Learning Philanthropy: Engaging in the Study and Practice of Giving
Northwestern University
School of Education and Social Policy (SESP)
SESP 351
Spring 2017
Syllabus Version: March 27, 2017

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Class: Tuesdays, 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm
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Course Description
An aim of this course is to engage students in the study of philanthropy and the practice of giving. We bring to this examination a particular set of perspectives emphasizing philanthropic giving intended to improve the lives of children and adults and the opportunities afforded them. As a class, we will interrogate this focus and the role of philanthropy in the United States by studying its history, social meanings, motivations, and effects. Students will learn about philanthropy in light of relationships with the nonprofit sector and government, socio-cultural and historical contexts, and influences on why individuals give. In addition to developing rich understandings of theory and actions in philanthropic practices, students will be asked to explore their own conceptions and values regarding philanthropic purposes and outcomes. By the end of the course, students should have gained knowledge and experience that will enable them to more thoughtfully and diligently engage in the practice of giving.

In the grant-making lab part of this course, students will have the unique opportunity to experience the satisfaction, challenges, and responsibility of giving away money with the intention of promoting a public benefit. Expectations are high for participation and engagement in course assignments and class discussion, and for professionalism in the community-based activities. Together, students and professors will decide, through deliberation and discussion, why and how this money will be granted to benefit people and causes of the students’ choosing. All recipients must be U.S. 501(c)(3) organizations. The grant cannot be made to a Northwestern University organization or used for any political purposes (e.g., political advocacy, funding political campaigns). This laboratory component of the course is made possible by an initiative of the Once Upon A Time Foundation of Ft. Worth, Texas. The Foundation has
entrusted the class with these resources to enhance students’ understandings of and engagement with philanthropy.

**Course Requirements**
This course will require individual reflection as well as large- and small-group analyses and discussions of the readings. Through dialogue and discussion, our goal is to facilitate your explorations and understandings of major ideas and practices in philanthropy as well as reflections on who you are, what you have to give, and what are your own values. Students thus are expected to arrive at each class session on time and to have read the materials assigned, prepared to participate constructively in class discussions.

Approximately one-third to one-half of each class will be devoted to the grant-making lab. Each student is assigned to one of five workgroups based on individual preferences. In this portion of the course, students are expected to participate in discussions and other activities of the workgroup leading to a plan, argument, and decision about an organization to fund. These other activities may include establishing goals and principles for giving, investigating and visiting nonprofit organizations on site, creating brief reports on site visits to share with team members, and developing a decision-making process. Benchmarks are provided for lab activities to help guide progress toward final recommendations.

Assessments of individual work account for 55% of the final grade; work in the grant-making lab accounts for 45%. Five components make up the course requirements: Participation, Reflection Papers, Workgroup Class Presentations, Site Visit Information Forms, and the Workgroup Portfolio.

**Participation (15%)**: This component includes attendance, coming to class prepared, active and constructive involvement in information gathering and due-diligence discussions and activities, posting information on Canvas as requested, providing critique of other workgroup presentations, and participating constructively in final decision-making activities. This portion of your grade also centers on the extent to which you are a thoughtful, reliable, collegial, collaborative, and informed workgroup and class participant.

**Reflection Papers (40%)**:
**Paper 1 (20%)**: Write a philanthropic autobiography (2-4 pages, double-spaced) in which you describe and reflect on your times of giving.
- Describe the context of your giving. To where did you give, and what key values or principles motivated your giving?
- What are the origins of these values or principles?
- Describe your attitude toward and way of thinking about your relationships to others, as it pertains to your philanthropic giving.
Be sure to connect your views and experiences to course readings, referencing at least 4 readings to support, frame, and/or elucidate your ideas. Cite course readings in American Psychological Association (APA) style. **DUE APRIL 18**

**Paper 2 (20%)**: In 2-4 pages, identify a challenge to giving away money wisely that you have discovered through your readings, class discussions, or the unfolding of your workgroup’s activities.
- Describe how this challenge occurred to you and why you find it difficult.
- Does this possible pitfall make you hesitate to give or to ask for money? Why or why not?
• How would you address it or at least guard against its worst effects?
Include and reference at least 4 class readings to support and/or elucidate your ideas. Cite course readings in APA style.  **DUE MAY 18**

