

HODC 3890: PHILANTHROPY & SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING

Special Topics in Community Leadership and Development
3 credit hours MW 12:45 - 2:00 Room: Mayborn 205
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Most people think that Americans are generous because we are rich. The truth is that we are rich, in significant part, because we are generous.

— Claire Gaudiani

Every man goes down to his death bearing in his hands only that which he has given away.

— Persian proverb

The true friend of the people should see that they be not too poor, for extreme poverty lowers the character of the democracy.

— Aristotle

The hell with charity, the only thing you'll get is what you're strong enough to get.

— Saul Alinsky

I can testify that it is nearly always easier to make \$1,000,000 honestly than to dispose of it wisely.

— Julius Rosenwald

The Department of Human and Organizational Development at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, is partnering with the Once Upon a Time Foundation to offer a course on “Philanthropy and Social Problem Solving” as part of the Philanthropy Lab. This effort is a course in the Community Leadership and Development track of the HOD undergraduate program, which prepares students for a career focused on “finding solutions to human problems in organizations and communities.” The program, rooted in the philosophy of American Pragmatism and John Dewey, emphasizes linking academic knowledge and theory to personal and professional practice through tackling organizational and community issues and concerns. This course provides an opportunity to engage in applied social problem solving in combination with the practice of philanthropy, while learning about philanthropy, the non-profit sector, and students’ own role in philanthropy and giving.

Prerequisites: students must have taken courses in group processes, organizations, and systematic inquiry/research methods as at least co-requisites, so that they are prepared to work in teams and to analyze both social problems and the organizations that aim to deal with them.

Plan for the course

Although this course is part of the Community Leadership & Development track, students from all HOD tracks and other majors are eligible to take it. The class will be run like a seminar at times, but it is probably more accurate to understand this course as a 'virtual or temporary organization'; in this case the class is a 'virtual' Foundation – existing for one semester. Class members will serve different roles in this organization at different times: Board member, program officer, and applicant to this foundation. Most coursework is done in student teams, but there are individual assignments, and much of the course requires reflection on the processes individuals and groups are engaged in.

Course Timeline

The course will be divided into four sequential periods:

1. Problem identification, including needs assessment and discussion of values.
2. Theories of change, including levels of analysis, ameliorative vs. transformative change, discussions of scale; identification of candidate organizations.
3. Evaluating organizational effectiveness/ impact and fit with theories of change; analysis of strategies of giving; presentation of evidence for recommendations.
4. Final decision on allocating resources, considerations of evaluating impact and efficacy.

Course Structure

Course structure will align with the timeline areas foci (above).

- Focus 1: Problem Identification. Class members will be broken up into teams based on issue area interests (3 or 4 groups expected). Each team will research a broad problem area (housing, education, crime, economic development) in Nashville. These are broad categories, and the task of each team is to research the conditions within Nashville with regard to the problem area (e.g., in education: dropout rates; absenteeism; suspensions; teacher turnover; test scores; performance differentials by neighborhood, race, gender, etc.). The goal is to develop a firm empirical grounding on areas of greatest need.
- Focus 2: Conceptualizing Intervention. Teams will conceptualize potential interventions to address the areas of need identified, and potential organizations addressing this need. What interventions align with problems identified? Services to support the need or advocacy to prevent the problem? Individual treatments or organizational or systems-level interventions? What organizations in Nashville are filling the gaps identified? How do different organizations relate to one another and to the identified issue?
- Focus 3: Identifying Organizational Fit. Drawing on the problem identified and the conceptual approaches to addressing this problem, teams will identify the groups in Nashville dealing with these issues and where these organizations fit, conceptually, in how they impact this issue. Teams will identify a pool of organizations that fit the problem selected, analyzing these organizations, and determining those most likely to have the greatest impact on the problem identified.
- Focus 4: Decision-making. There will be several stages through the course where decisions will have to be made (i.e., narrowing the problem area foci), but the groups will need to make final decisions about how they, as a Foundation, can allocate their resources to maximally impact the problem areas identified in Nashville. Groups will make presentations to the class to make the case for funding based on research and analysis.

