



COLLEGE *of*
CHARLESTON

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

FYSE 138.03 - Unmuted: Making Meaning and Finding Joy in the Hard Work of Learning

3 Credit Hours - Fall 2026
Class Meetings - M & W 10:00 to 11:15
Ed Center, Room 214

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Office hours:

I am available Monday and Wednesday (9:00 AM - 1:00 PM). Other times are available by appointment. The best way to reach me is via email at obyrnei@cofc.edu.

First Year Synthesis Seminar (FYSS)

This course includes your work in your FYSS. The Peer Facilitator (PF) for your FYSS is Robert Bevilacqua (bevilacquarb@g.cofc.edu). The FYSS meets on Fridays from 10:00-10:50 in BELL 405.

Course Description:

Can your voice change the world? Better yet, can it help you find yourself?

College is a time to explore who you are, what matters to you, and how you want to participate in the communities around you. This course will help you develop your voice, build relationships, navigate campus resources, and reflect on your possible futures.

We will learn social action by doing social action. You will work with classmates to investigate a campus or community problem, identify a decision-maker, develop a realistic demand, and carry out at least one responsible public action.

The Personal Growth Portfolio (PGP) will help you reflect on your growth, support systems, and possible futures. Campus visits, invited guests, selected readings and collections, and occasional creative work will give us different ways to learn. You do not need to arrive knowing your major, career, purpose, or political identity.

How we will work together

- **Be curious:** You do not need to begin with final answers.
- **Share responsibility:** Communicate, contribute, follow through, and repair problems.
- **Use evidence:** Let research, relationships, and feedback shape your decisions.
- **Practice care:** Consider access, consent, safety, and the well-being of everyone involved.

What you will learn to do

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Turn a broad concern into a focused campaign with a realistic demand and decision-making target.
2. Investigate an issue by examining evidence, stakeholders, institutional power, and possible leverage.
3. Work responsibly with a team to plan and carry out a public campaign action.
4. Communicate ethically with real audiences and evaluate what happened.
5. Reflect on how your values, strengths, relationships, and campus resources can support your continued growth.

FYE student learning objectives

As a First Year Experience course, this seminar also addresses and assesses the following program objectives.

FYE objective	You will demonstrate this by	Assessed through
Metaliterate learning	Finding, evaluating, connecting, and ethically communicating information across scholarly, media, digital, visual, and community contexts	Campaign research brief and public communication artifact
Collaborative learning	Working respectfully with others and making an identifiable contribution to shared work	Team charter, campaign action, and record, and self/peer reflection
Integrative learning	Connecting personal experience, academic inquiry, campus life, and public action	PGP checkpoint, theory of change, campaign evaluation, and final reflection

Required materials

- [Scott Myers-Lipton, *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*](#)
- the Personal Growth Portfolio template provided through the course
- short readings, campaign examples, and campaign-planning materials provided through the LMS
- sources and public information selected by your campaign team for its issue

Unless announced in advance, materials other than the student guide will be provided electronically at no additional cost. Bring a device or printed copy when a reading or working document is assigned for class use. If access to a device, printing, or course materials creates a barrier, contact the instructor so we can arrange an alternative.

Campaign boundaries

Students choose the issues and viewpoints they pursue within these course boundaries. A campaign must:

- seek a concrete change to a rule, law, regulation, norm, practice, resource allocation, or program
- make 1 to 3 specific and measurable demands
- identify a person or small decision-making body with authority to act
- use nonviolent methods and respect human rights
- be feasible enough for meaningful action during the semester
- follow applicable campus policies and receive instructor review before target contact or public release

The instructor supports research, strategy, teamwork, safety, and learning. The instructor does not choose the campaign's political position for students.

How the course works

The semester follows five overlapping phases. We may return to an earlier phase as campaigns develop and circumstances change.

1. **Explore.** We will build our class community, learn how social action works, explore campus resources, and consider our values, experiences, and questions. Each student will investigate potential issues that matter to them and their communities.
2. **Choose.** We will examine the proposed issues, consider their scope and feasibility, and form campaign teams. Each team will begin developing a focused demand and identifying a decision-maker with the authority to respond.
3. **Plan.** Teams will research the issue, its history, stakeholders, and power relationships. They will establish team responsibilities and develop a theory of change, strategy, public message, and action plan.