**Workgroup Class Presentations (15%)**:

**Presentation 1** (5%): Power-point/video/oral presentation on the final 3-4 organizations the workgroup is considering for funding, including the following:
1. Brief introduction of topic, mission statement, and theory of change, including references to support the theory of change.
2. Brief description of the 3-4 organizations under consideration and compelling reasons why the workgroup considers these the leading candidates for funding.
3. Brief discussion of the criteria you will use to evaluate the organizations. (What qualities of the organizations and the people in them will you be looking at to judge the organizations?)
4. Evidence you will gather to determine whether an organization has met the criteria identified in #3
5. Questions/issues on which you would like advice from the class

The presentation is limited to 15 minutes. Class members will have an opportunity to ask questions, orally and in writing, about the rationale and organization choices.  **APRIL 25**

**Presentation 2** (10%): Power-point/video/oral presentation on the workgroup’s recommendation and rationale for funding, including the following:
1. Brief reminder of your workgroup topic, mission statement, and theory of change.
2. Brief overview of the nonprofit and the intended use of funds. Describe the organization and its mission and history, general population served, location, and financial status.
3. Why support this organization? Provide compelling reasons for the selection of this organization and the grant purpose. Include key learnings from the site visits and other due diligence investigations of the organization, and provide evidence that the organization is worth funding, given the criteria for judging organizations developed in class.
4. Justification for why your organization should receive additional funding, including how the organization would use each level of additional funding ($8,000 / $16,000) and anticipated results and outcomes of the award.

The intention is to present a persuasive argument designed to inform others about what you want to do and why. The presentation is limited to 20 minutes. Class members will have an opportunity to critique the presentations made by other workgroups.  **MAY 30**

**Site Visit Information Forms (5%)**: A completed form for each of the two site visits you conducted is due before class on **MAY 23**. Forms can be found on Canvas, and one form must be uploaded per site visit.

**Workgroup Portfolio (25%)**: The workgroup portfolio is comprised of five (5) documents. One portfolio per workgroup will be accepted.  **DUE JUNE 7**

1. A written report (5-10 pages) including all elements of your PowerPoint presentation. The report should include the following:
   a. Overview of your topic and context: your workgroup’s topic, mission statement, and theory of change, including references supporting the theory of change.
   b. Brief description of the 3-4 organizations that were considered.
   c. Overview of the nonprofit recommended and the project. Describe the organization and its mission and history, general population served, location, and financial status.
d. Why support this organization? Provide compelling reasons for the selection of this organization and the grant purpose. Include key learnings from the site visits and other due diligence investigations of the organization, and provide evidence that the organization is worth funding, given the criteria for judging organizations developed in class.

e. Provide a justification for why your organization should receive additional funding, including how the organization would use each level of additional funding ($8,000 / $16,000) and anticipated results and outcomes of the award.

f. Name and contact information for a key contact person at the organization.

2. Citation for the award: a 100-word statement about the organization selected to receive an award that could be used as a press release.

3. Copy of the email of declination that was sent to the organizations that you visited but did not fund.

4. Memo (2-3 pages) to the next cohort of students, including the following information:
   a. Reasons for giving money to the organization you funded
   b. Expectations/intended uses of the grant, including a timeline of activity for the next year
   c. Questions that should be asked of the organization in one year regarding the activities and outcomes to be completed/achieved (What should others look for in one year to know that your grant-making has achieved what you intended?)

5. A 3-5 minute PowerPoint to accompany the presentation of the award to your organization at the reception. The PowerPoint should consist of 1-3 slides including the following information:
   a. Name of the organization
   b. Pictures of the organization and/or its clients (if available)
   c. Brief description of what the organization does
   d. Your workgroup’s reasons for choosing to fund the organization

**THE FINAL FOR THIS CLASS WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY, JUNE 5, 5:00-7:00pm. Dinner will be provided. Please note the changed date and time from the original finals schedule. We will meet at this time to make the final decisions about the allocation of grant money.

