Spring 2021 Syllabus: Becoming a Problem Solver

(INCO 505A for UNH/University of Record students; 4-credit course; Dr. Fiona Wilson, faculty of record)

Instructors

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Overview

The goal of this course, **Becoming a Problem Solver (BAPS)**, is to leverage the experiential learning cycle to provide you with hands-on, work-based learning opportunities where you can apply cross-sector skills, tools, and knowledge to understand how to solve social problems in your internship and prepare for your career after college. It also provides many opportunities and approaches to reflect on the challenges and successes of your entire Semester in the City (SITC) experience.

Becoming a Problem Solver course is primarily taught each Friday with additional components online at other points in the week. Classes will include multiple workshops, assignments, and reflection activities focused on the core skill domains of **Launching a Purpose Driven Career** and **Working in Diverse Teams.** You will need your laptops unless otherwise stated. See the Course Outline below for a breakdown of class sessions, activities, and assignment due dates.
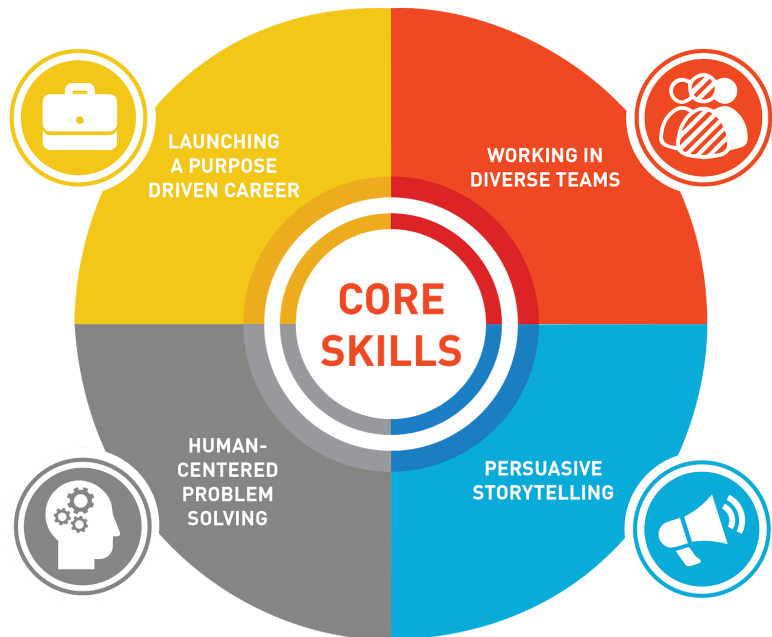
Program Level Competencies

Based on the College for Social Innovation (CFSI) Core Skill Domains, your entire SITC experience will focus on developing the following competencies:

Domain	Category	Competencies: *As a result of their SITC experience, Fellows will. . .*
Human Centered Problem Solving	Attitudes	Develop, explore, and nurture a **solutions mindset;** including building a sense of **civic identity** and a recognition of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities in becoming **effective problem solvers.**
	Skills	Apply **design thinking** as a set of principles and a series of tools for identifying and understanding **complex social and ecological problems,** and designing and developing **innovative solutions** and measuring impact.
	Knowledge	Develop an understanding of the complex nature of social systems and to **think critically and creatively** about the roles and responsibilities of self and community in identifying and addressing **persistent, and pervasive social and environmental challenges.**
Persuasive Storytelling	Attitudes	**Express openness and interest** in diverse people and perspectives and to acknowledge the limitations of **singular narratives.**
	Skills	Develop, construct, and share **stories, that motivate and persuade** audiences to act and to listen, empathize, reflect, and **learn from the stories of others.**
	Knowledge	Discover the ways in which **storytelling,** supported by **data and details,** facilitates the exchange of knowledge, builds connections, and how it can **promote change**.
Launching a Purpose Driven Career	Attitudes	Develop **confidence** as young professionals contributing to social change, and a **desire** to pursue a sustainable career in social impact.
	Skills	Translate evidence-based indicators of **professional readiness** into practical skills for success in the social sector.
	Knowledge	Develop an awareness of the importance of building and leveraging robust **networks**, establishing a professional **brand**, and making connections between individual **values** and a professional **purpose**.
Working in Diverse Teams	Attitudes	**Take responsibility** for considering, analyzing, and reflecting on the ways in which our individual values, mindsets, and beliefs impact self, others, and community to **demonstrate a commitment** to equity and inclusion.
	Skills	Balance **inquiry and advocacy** and translate systemic knowledge into self-awareness and behaviors that enable one to **contribute and collaborate** effectively in intersectional workspaces.
	Knowledge	Learn from and about **diverse identities and experiences**, identify one's position in a group, and recognize the ways in which **power, oppression, and privilege influence** organizations, and communities.