Texts for Course

We will utilize two textbooks for the semester, and will supplement those with additional readings to be posted on Blackboard (shown on 'Readings' at the end of the syllabus):

- Brest, P. & Harvey, H. (2008). *Money well spent: A strategic plan for smart philanthropy*. New York: Bloomberg Press.
- Frumkin, P. (2010). *The essence of strategic giving: A practical guide for donors and fundraisers*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Assignment and Grading

Course assignments are structured around group projects, although assignments will vary between individual and group-based. There are six assignments in this class.

1. An exercise to *identify values and issue areas* of concern and the links between these (from Gary, Inspired Philanthropy). Issue area times are based on this assignment. (This is required, but ungraded) [individual assignment]
2. Each individual student will submit a paper, pitching a *particular problem* to their group and how it is defined, with documentation of a) the magnitude of the problem; b) this problem relative to other problems and changes over time; c) who is affected; and d) who is being served. First DRAFT of this assignment due before class on Feb. 1, final draft due Feb. 10. [15% of grade] [individual assignment]
3. Each student will submit an *integration paper*, linking magnitude of their particular problem (paper above), with conceptual approaches to addressing the problem, and local organizations intervening on the problem. (Based on this assignment, the group will settle on a single "problem" to address, and a list of organizations working on that problem to evaluate for the remainder of the semester.) Due Feb. 29 [30% of grade] [individual assignment]
4. This is a group assignment. All members of the group will receive one grade. The group will prepare a *draft briefing report* describing the nature of the problem, the theory of change, the funding strategy, the evaluation of organizational finalists, their recommended organization, why it was selected, and how money would be used at different levels of funding. (This is an advanced version of the integration paper.) Due April 4 [25% of grade] [group assignment]
5. A *presentation* to the class is required from each group about their issue, and the organization they nominated for funding (based on that organization's anticipated impact on this issue in Nashville). Each member of the group must participate in some way for this presentation (not a single speaker for the whole group). Others in our class (non-group members), sitting as the Board of Directors of the HOD Philanthropy Lab Foundation, will make decisions based on this presentation about the allocation of funds. Due April 11 & 13 [10% of grade] [individual assignment]
6. Using the feedback provided by the instructor and classmates, each group will produce a *final, polished briefing report*. Due April 25 [20% of grade] [group assignment]

COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Topic	Reading / Assignment ¹	
Jan. 11	Introduction – Course structure, goals		Problem Identification
Jan. 13	Individual values and interests	Schiller. Singer. Gates. Assignment 1. <u>Visions & Values (ungraded).</u>	
Jan. 18	NO CLASS – MLK Day	Participate in service and/or MLK lectures – reflect with assignment 1.	
Jan. 20	Groups – Problem identification	Metro Social Services Needs Assessment	
Jan. 25	Discerning philanthropy with social problem	Frumkin, Preface, Chapter 1	
Jan. 27	Problem identification & supporting data	Frumkin, Chapter 2	
Feb. 1	Data generation for problem	2. <u>Problem pitch draft due.</u>	Theories of Change
Feb. 3	Guest Speaker: Jeanne Arthur, past student in course	Systems thinking handout	
Feb. 8	Data for problem – approach to addressing	Dewey. Brest & Harvey, Chpt. 1-4	
Feb. 10	Guest Speaker: Beverly Moran, Professor of Law, 501c3's and advocacy	O'Connor. 2. <u>Problem pitch final report due.</u>	
Feb. 15	Data for problem – approach to addressing	Seidman. Frumkin, Chapter 3	
Feb. 17	Guest Speaker: Jocelyn James, CCO, New Philanthropy Capital, London. Develop TOC.	Knight & Ruesga.	
Feb. 22	Organizational meetings	Barkan.	Organizational Effectiveness & Fit
Feb. 24	Guest Speaker, Prof. Susan Friedman, Evaluating nonprofit financial statements	Reich.	
Feb. 29	Guest Speaker: Scott Perry, The Memorial Found.	3. <u>Integration paper due.</u>	
Mar. 2	Organizational meetings	Brest & Harvey, Chpt. 12-13	
Mar. 7/9	S P R I N G B R E A K		
Mar. 14	Organizational meetings	Frumkin, Chpts. 6 & 7	
Mar. 16	Synthesis of findings	Reich.	
Mar. 21	Organizational meetings	Schambra.	
Mar. 23	Integration of organizational fit and community need	Brest & Harvey, Chpt. 9 & 10	
Mar. 28	Guest Speaker: Geoff Raynor	B&H, Chpt. 5, 8 & 11	
Mar. 30	Conclusions re foundations & strategic philanthropy	B&H, Chpt. 14-16, Afterword	
Apr. 4	Finalize briefing report; Organizational Fit based on community need and projected impact.	4. <u>Briefing report due.</u>	Decision Making
Apr. 6	Presentation practice (separate groups)	Schmidt.	
Apr. 11	Presentations within class	5. <u>Presentations due.</u>	
Apr. 13	Presentations within class	5. <u>Presentations (continued).</u>	
Apr. 18	Deliberations		
Apr. 20	Award Presentation		
Apr. 25	Follow-up, Evaluation, Next Steps	6. <u>Final, polished briefing report due.</u>	

