

Welcome to the Carsey School of Public Policy Engagement Lab at the University of New Hampshire!

This hybrid course is designed to bring together interdisciplinary graduate students to foster a learning exchange focused on inclusive civic dialogue and collaborative problem-solving — in short, public engagement in communities. Through a blend of theory, reflective assignments, seminars, and field experience, students develop insights for leadership in their field.

The Carsey School of Public Policy is nationally recognized for research, policy education, and bringing people together for thoughtful dialogue to address important societal challenges. To its core, the Carsey School is about making positive change. Our research is rigorous and actionable. Our students gain the skills to start and build impactful careers, learning from both leading scholars and leading practitioners in policy, community development, and public management. Our faculty and staff engage communities, advise policymakers, and convene public discussions.

This course is powered by New Hampshire Listens leadership and staff, the anchor program of the Carsey School's Center for Engaged Communities. The Center for Engaged Communities (EnCo) is the home of NH Listens and expanding research on civic health and social trust. EnCo builds on applied work for navigating controversy and misinformation with proactive engagement strategies. When communities involve people in decisions that affect their lives, it leads to fairer, more effective policies and strengthens civic health. EnCo connects the Carsey School of Public Policy to grassroots policy, engagement practice, and research, reinforcing New Hampshire's civic health through research, dialogue, engagement, and training. As the leading force in civic design and dialogue across the state, NH Listens plays a vital role in this work. EnCo will further enhance collaboration with regional and national partners, advancing civic research, fostering community belonging, and driving civic innovation.

Syllabus: PPOL898 - Public Engagement in Communities (3cr)

Lead Instructor: Carrie Portrie, M.Ed., PhD, Research Assistant Professor with the Center for Engaged Communities, and Assistant Director of New Hampshire Listens

Email Address /response time: Carrie.Portrie@unh.edu (will respond within 24-48 hours).

Availability/Office Hours and location: By appointment (in-person, video, or phone call).

Semester/ Term: Summer 2026

Course Description

Community engagement in research and practice requires listening and facilitating challenging dialogues. Community engagement work requires managing resources effectively and responsibly. This often means that people working on complex public challenges must involve, collaborate with, and empower stakeholders and community groups to develop solutions across differing perspectives. In public life and with responsibility for and with the public, we need knowledge and skills necessary for addressing inequities and discrimination in decision-making. This course provides a foundation for students from various disciplines to develop a fundamental understanding of the theory and practice of public engagement in communities.

Learning Outcomes:

- Learn theoretical frames and facilitative practices effective for increasing social equity and fostering participation in the decisions that impact people's lives.
- Build awareness of how different fields / disciplines think about engagement
- Understand methods and tools for "stakeholder" and community engagement
- Differentiate when to apply different tools for different settings / issues
- Apply theoretical concepts to the analysis of case studies.
- Reflect on our identities/roles, engagement planning, and attending to power dynamics.

Locations / Modality = Online and In-Person

IMPORTANT NOTE: May 18–21, 2026, the first week of class are the in-Person Site Visit in New Hampshire. We will travel by van together and there will be an online prep session the week prior. During the site visit week, students will meet with community partners to learn from local initiatives, hear real stories, and reflect on how care, creativity, and collaboration contribute to strong communities.

Reserve this week in your schedule along with the Live Zoom/Teams virtual sessions, if you plan to take the course, and feel free to reach out to Carrie Portrie (the course instructor and Assistant Director with New Hampshire Listens) to discuss any questions. We are happy to provide a list of nearby lodging options.

5-Week Schedule

Course Dates	Details about Each Week's Modality
Prep Week One online meeting to prepare for gathering in Durham, NH to start our In-Person week.	Prep: Live ONLINE orientation session week of May 12 th or 13 th . TIME TBD based on Class Enrollments) We will poll students in April to see what day may work best or shifting it to the week before to see how to best accommodate students who are international or coming from another US time zone)

Week 1: May 18–22 Synchronous IN-PERSON	Site Visits and Seminar Days in Durham, NH (more details shared prior to course start) • May 17 - Students staying from afar arrive the night before Day 1 in Durham (optional meet and greet for anyone interested, TBD) • May 21 - Students depart in the afternoon of Day 4, 4pm (estimated time) Day Trip Themes (subject to change) • Building Civic Health Strategies – Women, Children, and Public Health • Local Civic Life and Volunteering – Local, National, and International Connections • Land and History - Our Complicated Heritages Tour • Maker Spaces and Civic Engagement – Engaging in Creative Pursuits across Divides
Week 2: May 25–29	Asynchronous ONLINE
Week 3: June 1–5	Asynchronous ONLINE Includes synchronous session on June 3, 5:30–7 PM. (time may be shifted once we know who may be international or coming from another US time zone)
Week 4: June 8–12	Asynchronous ONLINE
Week 5: June 15-19	Asynchronous ONLINE Includes synchronous session on June 17, 5:30-PM (time may be shifted once we know who may be international or coming from another US time zone)

Course Resources and Materials

All materials for our 5-weeks together will be posted in MyCourses. We will let you know of any changes in advance.