**AWARDS RECEPTION: TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 4:30-6:00pm

One of the highlights and culminating experiences of the course is the awards reception. Here, for all class members and their guests who can attend, is the opportunity to spotlight each grantee’s work and for the workgroups to award symbolic checks to representatives of the selected organizations.

Grading
The grading system used in computing a student’s grades will be a 100-point scale:

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Course Policies and Expectations
• **Canvas:**
  o Class notices, updates, and reminders of assignments, deadlines, and changes will be posted at this course site.
  o Please upload a picture and brief bio to the class roster.

• **Attendance:**
  o Attendance at each class is important and expected.
  o One absence is excused without penalty – no questions asked. You are still responsible to your group and for catching up on missed work. Any absences beyond the first will affect your participation grade.

• **Assignments:**
  o Written assignments are due by 11:59 pm (CDT) on the specified due date, unless otherwise noted. No late assignments will be accepted after the last class. Late assignments received before the last class will lose ½ grade.
  o Papers and workgroup portfolios should be submitted on Canvas.

• **Workgroup Participation:**
  o You should anticipate that a significant part of the work for this course will happen outside of class.
  o Each student is expected to participate in two site visits to organizations being considered for funding by her/his workgroup.

• **Funding Amounts:**
  o The class will make grants totaling $74,000.
  o Each workgroup will propose an organization to receive a $10,000 grant.
  o The remaining $24,000 will be split into two additional grants of $16,000 and $8,000 to be awarded to two of the five proposed organizations. The class together will decide which two organizations should receive additional funding.

• **Culture of the Class:**
  o We will be supporting in this class a culture of being respectful of one another, listening to others’ points of view, presenting evidence, critiquing the ideas – exchanges that are part of the norm and practices of the academy.
  o We anticipate that there will be differences of opinion. In fact, we will encourage healthy debate and discussions of opposing ideas and points of view, with the expectation that these will be conducted with civility and respect.

**Course Materials**
Articles and book chapters can be downloaded from the online course-management system, Canvas, or found online at the links provided in the syllabus and on Canvas. As these readings will be the focus of class discussions, students should have access to digital or print copies during the class. Below are website links to information that you may find useful about nonprofit organizations and philanthropy.

**General sites:**
- Guidestar.org (basic data on NPOs, including the IRS 990 form)
- Charitynavigator.org (financial health and reviews of 6000 major national charities)
- American Institute of Philanthropy, includes ratings of NPOs, [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)
- Grantmakers for Effective Organizations ([www.geofunders.org/geo-publications](http://www.geofunders.org/geo-publications))
- Idealist.org (clearinghouse for nonprofit ideas and news)
- Nonprofithub.com (large list of links organized by category)
- Greatnonprofits.org (searchable database on nonprofits)
• Givewell.org (research on charities)
• National Center for Charitable Statistics (http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/)
• Independent Sector: www.independentsector.org (broad-based coalition dedicated to improving America’s third sector)
• Foundation Center, www.fdncenter.org (database on foundations)

On philanthropy:
• The Chronicle of Philanthropy (national weekly devoted to covering philanthropy)
• Donors Forum (www.donorsforum.com): organization dedicated to strengthening Illinois philanthropy and the nonprofit sector
• National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (http://www.ncrp.org/publications) (Resources on giving circles)
• Ashoka: www.ashoka.org (supports social entrepreneurship, with section devoted to nonprofits and philanthropy)
• The Non-Profit Times (monthly news magazine)
• Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University (www.philanthropy.iupui.edu)
• The Philanthropic Initiative (www.tpi.org: offers strategic services to philanthropists)
• Center for Strategic Philanthropy & Civil Service (http://cspcs.sanford.duke.edu)
• Non-Profit Quarterly (www.nonprofitquarterly.org)
• Center on Wealth and Philanthropy, Boston College, http://www.bc.edu/research/cwp.html

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To give away money is an easy matter and in any man’s power. But to decide to whom to give it, and how large, and when, and for what purpose and how, is neither in every man’s power nor an easy matter.

Aristotle

Nicomachaen Ethics, 360 BCE
**Course Meetings**

**MARCH 28**

**INTRODUCTION: MISSION STATEMENTS AND APPROACHES TO PHILANTHROPY**

**Readings:**
These 4 short articles consider various approaches to philanthropy in the U.S.


http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2014/10/13/338295367/how-millennials-are-reshaping-charity-and-online-giving


As preparation for writing mission statements for your workgroups, these two readings discuss how to write a mission statement and provide examples of mission statements from foundations.


