our work is so important to the wellbeing, security, and happiness of every person.

We will continue to explore the intersection of social, material, and spiritual components of society as we search for solutions to the many challenges, conflicts, and human suffering prevalent in the world. In fact, we are eager to move forward with greater determination in furthering our understanding of how to construct a more peaceful, prosperous, and happy world.

With gratitude, we take this opportunity to thank you for your generous support. Without your involvement, we would not be in a position to accomplish the exceptional and imperative educational goals of the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace. To find out more about our program and to view the event photos and videos, visit our website at bahaichair.umd.edu.

Thank you,

Hoda Mahmoudi
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace
Learning Outside the Lines: 
A Conference on Children and Youth in an Interconnected World
September 28–29, 2016 • www.bahaichair.umd.edu/learningoutsidelines

Around the world, the experiences of children range from those with affluence, well-funded schools, and peaceful homes, to those who are impoverished, exposed to violence, and are victims of injustice. This conference sought to widen and deepen our understanding of childhood and youth in relation to the inequalities of nation, gender, ethnicity/race, class, religion, and minority-majority belonging. It examined children in conflict and war, as objects of consumption, and as displaced and migrating populations.

The conference featured a range of interdisciplinary perspectives on the historical aspect of childhood experience, including a look at slave communities in nineteenth-century America, early American girlhood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, changes in attitudes toward children, and childhood in the Arab renaissance. Leading up to the modern era and taking a global perspective, other topics included the role of media in formulating childhood experience, childhood education disparities, the story of Asian immigrant girls in Japan and the United States, childhood adjustments, variety and stress, and modesty in ultra-orthodox Jewish schools.

From the top: Professor Steven Mintz, Professor Wilma King
Children are remarkable learners, actors and carriers of the future. Currently they reside in a world that although not of their own making, has profound influence on their lives both positive and negative.

— Professor Hoda Mahmoudi

From the top:
Dean Marcelo Suarez Orozco, Professor Tomoko Tokunaga, Professor Orna Blumen
W.E.B. Du Bois was one of a handful of scholars of the 20th century with a sustained global impact on sociological, literary, and political knowledge. In this talk, Morris drew upon evidence from his recently published book, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*, to demonstrate that Du Bois was the founding father of scientific sociology in the United States; that is, American scientific sociology was founded in a segregated black university by a black man.

Samuel Huntington’s 1993 “Clash of Civilizations” essay, which provided considerable intellectual justification for the war on terror and blinded many people to its excesses, has received much attention and controversy. But this debate often sidesteps the richer and more complex set of questions about civilizations. This conference looked at the varieties of ways, including pacific ways, in which civilizations have borrowed and exchanged ideas and engaged in reciprocal learning both through history and in modern times. This conference was jointly organized by the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland and the UNESCO Chair in Transnational Challenges and Governance at American University, Washington, DC.

This talk examined how human nature finds itself distorted through racism and the eugenic thinking that grounded regimes like slavery in the antebellum South and the German annihilation of the Jews during the Holocaust. Professor Glass looked at how brutality and violence in human nature received scientific assurance through eugenic theory that conceptualized a distinction between different types of human beings; those distinctions argued that one class of persons may be exploited and killed because they lack the moral and physiological capacity to experience pain.

Videos of talks given by our speakers are available online: bahai.umd.edu/videos
Why we Believe that Education Solves all our Social Problems
April 7, 2016

Daniel Tröhler, University of Luxembourg
www.bahaichair.umd.edu/troller

Today, it seems that any kind of (social) problems are assigned to education. This talk analyzed the historical roots of this mode of thinking in the second half of the eighteenth century. The talk examined when the construction of modernity, progress, and open future started to depend on an idea of education that promised to be the engine of modernity by means of (new) and broadly disseminated knowledge and technologies. At the same time, education became a means of moral reassurance empowering the individual exposed to these modern conditions and their moral hazards to act morally or virtuously.

Forgiveness is Not To Make Us Feel Better
October 4, 2016

C. Fred Alford, University of Maryland
www.bahaichair.umd.edu/alford

Forgiveness is not to make us feel better. The problem with forgiveness is that it has become a way for people to feel better about themselves, let go of their hate, and get on with their lives. Forgiveness is frequently given too quickly, because real forgiveness requires that we work through our own pain, suffering, and anger. Alford’s talk focused on the misuse and proper use of forgiveness.