Purchase:

I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times by Mónica Guzmán <https://www.moniguzman.com/book>

Accessible Online for Free:

Local civic health: A guide to building community and bridging divides produced by the Carsey School of Public Policy. <https://carsey.unh.edu/research/local-civic-health-guide>.

Shadows Fall North. This film may be viewed in full at <https://vimeo.com/194591588>. A password will be provided.

By clicking the link, you consent to the following terms of the Distribution Agreement: Shadows Fall North is a co-production of the UNH Center for the Humanities and Atlantic Media Productions, LLC and may be used only for research, educational, or screening purposes. The documentary is copyrighted. You may not 1) copy or share the documentary, 2) upload the documentary or any part of it onto the Internet for any purpose; 3) mis-quote or mis-represent the documentary in any responses. humanties.center@unh.edu.

Guidance for Learning Together

This is an interactive course that requires an in-person week (noted above) and two synchronous online sessions. Students need to be ready to actively share their knowledge and experiences with others as part of this course and reflect this knowledge with their learning in course assignments.

Notes on participation, language, and frames for learning

Throughout the course you will see variability in the language. While many settings use people-first language ("person with a disability"), some of our readings use academic language, pride language (Queer), or identity-first language ("indigenous woman"). We will discuss the complexity surrounding language and identity through our time together, readings, and assignments. We encourage everyone to be open to a variety of interpretations and uses of respectful language. We expect that people will not use racial or any other hurtful slurs (currently or historically used), even as an example when trying to explain something.

For us to create an engaging class

Given the size and structure of the course, your participation is critical to the success of this course for you and for your classmates. We (as a class) will be from a variety of backgrounds with many different lived experiences; this will bring fruitful discussion and perhaps some disagreements (which is welcome as part of our dialogues!). We will agree to:

- Speak/write from our own professional/personal experiences.
- Engage thoughtfully with the content of the class in your assignments and time with others in small and large group discussions
- Listen to others' thoughts and feelings, even if they differ significantly from your own
- Contact the instructor with any concerns about assignments or interactions, so we can all benefit from our time together 😊.

Civic Health as a frame for meaningful engagement in communities

Civic health will be a central framework for discussing public engagement. This term refers to how individuals connect, communicate, and contribute within their communities.

<https://carsey.unh.edu/new-hampshire-listens/working-us/civic-health>. It is grounded in trust, belonging, and the belief that every person matters. Through this lens, we people often explore:

- Trust and Belonging = Investigate how declining trust in institutions impacts participation, and how to rebuild inclusive spaces where people feel safe, valued, and empowered.
- Community Connections = Examine how engagement is shaped by relationships within neighborhoods, families, and social networks.
- Voting and Participation = Understand barriers and motivations for civic involvement.
- Dialogue and Discourse = How people can talk about challenge issues and reduce polarization through respectful, constructive conversations.
- Collaboration and Decision-Making = How individuals interact with governance structures and decision-makers.
- Generational Shifts in Engagement = Recognize how different generations may be civically engaged, traditional channels, online platforms and informal networks.

Course Assignments

NOTE: Look at MyCourses for assignment details and grading rubrics.

Assignment	Description
Question, Quotation, Talking Points Memos	1–2 page memos to support equity and engagement discussions, raise questions, and reflect on course materials and personal experiences.
Community Leader Interview	Interview a community leader using the Civic League guide. Summarize findings in a 3–5 page paper or <10 min audio/video. Include background, questions, responses, and reflections.
Pluralism Case Study Analysis and Reflection	Review and discuss case studies from Harvard’s Pluralism Project using the HBS Case Discussion guide during Week 4 synchronous session.
Reflections on Power	Write a 3–4 page reflection on how various forms of power impact equity and engagement. Connect course materials and personal experiences.
Seldom Heard Groups Community Engagement Mapping	Create a visual map and reflect on engaging seldom heard groups using Modus article and Civic Health Guide. Submit map and short reflection.
In-Person and Online Discussions	Participate in discussion boards for each Field Site Visit and Seminar. Instructions provided on MyCourses following Days 2–4.

Grading Percentages

You will engage in a variety of materials. Let me know of any accommodations you might need to complete your assignments. Grades are calculated in MyCourses. See the UNH Grading Scale: <https://catalog.unh.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/grades/>.

Category	% of Grade
Question, Quotation, Talking Points Discussion Boards (x2)	5%
Community Leader Interview Questions, Summary, and Reflection	10%
Pluralism Case Study Analysis and Reflection	20%
Reflections on Power	10%
Public and Community Engagement Mapping of Seldom Heard Groups	10%
Participation in In-Person Field Visits and Seminars	45%
Total	100%

Presentation of assignments

Feel free to write in the first person and use bullets if it feels appropriate. Use alternatives to writing (audio, video, drawing/graphics) as it makes sense. Ask for guidance if you are wondering about your approach.

Make sure to reference which resources. Use APA formatting and style. See https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html. Rubrics for Assignments and further guidance is available on MyCourses.