Course Learning Outcomes

By completing the Becoming a Problem Solver course, Fellows will be able to:
1. Develop and articulate a professional brand that demonstrates coherence of passion and purpose, and reflects both self-awareness and efficacy in launching a sustainable, purpose-driven career in the social sector.

2. Build and maintain robust professional connections that demonstrate a nuanced understanding of networking, including the importance of formal and informal networks, ways to leverage existing networks, and how to use online spaces for networking.

3. Assess areas of strength and growth to align behavioral commitments and skill building as young social impact professionals. Demonstrate progress towards addressing professional readiness growth areas related to the categories below (3.1, 3.2, 3.3).
   3.1. Effective work habits including time management, project management, managing up, and personal accountability.
   3.2. Communication, including giving and receiving feedback, balancing inquiry and advocacy, and adapting one's approach and vehicle to fit the needs of the audience.
   3.3. Problem solving, including defining a problem, evaluating potential solutions, engaging in peer consultation, and identifying resources to overcome challenges.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of social systems in organizations by connecting one's internship to the primary drivers of one's host organization's mission, model, and impact.

5. Assess how one's identity interacts with facets of power, privilege and bias. Identify opportunities to model inclusive practices.

6. Practice critical skills for engaging in dialogue across differences and fostering inclusive work spaces, including acknowledging and learning-in to discomfort, being aware of emotional labor, and addressing microaggressions.

7. Adapt one's own language and behavior for productive collaboration through observation and knowledge of varying approaches to work based on differences of identity, context, and workstyle.

What You Can Expect

College for Social Innovation believes in experiential, project-based learning, in the classroom and out. As a result, **Becoming a Problem Solver** is designed to feel different from a typical undergraduate university course, with an emphasis on self-discovery, practical skill-building, reflection, professional responsibility, communication, networking, and building inclusive practices, within the context of your internship experience and your journey as a young professional.

What We Expect From All of Us: Guiding Principles for SITC
- *Build Inclusion and Belonging:* At Semester in the City, we invite you to choose to bring your full self each day. If we build an inclusive community that allows for everyone to show up as their authentic selves and be seen, respected, and embraced. We aim for our community to practice empathy and

develop connections with others, and to allow ourselves to be shaped by those interactions. Empathy does not require shared experience; rather, it is the ability to connect based on shared feelings whether, loss, disappointment, and anger, or joy, pride, and gratitude.

- *Engage in the Learning Community:* Social change is a team sport, individuals -- and organizations - are more likely to thrive, learn and solve complex problems when we enlist the help of others, support our colleagues and work in diverse groups. We will be our best together and learn the most when we are comfortable being uncomfortable, make room for diverse experiences and ways for learning. In our learning community, kindness and generosity should be extended as gifts, with the most generous interpretation of the intentions, words, and actions of others; it is the assumption that we are all doing the best we can. When the work is hard, and progress is challenging, we give extra.

- *Take Agency and Be a Problem Solver:* You are in charge of your own experience and your presence impacts the community as a whole. Be curious and acknowledge gaps in your knowledge to enable learning new things and expand your perspective. Listen, ask questions and at times, sit with the discomfort of uncertainty and not knowing. Then, challenge yourself to take action knowing you might fail. No one is expecting perfection, rather you are encouraged to take risks, be vulnerable and engage in productive struggle. Persevere! Your abilities as a problem solver will develop with dedication and hard work.

- *Build and Balance Health and Wellbeing:* Engaging in social change, even in the form of a semester-long fellowship, is challenging. Know that we are a community that recognizes this and values self-care as essential to a career in social change. We are committed to each fellow cultivating personal, emotional and academic well-being during SITC. In this effort, you are not alone. Communicate your needs and ASK FOR HELP without feelings of shame, guilt or embarrassment. We are all working on these skills and need help from time to time. As an organization, we set policies and procedures to create an environment in which Fellow's well being is valued whether that be in our housing, courses, or through our code of conduct.