4. **Act.** Teams will communicate with real audiences and carry out at least one responsible public campaign action. They will document what happens, respond to feedback, and adjust their plans when needed.
5. **Reflect.** Teams will evaluate their campaign, organize a useful record of their work, and create a continuation or handoff plan. Each student will reflect on their contributions, learning, relationships, and growth during the semester.

How your work will come together

Your work in this course is organized into four connected bundles. Each bundle contains smaller activities, drafts, and opportunities for feedback. Some work will be completed individually, and some with your campaign team.

1. Purpose and issue exploration

You will explore your values, strengths, experiences, and questions about the world around you. You will investigate potential public issues and develop a short issue pitch that explains what is happening, who is affected, and why the issue matters.

This bundle may include:

- PGP and Ikigai activities
- personal or public narrative
- campus and community exploration
- issue research and an issue pitch
- an optional creative artifact

Most of this work is individual.

2. Campaign foundation

After forming a team around a shared issue, you will turn that concern into a focused and achievable campaign. Your team will identify what should change, who has the authority to make that change, and how you will work together.

This bundle includes:

- one to three specific demands
- a campaign target and rationale
- campaign research
- a team charter and division of responsibilities
- an initial stakeholder and power analysis

- a theory of change

The campaign foundation is shared work, accompanied by a record of each student's contribution.

3. Strategy and public action

Your team will develop a responsible strategy, communicate with a real audience, and carry out at least one public campaign action. The action should align with your campaign's goals and target audience. Not simply attract attention.

This bundle includes:

- a campaign strategy and action plan
- ethical public communication
- preparation for accessibility, consent, and safety
- at least one documented public action
- follow-up with participants, supporters, or the campaign target

Possible actions include a meeting, presentation, workshop, petition delivery, awareness event, public exhibit, campus program, or another tactic appropriate to the campaign.

This is primarily teamwork, with individual contribution records.

4. Evaluation, reflection, and handoff

You will examine what happened, what your team learned, and what should happen next. Your team will leave behind an organized record that another group could understand and use. You will also reflect on your own growth during your first semester.

This bundle includes:

- campaign documentation and evaluation
- a continuation or handoff plan
- a concise campaign record
- self- and peer assessment
- final PGP reflection
- individual reflection on purpose, collaboration, and learning

This bundle includes both shared and individual work.

How the bundles will be assessed

Assessment bundle	Main form of work	Weight
Purpose and issue exploration	Individual	20%
Campaign foundation	Team and individual	20%
Strategy and public action	Team and individual	35%
Evaluation, reflection, and handoff	Team and individual	25%

Evidence-based, revision-friendly grading

This course uses weighted assessment bundles with clear criteria, feedback, and opportunities to revise. It is not fully ungraded, and you will not negotiate your own final grade. Your self-assessment and reflections are important evidence of learning, but the instructor determines course grades using the published criteria and the work you submit.

Your work will be assessed through four recurring questions:

1. **Purpose and judgment:** Did you make thoughtful, responsible, and feasible choices?
2. **Evidence and connection:** Did you use research, stakeholder knowledge, course concepts, and feedback?
3. **Contribution and responsibility:** Did you communicate, follow through, and make an identifiable contribution?
4. **Reflection and revision:** Did you evaluate what happened and strengthen your work in response?

Feedback will generally describe the evidence as strong, sufficient, developing, or not yet demonstrated. Each bundle's rubric in OAKS will show how those judgments contribute to its weighted course value.