**Lab:** Five workgroups have been constituted, based on individual and class topic priorities. Introduce yourself to your workgroup members. Discuss why you each think your issue is important and what are your giving priorities. Begin to draft a mission statement that identifies the values and goals of your group.

**APRIL 4**

**PHILANTHROPIC TRADITIONS AND THEORY OF CHANGE**

What is it that you hope to accomplish with this gift? What problems are you addressing? How will this gift help remedy the problem you identified in your mission statement? What are key assumptions that underlie your theory of change?

**Readings:**


**Assignment:** One member of each workgroup should email Amalia your workgroup’s mission statement by 12 p.m. on Tuesday. Come to class prepared to discuss your workgroup’s draft mission statement with your classmates.

**Resource:**

**Lab:** Share a draft of your group’s mission statement with the class. Begin drafting a theory of change for your workgroup, highlighting the principles that will guide your workgroup’s decisions. **Each student should identify one reference that connects with your workgroup’s issue and supports the theory of change being promoted.** This information should be helpful as you look for organizations to propose.

**APRIL 11**

**GIVING STYLES/MOTIVES AND THE ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY**
Why engage in philanthropy – charity, duty, justice? How do personal philosophies intersect with ideas about how best to help others and improve society?

**Readings:**


Conflict of Interest policy for the 2015 Learning Philanthropy class

**Assignments:**
- One member of each workgroup should email Amalia your workgroup’s theory of change by 12 p.m. on Tuesday. Come to class prepared to discuss your workgroup’s draft theory of change with your classmates.
- Each workgroup member should conduct online reviews of two organizations of interest and post a brief report (1-2 paragraphs) about each organization to your workgroup Canvas page by April 10. Review the reports from your other workgroup members prior to coming to class today.

**Resources:**
Council on Foundations, Legal Services and Ethical Standards Group. *Conflict of Interest: IRS Sample Policy Annotated for Grantmakers*


**Lab:**
1) Share your draft theory of change with the rest of the class. Edit your workgroup’s mission statement and theory of change, including a citation from each workgroup member. Send both to the instructors by Friday.
2) Begin to discuss the nonprofit organizations proposed by each workgroup member. Weigh the merits of each and evaluate their alignment with your workgroup’s mission statement and theory of change. Begin narrowing down the organizations to work towards selecting 3-4 finalists. For each finalist, email the contact information (contact name, mailing address, email address) to the instructors. We will send letters of introduction to these organizations prior to your workgroup contacting each organization.

**APRIL 18 WORKSHOP ON GATHERING INFORMATION, SITE VISITS, AND RELATED ISSUES**
What information is important to gather to inform your decision to support a nonprofit organization? What information about the organizations is needed in advance of the site visit? Where do you find it?
Readings:


Giving 2.0 LLC. *Site Visit Guide*.


Assignments:
• Reflection paper #1 is due on April 18.

Resource:

Lab:
1) If you haven’t already done so, select the final 3-4 organizations that your group would like to consider for funding. For each organization, provide the contact information (contact name, mailing address, email address) to the instructors via email. We will send letters of introduction to these organizations prior to your workgroup contacting each organization.
2) Assign responsibility for the workgroup presentations on April 25. Then
3) Begin to draft interview questions and observation protocols for your site visits. The workgroup should develop common questions to ask and materials to collect from each organization.

APRIL 25
WORKGROUP PRESENTATIONS #1
See Course Requirements section for details on what should be included.

Lab:
1) Decide who will visit which sites, in teams of 2-3 students. You can begin to schedule site visits for as early as next Wednesday. Each student should visit two sites.
2) Continue to work on your interview questions and observation protocol, incorporating your classmates’ feedback. Send the instructors a draft of each for review no later than Friday, April 28. Keep in mind that we must review your protocols prior to visiting any site.

MAY 2
GRANTMAKING: ASSESSING THE WORK
What are your expectations for the gifts you make? How might the return on investment be evaluated? How do you think about effectiveness and accountability –
for nonprofit organizations, for the field of philanthropy, as well as for your own
grantmaking?

