Social Change in Times of Crisis: Re-imagining how we know, think and do change  
GLBL 450, Maymester 2018, osterwei@email.unc.edu

There is no doubt that the present is characterized by unprecedented crises—economic, environmental, social, and political. Some have described this moment as one of impasse in which none of the political and theoretical frameworks with which we are accustomed to thinking and acting are sufficient. As a result, traditional paradigms of change—based around movements, revolutions, resistance, etc. —are themselves no longer adequate. However around the world people, movements and projects—ranging from indigenous communities to ecological initiatives, to less articulate change projects — are developing and experimenting with alternative visions of change. Many of these require fundamental shifts in levels we don’t often think about when it comes to social change, namely epistemology and ontology, or the forms of knowing, being and doing, we use in or inform the forms and frameworks of action and future making. These projects eschew the universalizing and colonizing tendencies of past frameworks, and promote a form of knowing and doing with and through uncertainty—what the Zapatistas term “walking while questioning,” care and autonomy. Many of these projects describe themselves as transformational. They place an emphasis on relationships or relationality, community and collectivity, and many have mindfulness and other spiritual practices at their core.

This course will explore a variety of practices and imaginaries currently being elaborated and developed by social movements and other social actors engaged in social change work. **In particular, we will be taking advantage of the Maymester format to have guest speakers, field trips, and assignments that explore the work of current projects that can be considered to fall into this non-traditional vision of social change, in particular we will focus on local alternatives to: Prison Industrial Complex/Criminal Justice, Contemporary Social Movements and Food!