- *Explore New Things:* This semester is a rich opportunity to try out new experiences, places, and pieces of yourself current and future self. Be curious and acknowledge gaps in your knowledge to enable learning new things and expand your perspective in the City of Boston and this group of new colleagues in the coming months. Band together with your fellow fellows to check out brand new experiences.

Class Structure

Online- Self-Paced
Also known as asynchronous content, there will be full sessions, prep-work, and elements of learning community engagement each week that you will complete online at your own pace. These elements will be clearly distinguishable from synchronous online content and will have specific windows of time in which they will need to be completed.

Online- Synchronous

Synchronous online course sessions will take place in real-time through video conferencing. Each week will feature synchronous content from 10am - 12pm. During odd numbered program weeks (i.e. weeks without community meetings/team time), a break will take place until 12:30 with additional synchronous sessions running until 1:15pm. This additional session time will be focused on group work, reflection, and other interactive activities.

Learning Community Engagement (LCE)

As a Semester in the City Fellow you are a valued member of our learning community and our organization as a whole. As such, consistently attending classes, both virtual and in-person, is critical. The expectation for attendance is that all Fellows will be present for every class.

In our classrooms, you are an influencer. Your behavior impacts others. Listen, reflect, engage and take ownership over your experience as a learner. We recognize that in a time where many of us have become used to our smartphones being extensions of our hands that it can be difficult to unplug. But, 15 weeks is a short time to be together and it's time we can't get back. For the few hours a week that you are in class, we ask you to stop scrolling, texting, and surfing and give yourself the opportunity to connect with the material and each other.

Being present goes beyond simply coming to class and passively absorbing the content. The non-traditional, experiential elements of SITC require you to actively engage in learning as both a process and an outcome. This means:

- Arriving on-time and prepared;

- Demonstrating a willingness to think creatively and critically;

- Fully committing to contribute your unique ideas, experiences, and perspectives; while also being receptive and open to the ideas of others.

Excused Absences

While the expectation is that you make every effort to attend all of the synchronous elements of the program we also recognize that life happens. If you are sick, have an emergency or other extenuating circumstances, please email courses@collegeforsocialinnovation.org to alert your instructors if you will be missing class, will be more than 10 minutes late or will need to leave class more than 10 minutes early. Whenever possible, emails should be sent prior to the class start time.

Learning Management System (LMS)

CFSI uses the Schoology LMS platform, and this is where all assignments, up to date schedules, course materials, and other resources will be concentrated. Each Fellow will be enrolled in three courses and one group for the semester and most communication from the program team will be centralized on this platform. It is the expectation that Fellows will log-in to Schoology on a daily basis and are responsible for all the information contained within it.

Grading & Assignments

Letter grades will be assigned for cumulative points across the semester and all assignments. The baseline for the College for Social Innovation—meets expectations—means that students who have demonstrated overall proficiency in the learning outcomes of the course will earn a B level grade. To the extent you exceed expectations in the quality of your work, your grade will be a B+ or an A-, depending on the level and frequency of that performance. An A grade is for those who consistently exceed expectations, or to a significant degree. Receiving a C grade or less is usually the result of failure to submit your work on time, or to follow instructions, or to simply fail in making the effort to produce a college-level work product.

For all assignments, an assignment overview, a grading rubric, and samples will be provided to help you understand what is required to meet expectations and what is required to exceed those expectations. CFSI takes a competency-based approach and as a result, most assignments for this course will be eligible for resubmission to improve your grade. More information about resubmission opportunities will be detailed in each assignment overview.

CFSI Grading Scale

93–100% A Exemplary performance	70–72% C- Below expectations, needs improvement
90–92% A- Consistently above expectations	67–69% D+ Consistently below, but enough to get credit
87–89% B+ Above expectations, very good	
83–86% B Meets expectations, good overall performance	63–66% D Underperforming
80–82% B- Meets expectations most of the time	60–62% D- Should consider repeating the course
77–79% C+ Mostly meets expectations but below at times	< 60% F No credit for the course
73–76% C Below expectations but passing	

Graded Course Components & Assignments

You will be assigned a letter grade based on a weighted average of the following assignments. Additional details for each assignment, including grading rubrics, will be provided in class and on Schoology, our Learning Management System.

