

SOC 131: PHILANTHROPY AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Fall 2017

Harvard Hall 102, Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3pm

Instructor: Shai Dromi shai.dromi@g.harvard.edu Office hours: Tues. 11:00am-12:00pm
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or by appointment

TF: Tal Grebel Avihai tgrebel@g.harvard.edu Office hours: Thur. 11:00am-12:00pm
Café Gato Rojo

Section times Group 1: Tue. 3:00-4:00pm Location: 207 Sever Hall

Group 2: Thu. 3:00-4:00pm Location: Harvard Art Museums
Seminar room 0600

Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/27647>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Most moral and religious frameworks uphold some form of benevolence and charity. However, societies have different ways of thinking about the roles of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations. This course investigates the nature of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations, as well as their influence on civil society. We will consider different sociological approaches to charitable giving and apply them to substantive topics, such as competing philosophies of giving and the relationship between philanthropic and state-sponsored programs. We will also address issues of social responsibility that arise when billionaire and corporate actors engage in philanthropic work.

As a culminating active learning exercise, students will work in groups to identify and evaluate nonprofits as potential donation recipients, and will assess the impact a donation would make for those organizations. Student groups will have a unique opportunity to decide how to disburse a grant provided by [the Philanthropy Lab](#) to nonprofits, and to experience first-hand the dilemmas donors face as they evaluate nonprofits for donation.

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students will be able to

- (a) recognize key sociological approaches to the study of nonprofits and philanthropy as a social activity.
- (b) employ sociological concepts and theories to analyze the key issues nonprofits and donors face.
- (c) examine nonprofits for financial health, transparency, and efficiency in order to make donation decisions.
- (d) evaluate the short- and long-term impact of a donation on a nonprofit organization.

ENROLLMENT

- Students from all concentrations are welcome to take this course.
- Enrollment permission requests should be made online no later than 1:00pm on September 7th (course registration deadline).

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance policy: Attendance in lectures and sections is mandatory. Please email the TF or myself in advance if you are unable to come to class for any reason.

Reading and participation: Please come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading material for each week. This means reading any required material by Tuesday of each week (unless otherwise noted on the syllabus) and bringing it to class with you. Your active and engaged participation is crucial for the quality of our course.

Technology: Please do not use laptops or cellphones during class. Laptop and cellphone use during classes distracts not only yourselves, but also the students sitting around and behind you.

Late assignments: Assignments should be submitted on Canvas on their due dates. In case of extenuating circumstances that prevent you from handing in your work on time, please email me or Tal in advance. Otherwise, I will deduct a third of a letter grade per day that your homework is late (i.e. A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, etc.).

Communication: You are welcome to come to our office hours with any matter concerning the course. The best way to reach me at other times is by email (shai.dromi@g.harvard.edu). I respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours over weekends.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Individual assignments **70%**

Research paper proposal – due October 30, 2017 10%

*Research paper – due December 19, 2017.** 30%

*Final due date may be adjusted once FAS posts final assignment due dates, around mid-term.

Analytic question – due on 5 weeks of your choice on Monday by 8pm. 10%

Over the course of the term, each student will formulate five questions about reading assignments:

- Each student will choose 5 weeks out of the course schedule to submit questions.
- At least one question needs to be submitted for each of the first three units of the course.
- Questions should be about one-paragraph long (5-6 sentences).

- Analytic questions cannot be based on reading items marked with an asterisk.
- Students should not submit more than one question a week.
- Questions should be uploaded to Canvas by Monday at 8pm.

Please [see the handout for details.](#)

Presentation. 10%

Each student will be randomly assigned a figure from the philanthropy world and a presentation date. Students will each prepare a 10-minute presentation that will provide key biographical information and evaluate critically the endeavors of each philanthropist. Presentations will serve as study cases for our substantive class or section discussions. Please see handout for details and guiding questions.