School Of Education Grade Scale

UNDERGRADUATE GRADING SCALE			GRADUATE GRADING SCALE		
Letter Grades	Percentage Range	Grade Points	Letter Grades	Percentage Range	Grade Points
A	93-100%	4.0	A	93-100%	4.0
A -	91-92%	3.7	B+	89-92%	3.5
B+	89-90%	3.3	B	85-88%	3.0
B	86-88%	3.0	C+	81-84%	2.5
B -	84-85%	2.7	C	77-80%	2.0
C+	82-83%	2.3	F	0-76%	0
C	79-81%	2.0	· A grade of 76 or below is considered a failing grade for all graduate courses. There are no grades of D in graduate courses. · There are no minus grades in graduate courses.		
C -	77-78%	1.7			
D+	75-76%	1.3			
D	72-74%	1.0			
D -	70-71%	0.7			
F	0-69%	0.0			

Team and individual evidence

For the three team-based bundles, approximately 60% of the assessment will come from shared campaign evidence and 40% from individual evidence. Individual evidence may include contribution records, selected work products, reflections, self-assessment, peer feedback, and responses to team difficulties. Individual grades may differ when the evidence supports a difference.

No student's grade will be determined solely by whether a campaign wins, whether a target agrees, or how other team members perform. Peer feedback is one source of evidence and never mechanically determines another student's grade.

Revision and responsible learning

Major assessment-bundle work may normally be revised once within 7 calendar days of feedback, unless OAKS lists a different deadline. A revision should respond meaningfully to feedback, strengthen the relevant evidence, and include any requested explanation of what changed. When the new evidence demonstrates stronger learning, it replaces the earlier evaluation. Low-stakes preparation, in-class work, peer feedback, and time-sensitive public actions may not be as revisable.

You are assessed on the quality of your inquiry, decisions, communication, contribution, documentation, and reflection. Not on your political viewpoint, private PGP disclosures, charisma, artistic polish, raw hours logged, or the public visibility of your role.

Deadlines, late work, and extensions

Deadlines help teams coordinate and allow everyone to receive timely feedback. Individual work has an automatic 48-hour grace period unless it is connected to a scheduled presentation, public action, or final College deadline. You do not need to request permission to use this grace period.

If you need additional time, contact the instructor as soon as reasonably possible and propose a new completion date. You do not need to disclose private medical or personal details. Work that remains unsubmitted will appear as no evidence in OAKS until it is submitted or another arrangement is approved.

There is no automatic percentage penalty for each day work is late. Repeated delays that interfere with campaign responsibilities may, however, affect the contribution and responsibility criterion. If you cannot complete team-facing work on time, notify your team and the instructor so responsibilities can be adjusted, reassigned, or rescheduled. All work and revisions must be completed by the date and time of the final, unless an official incomplete or other College-approved arrangement has been made.

Course calendar

The dates below use Monday–Sunday instructional weeks, so you can see busy and protected periods. Major deadlines are kept away from fall break, Election Day, Thanksgiving, and Reading Day.

Week and dates	Focus	Campaign milestone and workload note
1 · Aug. 17–23	<i>Explore</i> : welcome, first-year transition, and community commitments	PGP introduction, interests, and questions; low-stakes work only
2 · Aug. 24–30	<i>Explore</i> : voice, values, belonging, and campus resources	PGP exploration and a small creative or reflective artifact

3 · Aug. 31–Sept. 6	<i>Explore</i> : what social action is and how campaigns work	Issue generation, campaign examples, and first issue pitches
4 · Sept. 7–13	<i>Choose</i> : problems, issues, demands, targets, and feasibility	Campaigns selected; teams begin draft demands and target analysis
5 · Sept. 14–20	<i>Choose</i> : shared responsibility and team formation	Purpose and issue exploration bundle completed; team charter and campaign foundation begin
6 · Sept. 21–27	<i>Plan</i> : change theory, power, stakeholders, and allies	Theory of change and initial stakeholder and power maps
7 · Sept. 28–Oct. 4	<i>Plan</i> : research, evidence, and target analysis	Campaign foundation and research evidence submitted in time for midterm assessment; grading opens Sept. 30
8 · Oct. 5–11	<i>Plan</i> : group dynamics, feedback, and strategy	Midterm grades due Oct. 5; team health check and campaign conference; no major new submission
— · Oct. 10–13	Protected fall-break period	No coursework due; Monday, Oct. 12, class does not meet
9 · Oct. 12–18	<i>Plan</i> : re-entry, power analysis, and sustainable participation	Class resumes Wednesday, Oct. 14; revision and team planning only
10 · Oct. 19–25	<i>Act</i> : strategy, tactics, public communication, and kickoff	Action plan and timeline completed; public launch window opens
11 · Oct. 26–Nov. 1	<i>Act</i> : campaign implementation, coalition work, and target engagement	Protected campaign studio, public communication, rehearsal, outreach, or action