Why Police Compliance Does Not Save Black Lives: Racial Bias and the Need to Restructure the U.S. Criminal Justice System
October 25, 2016

Rashawn Ray, University of Maryland
www.bahaichair.umd.edu/ray

How do we make sense of the killings of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and Korryn Gaines at the hands of the police? This presentation provided an overview of some of the latest research on citizens’ interactions with the police by using national and Prince George’s County data related to police brutality, police killings, and perceptions of treatment by the police. Using social psychological and critical race theories related to unjust treatment and implicit bias, this presentation helped attendees better understand racial differences in policing outcomes.

Can Women Think? An Attempt to Go Beyond Philosophy-as-Difference
November 30, 2016

Nicole des Bouvrie, University of Maryland
www.bahaichair.umd.edu/bouvrie

The history of (Western) philosophy has been dominated by male thinkers. What does this mean for our understanding of thinking and the structures through which we understand reality, the world around us? Can there even be an alternative way of thinking that does not define itself based on being different? Is being a woman always going to be defined through an essentially lack of something? In other words, is a thinking woman always an oxymoron?
Honors College Award

Hoda Mahmoudi was recognized at a ceremony on November 4, 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.

China Trip

Hoda Mahmoudi was invited to give a lecture on “The Art of Living and Advancing a Holistic Civilization” 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.

Professor Mahmoudi’s Class

Hoda Mahmoudi led an honors class seminar on “The Problem of Prejudice: Overcoming Impediments to Global Peace and Justice.” Her class of twenty students was one of a special series of small classes designed to facilitate open discussion and critical thinking. The class culminated in the students working 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.”

Bahá’í Chair Social Media

The work of the Bahá’í Chair through its social media was recognized by an invitation to the Chair to make a presentation at the University of Maryland’s #UMDSocial: University of Maryland Social Media Conference. The Chair was recognized for its social media and, in particular, its use of social media for events promotion. In 2016, the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace launched a new blog, creating a form for various discussions on peace-related issues, book reviews, and other reflections on societal issues. Professor Mahmoudi’s students and staff regularly contribute to the blog and continue to build on the focus areas of the Bahá’í Chair. Read the latest blog posts at blog.umd.edu/bahaichair.
**Faculty & Staff**

**Hoda Mahmoudi** holds the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, serving in this position since July 2012. Before joining the University of Maryland faculty, Mahmoudi was the head of the Bahá’í World Centre’s research department 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. Olivet College granted Mahmoudi special recognition for her support of and service to students of color and for her work on diversity issues and international education. She is also the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Award for Excellence in Bahá’í Studies, the Hewlett Grant for Faculty Development, and the Professor of the Year award from Westminster College of Salt Lake City. Mahmoudi holds a PhD in sociology, an MA in educational psychology, and a BA in psychology from the University of Utah.

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**Kate Seaman** joined The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace in 2016 as the Assistant Director where she works to support the research activities of the Chair. Prior to joining the University of Maryland Kate spent a year as Senior Fellow at a nonprofit in Washington D.C. with a focus on genocide prevention. Kate has also been a teaching fellow in the Department of Politics, Languages and International Studies at the University of Bath and a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Political, Social and International Studies at the University of East Anglia. Kate received her PhD in Peace Studies from the University of Lancaster, where she studied under the Richardson Institute for Peace Research.

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**Brandie Williams** joined The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace in 2016 as a staffer, blogger and researcher. Her research interests are in community and economic development, women’s rights, racial and group identity, and public policy. Prior to working for the Bahá’í Chair, she spent a year working as a research assistant for the Metropolitan Policy Center at American University helping with projects related to DC gentrification, urban racial inequality, and research on Baltimore food deserts. She also spent a year doing applied research for the Human Relations Department, the Commission for the Status of Women, and the Police Complaint Review Committee at the City of Greensboro. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a Bachelor’s in Political Science (Pre-Law) and Master’s of Public Administration.

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**Nicole des Bouvrie** is a visiting scholar to the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland. After she finished her PhD in philosophy, art, and critical theory at the European Graduate School in Switzerland, she has worked as a freelance philosopher and as a post-doc researcher at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. She wrote her dissertation about 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.
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace
Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi
1114 Chincoteague Hall
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742

About The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland 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 that lead to the creation of a better world.

Giving to the Chair
The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland welcomes your support in raising awareness about its important and timely mission in examining pathways to peace. As a self-supporting academic program, the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace is grateful for and appreciates contributions of any amount in support of its activities. Please make your check for the Bahá’í Chair payable to the University System of Maryland Foundation, Inc., and also include “Bahá’í Chair Operating Fund” on the memo line. More information is available at bahaichair.umd.edu/giving.