Participation and attendance. 10%

Active involvement in class discussion and in group work (evidenced by group peer evaluation) will be taken into account.

Group assignments **30%**

Group assignment: memo #1 – due September 29, 2017. 10%

A 3-5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing group giving goals and philosophy, as well as its theory of change relating to its subject area. Memos will relate to at least two of the reading items from weeks 1-3.

Group assignment: memo #2 – due November 9, 2017. 10%

A 5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing the criteria used to finalize the decision, including a discussion of the charities that were not selected as finalists, the specific merits of the finalist, and how it aligns with the giving goals and philosophy described in the first group memo. At least 2 of the reading items should be included substantially in the discussion.

Group assignment: presentation – November 23 or 28, 2017. 10%

A presentation that delivers detailed information about each group's top choice. Each student must participate in the presentation. Presentations should include:

- Information on your finalist nonprofit, focusing on its fit with your giving philosophy (memo #1).
- Why you believe the organization you chose makes an impact in their field, focusing on the criteria of evaluation your nonprofit employs.
- What gift size are you asking for, what restrictions (if any) are you suggesting, how will the gift fit into the organization's overall budget and activities, how will the money be used to make an impact.
- What framework will the group use in the future in order to determine if the grant met the objectives set forth? What information will be requested from the grantee after the grant has been awarded?

The final grades will follow the College's grading system:

- A Earned by work whose excellent quality indicates a full mastery of the subject and, in the case of the grade of A, is of extraordinary distinction.
- A- the case of the grade of A, is of extraordinary distinction.
- B+ Earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.
- B command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities.
- B- engagement with the course requirements and activities.
- C+ Earned by work that indicates an adequate and satisfactory comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.
- C material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.
- C- student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.
- D+ Earned by work that is unsatisfactory but that indicates some minimal command of the course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
- D course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
- D- course credit toward the degree.
- E Earned by work which is unsatisfactory and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For research paper assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate.

However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. This policy applies to you individually, when you work on individual assignments, but also to your group for group assignments. Any assignment submitted by your group should be the product of the its own collective labor.

If you or your group received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), this assistance should also be acknowledged.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak to me by the end of the second week of the term, **September 8, 2017**. Failure to do so may result in my inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although I may contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

READING MATERIAL

- Reading material is reserved at the library.
- Most reading items are also available electronically - links are provided on the syllabus where available.
- There is no need to buy any of the course books.

WRITING HELP

The Department of Sociology has a Departmental Writing Fellow (DWF) who assists anyone taking a sociology course with individual consultations and with workshops. Our DWF this year is Charlotte Lloyd and you can find out more about her work and contact her here:

<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/sociologydwf/departmental-writing-fellow>

In addition, there is a video of a writing workshop in sociology online, which may be useful to course students: <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/sociologydwf/writing-workshop>

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 31, 2017 – Introduction.

The first session will be devoted to introducing ourselves, setting course expectations, and providing key definitions that will be used throughout the course.

Unit 1: The social meanings of giving.

In the first unit, we will consider how charitable giving connects to broader social dynamics by relating several contemporary examples to readings in cultural and economic sociology.

Week 1 - September 5 and 7, 2017 – Giving and inequality.

Charitable giving is intrinsically connected to inequality. This connection may be explicit (for example, when the rich give to the poor) or subtle (for example, when donors give generously to a museum, and gain social status in the process). In week 1, we will examine some key mechanics underlying giving relationships.

Readings

Mauss, Marcel. "Introduction" and "The exchange of gifts and the obligation to reciprocate." Pp. 1-23 in [*The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies.*](#) Translated by W. D. Halls. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2000.

Odendahl, Teresa. "[Culture, generosity, and power.](#)" Pp. 3-18 in *Charity begins at home: Generosity and self-interest among the philanthropic elite.* New York: Basic Books, 1990.

Walzer, Michael. "[Socialism and the gift relationship.](#)" *Dissent*, Fall 1982, vol. 3, p. 431-441.