12 · Nov. 2–8	<i>Act</i> : election week, democracy, participation, and adaptation	Campus is closed Tuesday, Nov. 3; Monday and Wednesday meetings remain scheduled, but no work is due Nov. 2–4
13 · Nov. 9–15	<i>Act</i> : public action, feedback, care, and sustainability	Campaign action or studio time; documentation, follow-up, team conference, and PGP check-in
14 · Nov. 16–22	<i>Act and reflect</i> : follow-up, evaluation, and public learning	Strategy and public action bundle completed by Nov. 22; evidence and follow-up captured before Thanksgiving
15 · Nov. 23–29	Thanksgiving break	No coursework due Nov. 23–29; Wednesday class and Friday FYSS do not meet
16 · Nov. 30–Dec. 1	<i>Reflect</i> : campaign evaluation, handoff, and course closure	Monday, Nov. 30 is the final regular class meeting; campaign-record workshop, evaluation, and continuation plan
Reading Day · Dec. 2	Reading Day	No new coursework due
Finals · Dec. 3–8	Final campaign presentation and reflection	Evaluation and handoff bundle, final presentation, and PGP reflection due during the assigned exam period; exact date follows the official exam schedule

Exact submission times and any approved schedule changes will appear in OAKS.

Attendance and participation

Attendance is not a separate percentage of the course grade. Campaign work nevertheless depends on preparation, communication, collaboration, and follow-through. These are assessed using the contribution and responsibility criteria across the four assessment bundles.

You may miss up to two Monday or Wednesday class meetings without a direct grade consequence. You remain responsible for reviewing course information, completing individual

work, and communicating with your campaign team. After a second absence, contact the instructor so we can identify barriers and make a plan. Five or more absences may require a conference about whether successful completion remains possible, consistent with College attendance and withdrawal policies.

An absence is not automatically the same as a lack of contribution. You may provide evidence of preparation, research, communication, production, follow-up, or another meaningful contribution completed outside the missed meeting. Documentation is not normally required for an occasional absence. Official accommodations, College-sponsored activities, religious observances, extended illness, emergencies, and other protected circumstances will be handled in accordance with College policy.

Notify your team and the instructor as early as possible if you will miss a scheduled meeting, target contact, public action, or presentation. Responsibilities may be redistributed, and alternative evidence may be arranged when circumstances prevent participation in a time-sensitive activity.

Community commitments: learning with care and integrity

Academic integrity and use of sources

Learning is built on honesty, trust, and curiosity. Do your own work, credit other people's ideas and labor, represent evidence accurately, and obtain consent before sharing another person's words or identifying information.

Public work, privacy, and consent

Campaign work may become visible beyond the classroom. Students will not be required to disclose private experiences publicly. Teams must obtain permission before recording, quoting, photographing, or identifying community members. Sensitive contact information and safety details do not belong in a public campaign record.

Presence and participation

Your voice, questions, and insights shape the course. If barriers affect your participation or well-being, communicate with the instructor early so we can identify appropriate support or adjustments.

Access and accommodations

If you have a disability or need accommodations, contact the Center for Disability Services/SNAP and let the instructor know how the course can support your access. You may begin a confidential conversation about access needs without waiting for documentation.

Names, pronouns, and identities

You deserve to be addressed in ways that reflect who you are. Tell the instructor, privately or publicly, which name and pronouns you would like the class to use.

Land and labor acknowledgment

We are learning on land stewarded by Indigenous peoples for generations and on a campus built through the labor of enslaved Africans. This acknowledgment asks us to learn and act in ways that take history, place, and responsibility seriously.

Mental and physical well-being

Learning and public work take energy. If you are struggling with health, stress, food, housing, safety, or other needs, contact the instructor or an appropriate campus resource. Asking for support is compatible with accountability to the course and your team.