Course Description
UNST 399 Experiential Pathways Cluster Course: Engaging in Social Change

Description: In our courses, we gain a wide variety of knowledge about community problems. However, often we lack sufficient opportunities to directly engage these issues and miss out on the unique and important experiential learning inherent in such work. This course is a 4-credit, 300-level UNST course that fulfills one of your UNST Cluster requirements through an applied learning experience based on the approaches, theories, and practices of your cluster.

As part of this course, you will participate in a community internship* that fits with both your cluster theme and the course-theme of Social Change. You may continue pre-existing work you are doing with a community organization if you are already engaged in such. In addition to the direct experience of working on one of the many issues raised in the course of your studies in your UNST Cluster, you will also participate in an online reflective space with peers engaged in other projects. This complementary experience will allow you to explore different forms of engagement; determine how race, class, and gender intersect with community work; and develop professional skills.

Throughout the course, we will create a space to reflect on and look at the community internship work you are doing so that we can better participate in that work, create community to support one another, develop plans for continued engagement at and beyond the university, and understand the connections between the work and larger UNST and Cluster goals.

Students will be required to find a community internship before the course. For assistance in locating or creating an experience, see How to Locate an Internship.

*Community Internship
A Community Internship is a form of experiential learning that can take place within a nonprofit, community-serving organization, an educational institution, or governmental agency. It is a short-term work experience that allows students to integrate the knowledge and theory learned through their academic coursework with practical, hands-on experience in a real-world setting. Community Internships are meant to include substantive learning and engagement opportunities and provide the intern with an in-depth understanding of the organization and the communities it serves. For the purposes of this course, community internships will be those that work to address specific community issues with their efforts.

Community internships may be paid or unpaid, and in either case will be highly educational in nature and supervised or mentored by a professional.

Definition of Social Change
Social change work of the type explored in this course reflects actions by individuals and groups to work for specific outcomes rooted in shared values. Values are at the center of this concept of social change. Implicit in this understanding are individuals or groups grounded in values that suggest a different vision of the world than that which currently exists. Often the disconnect between these values and the status quo is manifested in a sense of injustice. Individuals and groups work to achieve their vision, which emerges from their values, by participating in social change. This can take many forms and includes lobbying, education, protests, mentoring, service and social movements. What unites students in this course is a shared experience of participating in some form of social change work.