

Social Transformation Project Guidelines

Updated: Spring 2025

Project Guidelines:

1. Students completing a Social Transformation degree at United Theological Seminary will demonstrate transformational leadership through the intentional, real world application of hermeneutical and strategic frameworks for faithful public witness and action in the world. They will document and reflect upon the completed project, including its impact on the community and contribution to the field of social transformation. This is praxis-oriented learning.
2. The project may be one of the student's own design or may consist of an internship or employment at one or more locations. These sites may be secular or spiritual in nature, depending on the student's interest and learning goals, and the needs of the project.
3. Prior to the start of the project, students will take ST1001: Leadership and Strategies for Social Change (MAL/MDiv) or ST5001: Leader as Change Agent (DMin). In these courses, students will develop an initial plan for a social change project and receive coaching and feedback on the plan. Students may implement the projects developed in class or use the methodology to develop a similar program. Students will have an opportunity to further develop their plans as they continue through their coursework.
4. The project should take at least 300 hours to complete. This is usually done over time as 8-10 hours per week, but the schedule may vary based on the needs of the project. (For example, one student may work at a community center for approximately 10 hours per week for 8 months, while another student may spend 200 hours over 5 months planning an intensive program such as a camp and then 100 hours over 3 weeks implementing and following up on the program).
5. Students are welcome and encouraged to engage in projects at the site of their current employment, community of faith, or other appropriate setting. It is expected that DMin students will engage in projects at their place of ministry, although this is not required. The goal is that the project be directly applicable towards your vocation and learning goals. The student is responsible for informing their employer, community, or other setting of their intentions to conduct a project at that site. This should be a point of mutual agreement and enthusiasm.
6. Students should document their hours and their work as they go. All projects will be included in the capstone (MAL/MDiv) or the dissertation (DMin) and this documentation will be invaluable in accurately writing up the results of the project.
7. Master's degree students should identify a supervisor or mentor who will be available to supervise the project on a regular basis or have sufficient knowledge to guide the student in project implementation. In cases where the student is the executive leader of

an organization, such as the pastor, executive director, etc. and does not have a direct supervisor, please see your advisor to develop an alternative plan.

8. DMin projects are related to the work the student will complete in their dissertation and are completed prior to writing the dissertation.

Practicum Courses

These are courses to be taken as the student is actively implementing the project and provide opportunities for reflective learning and guidance.

MAL and MDiv Students:

- FE2001/2002/2003: Contextual Education Internship. Students are expected to spend 400 hours in one or more organization/community context(s) related to their Social Transformation Project. While working on their project, students enroll in the one-term intensive (FE2003, offered in the summer term) or two-term course (FE2001 and FE2002, offered in the summer and fall terms), which focuses on leadership development and reflection on the contextual learning experience, moving toward the successful completion of their Social Transformation Project. If students choose the two term option, FE2001 and FE2002 must be taken consecutively to receive credit.
- Sequencing: The student will enroll in FE2001/2002 or FE2003 no later than the summer term of the academic year prior to graduation, and ST3001 in the spring term. Students will then be eligible to graduate that spring if they have completed their other coursework. For example, a student who intends to graduate in 2026 should begin their contextual education courses no later than the summer of 2025 and enroll in ST3001 in the spring of 2026.

DMin Students:

- DM5300 DMin Practicum. This is the capstone course for Doctor of Ministry students; it should be taken at or toward the end of coursework and prior to the beginning of dissertation. The course is offered in the Spring term. The practicum integrates students' Doctor of Ministry coursework into their ministry and/or vocational context. The practicum includes a project, related to the student's dissertation, that will be undertaken in one's ministry and vocational context. 4 credits

Final Courses

These are courses to be taken as the student writes the final work of the degree program.

MAL and MDiv Students:

- ST3001: Social Transformation Capstone. The Capstone Document of the Social Transformation Project is the central and culminating professional and academic component of the Social Transformation program. The Capstone Document demonstrates the learner's ability to integrate, synthesize, apply and evaluate the praxis of social transformation. The Capstone Document should add to the body of knowledge and practice of social transformation. Offered in the Spring term and is generally taken in the final semester before graduation. 3 credits.

DMin Students:

- DM5400 DMin Dissertation: In this course, students begin work on their dissertation, write a focused thesis statement, complete research necessary for their projects, and engage with the instructor(s) and with other students in a cohort experience. Students must complete DM5201 Research Tools and Proposal and DM5300 Practicum prior to enrolling in this course. 4 credits
- DM5401 DMin Dissertation Continuation. In this course, students continue work on their dissertation started in the DMin Dissertation course. Dissertation students are automatically registered for this course each academic term subsequent to their registration for the DMin Dissertation course, including summer, until the completion and approval of their dissertation. 0 Credits.