Group work

Students will be given time to organize into groups during our September 7 meeting. Each group will be randomly assigned a nonprofit category.

Assignments

Each enrolled student will receive a copy of the full grant letter. Students should read, initial, and return the grant letter and the evaluation letter (Appendix A) by our September 14th class.

Week 2 - September 12 and 14, 2017 – Strings attached.

Receiving a charitable gift often imposes considerable constraints on the recipient. This week we will evaluate several contemporary and historical examples for such constraints (as well as attempts to alleviate them). We will put them into social context using concepts from economic sociology.

Readings

Zelizer, Viviana A. Rothman. "With strings attached: The earmarking of charitable cash." Pp. 143-169 in [*The social meaning of money*](#). Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997.

Huysen, David. "[Chapter 5](#): The business of godly charity; [Chapter 6](#): Reaching out to the rich." Pp. 89-122 in *Progressive inequality: Rich and poor in New York, 1890-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014.

Listen

Act one ("Money for nothing and your cows for free") in [*This American Life 503: I Was Just Trying to Help*](#).

Group work

1. Student groups will touch base to begin discussion of overall goals for giving
2. Groups will begin research into their assigned nonprofit category.

Assignments

Initialed copies of the grant letter and Appendix A should be returned by September 14th.

Week 3 - September 19 and 21, 2017 – Who gives, and why?

Giving is inextricably tied to inequality from the donor side as well. While common sense dictates that those who have more give more, there is also ample evidence to the contrary. This week we will take a critical look at who in society is compelled to give and volunteer more, and examine several explanations for this disparity.

Readings

Snell Herzog, Patricia and Heather Price. "Chapter 5: Giving Webs of Affiliations" in [*American Generosity: Who Gives and Why?*](#) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 212-272.

Schervish, Paul G. "[Major donors, major motives: The people and purposes behind major gifts.](#)" *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, no. 47 (2005): 59-87.

Recommended

Almeling, Rene. "[Chapter 4: Being a paid donor](#)". Pp. 110-141 in *Sex cells: The medical market for eggs and sperm*. Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 2011.

Group activities

-Groups continue discussion of overall giving goals and research into their nonprofit category.

Assignments due

-At least one analytic question should be submitted by this week.

Unit 2 – Making a good intervention.

Given the various social constraints on charitable giving covered in unit 1, how can we make a successful philanthropic intervention? In unit 2 we will explore several ways to evaluate nonprofits and to examine their potential impact.

Week 4 - September 26 and 28, 2017 – Values and philosophies of giving.

This week we will consider how long-standing traditions and philosophies affect the ways donors and policy makers think about charitable giving. These include ideas about the proper relationship between civil society and the state, about the causes of poverty and social suffering, and the extent to which individuals can intervene.

Readings

Carnegie, Andrew. "The gospel of wealth" Pp. 4-49 [in *The gospel of wealth, and other timely essays*](#). Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & company, inc., 1933.

Lynn, Elizabeth, and D. Susan Wisely. "[Four traditions of philanthropy](#)." Pp. 210-217 in *The civically engaged reader*, edited by Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn. Chicago, IL: The Great Books Foundation, 2006.

Singer, Peter. "[What should a billionaire give – and what should you?](#)" *The New York Times Magazine*. December 17, 2006.

Group activities

-By September 29 groups decide on their giving goals and philosophy.
-Over the next two weeks, each student will find three charitable organizations that meet the goals of the group and gather basic information about their three nonprofits for the next group meeting.

Assignments due

-Due September 29: a 3-5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing group giving goals and philosophy of change as it relates to the group's assigned nonprofit category.

Week 5

October 3, 2017 – Is philanthropy always the best option?

Despite the good intentions that are usually associated with philanthropy, there are also many arguments against attempting to solve public problems through charity. This week, we will review such arguments and examine several examples of unsuccessful attempts at charitable intervention.