Category	Details	% Grade
Application & Reflection	This largest category includes assignments designed to enable Fellows to explore the full experiential learning cycle. These assignments ask Fellows to apply something learned during class and then reflect on that application.	30%
Learning Community Engagement (LCE)	LCE includes all points related to attendance, participation, and other asynchronous activities not covered in another category (e.g., Internship Catalyst activities).	20%
LPDC Units	Assignments in this category will encompass any assignments that relate specifically to Launching a Purpose Driven Career (LPDC). These include but are not limited to choice block skill-building sessions and "Designing Your Life" content.	20%
Informational Interviews	The informational interview assignment allows you to bring together your professional brand, communication skills and networking.	10%
Host Organization Infographic	This assignment enables Fellows to explore 21st Century workplace skills like visual storytelling and utilization of Web 2.0 Tools, while also prodigy an opportunity to reflect on the work of the host site and the Fellows role in its impact.	10%
End of Semester Reflection	This assignment invites Fellows to reflect on growth in the core skills of Launching a Purpose Driven Career and Working in Diverse Teams competency areas throughout the semester.	10%

Course Outline

Week	Date	Mode	Topic	Related Deliverables/Notes
1 (Launch Week)	1.21.21	Synchronous Online	Schoology Introduction	● Schoology Scavenger Hunt due on 1.25
			Apprenticing with Culture	● Application & Reflection assignment due on 1.31
	1.22.21	Synchronous Online	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) #1	
			Working from Home Part 1	
2	1.29.21	Synchronous Online	Course Intro	● Prep Work: Review Syllabus and come prepared with questions
			Internship Catalyst: Week 2 Debrief	
			Working from Home Part 2	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials detailed in the Week 2 Learning Plan
		Self-Paced Online	Becoming a (Professional) Problem Solver	● Application & Reflection assignment due on 1.31
3	2.5.21	Synchronous Online	Special Project Scaffolding: Goal Setting	● Prep Work: Review Special Project Proposal document and have related mentor meeting
		Synchronous Online	Special Project Goals Peer Review	● Peer review worksheet due on 2/7 (primarily completed in class)
		Self-Paced Online	Building Your Professional Brand	
4	2.12.21	Synchronous Online	Leadership Compass	
		Self-Paced Online	Special Project Scaffolding: Backwards Planning	● Backwards Planning practice due on 2/12
		n/a	Start of Semester Reflection Blog Post Due	● This assignment will encompass application & reflection questions related to previous sessions
5	2.19.21	Synchronous Online	Networking #1	● Application & Reflection assignment due on 2.28
		Various	Professional Readiness Choice Blocks	● Application & Reflection assignment due on 3.1
6	2.26.21	Synchronous Online	DEI Session #2	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology ● Application & Reflection assignment due on 3.7
		Self-Paced Online	Networking #2: Informational Interviewing	● Informational Interviews assignment due on 4.16

Week	Date	Mode	Topic	Related Deliverables/Notes
7	3.5.21	Synchronous Online	Giving & Receiving Feedback	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology
			Internship Catalyst: Special Project Groups	
		Self-Paced Online	Designing Your Purpose-Driven Career #1	● Initial discussion post due on 3.5 ● Responses due on 3.8
8	3.12.21	Synchronous Online	Visual Storytelling	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology ● Host Org Infographic due on 3.29
			Internship Catalyst: Consultancy Protocols for Problem Solving	● Prep Work: Review protocol overview and submit a dilemma by 3.9
9	3.19.21	Synchronous Online	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) #3	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology ● Application & Reflection assignment due on 4.4
		Self-Paced Online	Designing Your Purpose-Driven Career #2	● Initial discussion post due on 3.19 ● Responses due on 3.21
10	3.26.21	n/a	No Class	
11	4.2.21	Synchronous Online	Young Professionals Panel	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology
		Various	LPDC Choice Blocks	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology
12	4.9.21	Synchronous Online	Internship Catalyst: Special Project Wrap-Up Preview	● Prep Work: Review Special Project Assignment Update document
			LPDC Deliverables Review	● Sign-up for a review time & come with completed LPDC Choice Block deliverable ● Final LPDC Deliverable due on 4.11
13	4.16.21	Synchronous Online	Internship Catalyst: Semester Closeout	● Prep Work: Review pre-session materials on Schoology
			End of Semester Reflection Rollout	● Final blog post due on 4.25
14	4.23.21	Synchronous Online	Special Project Presentations	● Prep Work: Upload presentation to Schoology by 4.22
15	4.28.21 & 4.29.21	Synchronous Online	Showcase Prep	
	4.30.21	Synchronous Online	**Showcase!**	