The Use of AI Tools

NOTE: AI tools like Microsoft Co-Pilot can be very helpful to help develop your assignments or synthesize readings. Please use it with care and professional discernment – we are all still learning about how to best incorporate AI into our professional and academic lives.

Producing an assignment that is fully generated with AI is inappropriate for this course. Most of your assignments are reflective and experiential in nature, so you should be able to rely on your own research and experiences to complete each. I will not discount the use of AI tools to support comprehension, synthesis, and understanding of materials and to support your editing/revisions. This is an ongoing conversation. We can continue to address this as needed.

Before deciding to use any sort of AI tools, please read the following guidance on ethical use during this course. Student writing and A.I. handout: <https://www.unh.edu/student-success/sites/default/files/media/2024-09/student-ai.pdf>.

Course Schedule & Topics

Content for Each Week will be Detailed in the Modules on MyCourses

Week	Topics	Tasks
Prep Week ONLINE Synchronous orientation May 12 th or 13 th , TIME TBD based on Class Enrollments	Getting Ready for our In-Person week in NH – meet at UNH in Durham, NH	We will poll students in April to see what day may work best or shifting it to the week before to see how to best accommodate students who are international or coming from another US time zone)
Week 1 – May 18–21 IN-PERSON M-Th Arrive in Durham, NH on Sunday the 17th	How Research and Public Engagement can Work Together	Travel and In-Person Field Trips and Seminars Watch Shadows Fall North QTPP 1 DUE Sunday May 24 via discussion board
Week 2 – May 25–29 ONLINE Asynchronous	Deliberation and Dialogue for Shared Decision-Making	Begin: I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times by Mónica Guzmán QQTP 2 DUE on Sunday May 31 via discussion board Start Community Engagement Leader Interview and Reflective Summary
Week 4 – June 1–5 ONLINE + One Synchronous Session on June 3	Holding Multiple Points of View and Collaboration	June 3 rd Teams Virtual Session – 5-7:30pm Pluralism Case Study Discussions Read Pluralism Case Studies for our online Virtual session. Pluralism Case Study Analysis and Reflection DUE by Sunday June 7 th . Utilize the Local Civic Health Guide to start • Reflections on Power assignment • Community mapping assignment
Week 5 – June 8–12 ONLINE Asynchronous	Reflections on Preparation and Practice	Finish I Never Thought of It That Way. Start Community Engagement Leader Interview and Reflective Summary DUE this week.
Week 5 – June 15-19 ONLINE + One Synchronous Session on June 17	Final Group Reflections on Preparation and Practice	Utilize the Local Civic Health Guide for Assignments Reflections on Power DUE Community Engagement Mapping DUE

Institutional Policies and Resources

UNH Statement on Diversity: <https://www.unh.edu/diversity-inclusion/>

Resource	Description
Accessibility	If you have a disability requiring accommodations, register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Reach SAS at (603) 862-2607.
Academic Honesty	Students are required to abide by the UNH Academic Honesty policy located in the Student Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities Handbook. Incidents of cheating are reported to the school dean and may be grounds for further action. If you have questions about citations refer to your department's guidelines or contact me at any time on this issue.
Course Platform	Information on Canvas, the learning management tool we use for this course, may be accessed through mycourses.unh.edu . You will need to access the site on a regular basis for course materials and announcements.
Center for Academic Resources	CFAR is where students go to improve study skills, time management, and understanding of UNH's academic culture. Email unh.cfar@unh.edu ; use Chat Live on our website at https://www.unh.edu/cfar ; Smith Hall 2nd floor.
Connors Writing Center	The CWC is not only for those who struggle with writing, but for even the strongest writers to share ideas, work through concepts, and fine-tune your writing. The Center also helps with group projects and oral presentations. www.unh.edu/writing ; 603-862-3272; Dimond Library room 329.
Library Services	The UNH Library offers services in information and data literacy, discovery of and access to information resources and knowledge, and vibrant community spaces to support the public good. Dimond is the main library at the Durham campus. The two science branch libraries are located in Kingsbury Hall (Engineering, Math, Computer Science, Chemistry) and DeMeritt Hall (Physics). See more at www.library.unh.edu (603) 862-3125.
Technical Assistance	For technical assistance please call 603-862-4242 or go to: https://www.unh.edu/it
Emotional or Mental Health	Please contact Psychological and Counseling Services (PACS) (3rd fl., Smith Hall; 603-862-2090/TTY: 7-1-1) which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services. https://www.unh.edu/pacs/ .
Academic Credit Hour	This syllabus reflects the federal definition of a credit hour, which entails a minimum 3 hours of engaged time per week per credit over a 15-week semester. Examples of engaged time include class time, assignments, examinations, labs, participation in course-related experiences (attending a talk or performance, speakers and events, fieldwork, etc.), conferences, and office hours. Student work reflects intended learning outcomes and is verified through evidence of student achievement. For more information, please see: Pp111_Policy_On_Credits-And-Degrees.pdf (neche.org)