Readings

Reich, Rob. "[A failure of philanthropy: American charity shortchanges the poor, and public policy is partly to blame.](#)" *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter (2005): 24-33.

*Allard, Scott W. "[Tackling today's poverty with yesterday's philanthropy.](#)" *The Avenue*. August 1, 2011.

*Amsterdam, Daniel. "[The shortcomings of billionaire philanthropy.](#)" *The Atlantic*. December 5, 2015.

Reckhow, Sarah and Jeffrey W. Snyder. 2014. "[The Expanding Role of Philanthropy in Education Politics.](#)" *Educational Researcher*. 43(4): 186-195.

October 5, 2017 – Visit to the Widener Library

Meeting with research librarian Kathleen Sheehan to tour the building and examine how the Widener family gift to Harvard University continues to affect campus life.

We will meet at the front entrance at 2:00pm sharp (no Harvard time for this meeting).

Reading for this visit

*Biel, Steven. "[A noble structure of enduring stone.](#)" Pp. 85-96 in *Down with the old canoe: A cultural history of the Titanic disaster*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996.

[Talk given by Harvard administrator William Bentinck-Smith](#) on the occasion of Widener Library's 65th anniversary (from the Harvard University Archives).

Week 6 – October 10 and 12, 2017 – Nonprofits and public disclosure.

Tax codes and government forms provide donors with invaluable information about nonprofits, and they also tell us a great deal about how the state conceives of the nonprofit sector. This week we will examine the types of information nonprofits are required to make public in order to maintain a tax-exempt status. We will look closely at IRS form 990, which will be central to student groups' evaluation of potential beneficiaries.

Readings

Bromley, Patricia and John W. Meyer. "[‘They are all organizations’: The cultural roots of blurring between the nonprofit, business, and government sectors.](#)" *Administration and Society* 49, no 7 (2014): 939-966.

Reich, Rob, Lacey Dorn, and Stefanie Sutton. [Anything goes: Approval of nonprofit status by the IRS](#) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, 2009, pp. 1-26.

Familiarize yourself with [IRS form 990](#).

Recommended

Friedman, Eric. "[The paucity of helpful information.](#)" In *Reinventing philanthropy*, 39-53. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. "[Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony.](#)" In *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no 2 (1977): 340-363.

Simon, John, Harvey Dale, and Laura Chisolm. "[The federal tax treatment of charitable organizations.](#)" In *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*, edited by Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg, 267-306. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2006.

Group activities

-By October 13 - Group meetings to narrow the organizations to be considered to 1 per member of the group.

- Should be based on criteria established by the group.
- Each organization is assigned to one member of the group for further study.

-A representative of each group should email me the list of organization assignments by October 13.

Week 7 - October 17 and 19, 2017 – Evaluating nonprofits.

There are many ways to evaluate what constitutes a good intervention. A charity could provide immediate assistance to the needy, develop public education programs, or work with policy makers for long-term solutions. In these two weeks, we will review several ways of evaluating nonprofit interventions and consider the assumptions on which they rely.

Picciotto R. "[Experimentalism and development evaluation: Will the bubble burst?](#)" *Evaluation* 18, no. 2 (2012): 213–29.

Barman, Emily. "[In the public benefit: Nonprofit organizations.](#)" In *Caring capitalism: The meaning and measure of social value*, 33-62. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016.

Recommended:

Friedman, Eric. "[Chapter 10: Choosing a charity; Chapter 11: Project selection \(or deciding not to select projects\).](#)" In *Reinventing philanthropy*, 105-127. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013.

October 19, 6:00-8:00 pm – meeting with Geoffrey P. Raynor, founder of the Philanthropy Lab.

Dudley House (Lehman Hall) Private Dining Room.

Assignments:

-Due October 30 – research paper proposal.

-This is the last week to submit an analytic question for unit 2 readings.