Readings:
Grant letter from Once Upon A Time Foundation to Northwestern University

3 memos of your choice written to the 2017 class by the 2016 workgroups

3 corresponding reports from the organizations awarded gifts in 2016

spent: A strategic plan for smart philanthropy. New York: Bloomberg Press, pp. 135-
148.

Peter Frumkin. 2006. Central Problems: Effectiveness, Accountability, and Legitimacy,
Strategic giving: The art and science of philanthropy. Chicago: University of Chicago,

Panel Discussion: Students from the 2015 Learning Philanthropy class will talk about
the intentions of their workgroups and the reports submitted by the funded
organizations

Guests:
Cristina Desmond and Emily Reese, The Philanthropy Lab

Lab:
1) Using insights from the panel discussion and feedback from the instructors, edit your
interview and observation protocols. Send a final draft of each to the instructors no later
than Thursday, May 4. Again, keep in mind that we must receive these before you
conduct your first site visit.
2) Work out additional details regarding site visit dates and pairings if needed.

MAY 9

STRATEGIC PHILANTHROPY AND EFFECTIVENESS

What does it mean to say that philanthropy is “effective”? What are the benefits and
challenges of “strategic” philanthropy? How can we best evaluate whether our
philanthropy is achieving the intended impact?

Readings:
Stanley N. Katz. June 2005. What Does It Mean to Say that Philanthropy is “Effective”?
The Philanthropist’s New Clothes. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,
Vol. 149, No. 2, PP. 123-131

Innovation Review.
https://ssir.org/up_for_debate/article/strategic_philanthropy_and_its_discontents
Assignment:
Upload any completed site visit forms to Canvas. Review forms that have been uploaded by your other workgroup members prior to class.

Resource:
http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/a_decade_of_outcome_oriented_philanthropy

Guest:
Pat Ryan Jr., Chair of Chicago Ventures’ Investment Committee, Founder and CEO of INCISENT Labs Group
http://chicagoventures.com/team/pat-ryan-jr/

Lab: Take stock of your progress. Review any site visit forms that have already been completed or materials you have received from the organizations. Reflect on the alignment between the organizations you have visited, the class’s funding criteria, and your workgroup’s mission statement and theory of change. You should be nearing agreement on one nonprofit organization to advance for funding.

MAY 16

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR IN THE U.S.: MISSION AND SCOPE
What is the nonprofit sector in the United States and why do we need it? For whom and for what?

Readings:


Assignment: Reflection paper #2 is due Thursday, May 18.

Guest:
Liz Livingston Howard, Director of Nonprofit Executive Education, Northwestern University
http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/faculty/directory/howard_liz_livingston.aspx

Lab: Take stock of your progress. Review any site visit forms that have already been completed or materials you have received from the organizations. Reflect on the alignment between the organizations you have visited, the class’s funding criteria, and your workgroup’s mission statement and theory of change. You should be nearing agreement on one nonprofit organization to advance for funding.
MAY 23

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: OTHER MECHANISMS FOR TACKLING SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Readings:


Assignment: Completed site visit forms should be uploaded to Canvas by the end of the day on Monday, May 22. Review the forms of your other workgroup members prior to class.

Guest:
Robert Waldron, Chief Executive Officer of Curriculum Associates

Lab:
1) Decide on the nonprofit to recommend for funding.
2) Assign responsibility for the class presentation and portfolio components. The workgroup portfolio, including all the components, is to be submitted as one document.
3) Draft an email of declination that is to be sent to each organization that you visited but decided not to fund. Please send draft to Tracy and Penelope for review prior to sending emails to the organizations.

MAY 30

WORKGROUP PRESENTATIONS #2
See Course Requirements section for details on what should be included.

JUNE 5
5:00-7:00pm

DECIDING WHO GETS WHAT
Note the different meeting day and time!

JUNE 6
4:30-6:00pm

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS AND RECEPTION
Each workgroup will make a brief presentation about its chosen organization and award a check to a representative from that organization.

JUNE 7

WORKGROUP PORTFOLIOS DUE
Selected Additional Resources