¹ There will be some shifts in dates for speakers and readings thru the semester

Week	Supplemental Readings [Posted on Blackboard]
Jan. 11	Visions and Values exercise.
Jan. 13	Schiller, A. (2015, Oct. 26). Bloomingdale's 'Icons With Impact' Campaign Symbolizes Worrisome Shift in Philanthropy. <i>The Chronicle of Philanthropy</i> . Singer, P. (2013, August 10). Good charity, bad charity. <i>The New York Times</i> . Gates, B. (2007). Remarks at Harvard Commencement, 2007.
Jan. 18	MLK events throughout campus
Jan. 20	Metropolitan Social Services. (2014). 2014 Executive Summary - Community Needs Evaluation
Jan. 25	Frumkin. Preface, Chpt 1
Jan. 27	Frumkin. Chpt 2
Feb. 1	
Feb. 3	Excerpt: Christens, B.D., Hanlin, C.E., & Speer, P.W. (2007). Getting the social organism thinking: Strategy for systems change. <i>American Journal of Community Psychology</i> , 39 (3-4), 229-238.
Feb. 8	Dewey, J. (1916). Experience and thinking (Chapter 11). <i>Democracy and Education</i> ; B&H, Chpt 1-4
Feb. 10	O'Connor, A. (2001). <i>Poverty knowledge: Social science, social policy, and the poor in Twentieth-Century US history</i> . (Introduction).
Feb. 15	Seidman, E. (1983). Unexamined premises of social problem solving. In E. Seidman (Ed.) <i>Handbook of social intervention</i> (pp. 48-67). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications; Frumkin Chpt 3.
Feb. 17	Knight, B. & Ruesga, A. (2013, June 11). The view from the heights of Arnstein's Ladder: Resident engagement by community foundations. National Civic League.
Feb. 22	Barkan, J. (2013, Fall). Plutocrats at work: How big philanthropy undermines democracy. <i>Dissent</i> .
Feb. 24	Reich, R. (2013, Mar. 1). What are foundations for? <i>The Boston Review</i> .
Feb. 29	
Mar. 2	B&H, Chpt 12-13
Mar. 7/9	S P R I N G B R E A K
Mar. 14	Frumkin, Chpts. 6: Institutions and Vehicles & 7: Toward Strategic Giving
Mar. 16	Reich, R. (2005, Winter). A failure of philanthropy: American charity shortchanges the poor, and public policy is partly to blame. <i>Stanford Social Innovation Review</i> .
Mar. 21	Schambra, W. (2013). Escaping philanthropy's house of mirrors: Foundations and engagement. <i>Nonprofit Quarterly</i> .
Mar. 23	B&H, Chpt 9-10
Mar. 28	B&H, Chpt. 5, 8 & 11
Mar. 30	B&H, Chpt. 14-16, Afterword: The Challenges of Strategic Philanthropy
Apr. 4	
Apr. 6	Schmidt, B. (2014). All Enterprise is social: Measuring the impact of endeavors across the profit boundary. <i>Nonprofit Quarterly</i> .
Apr. 11	
Apr. 13	
Apr. 18	
Apr. 20	
Apr. 25	