Week 8

October 24, 2017 – Evaluating nonprofits, cont'd.

October 26, 2017 – Report from course alumni.

In this session, we will hear from course alumni about the impact their donation has made and about the evaluation schemes they used.

Unit 3 – Making an impact.

Having reviewed the workings of nonprofit organizations, as well as ways to evaluate them, we will now take a step back and look at some ways in which philanthropic work may or may not make a broader social impact in select sites.

Week 9 – October 31, 2017 – Race, ethnicity, and philanthropy.

One of the key issues philanthropists have focused on is racial disparity. But has philanthropy helped overcome race-based inequality? Or has it only made a superficial impact while leaving structural inequalities intact? We will consider this topic using both historical and contemporary examples.

Readings

Shiao, Jiannbin Lee. “[Chapter 2: Race Talk in the National Magazine of Foundation Philanthropy](#)”. Pp. 28-66 in *Identifying talent, institutionalizing diversity: Race and philanthropy in post-civil rights America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Banks, Patricia A. 2017. “[Ethnicity, class, and trusteeship at African American and mainstream museums](#).” *Cultural Sociology* 11 (1): 97-112.

November 2 -- guest lecture – Bala Venkatachalam from the Boston chapter of Pratham USA.

In order to see some of the complexities surrounding evaluation, we will hear about the evaluation schemes and cost-effectiveness considerations employed by the NGO Pratham. Please familiarize yourselves with Pratham’s website: <https://prathamusa.org>

Group activities

-By November 2 - Groups decide on a finalist nonprofit.

Over the next weeks, groups will conduct in-depth research on their finalist. Each group member will receive a task, such as data collection, interviewing a charity representative, etc. Task division must be approved by myself or the TF. An interview with a charity staff member (over skype or face-to-face) and/or a site visit is required.

Week 10 – November 7 and 9, 2017 – Volunteering.

While most of our course discussion covers monetary donation, we will also consider other ways of donating. This week we will examine why and how people volunteer, as well as the wider-scale outcomes of volunteer work. While common sense may tell us that volunteering is by definition good, the reading items will suggest that this is not always the case.

Reading

Eliasoph, Nina. “Chapter 2: Participating under unequal auspices; Chapter 5: Democracy minus disagreement, civic skills minus politics, blank “reflections”. Pp. 17-47 and 87-116 in [Making Volunteers: Civic Life after Welfare's End](#). Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011.

Lupton, Robert D. "[Chapter 2: The problem with good intentions.](#)" Pp. 11-30 in *Toxic charity: How churches and charities hurt those they help (and how to reverse it)*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011.

Recommended:

Kelemen, Mihaela, Anita Mangan, and Susan Moffat. "[More than a 'little act of kindness'? Towards a typology of volunteering as unpaid work.](#)" *Sociology* online ahead of print, p. 1-18.

Friedman, Eric. "[Volunteering and other ways of donating yourself.](#)" In *Reinventing philanthropy: A framework for more effective giving*, 128-139. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Assignments

-Due November 2 – a 5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing the criteria used to finalize the decision, including a discussion of the charities that were not selected as finalists, the specific merits of the finalist, and how it aligns with the giving goals and philosophy described in the first group memo. At least 3 of the reading items should be included substantially in the discussion

Week 11 – November 14 and 16, 2017 - Corporate philanthropy.

Even though this course focuses on nonprofits, corporations have become major actors in the philanthropic world—both by engaging in truly nonprofit activities and by creating for-profit programs that address social problems. This week we will review key ways in which corporate actors engage with social problems, and compare them to nonprofit actors.

Readings

Barman, Emily. "Morals and finance: Socially responsible investing" and "Just good business: Responsible investment." Pp. 93-120, 147-174 in [Caring capitalism: The meaning and measure of social value](#). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016.

*Schulman, Dan. "[Time to democratize the banking system.](#)" *CNBC*. July 21, 2015.

Week 12 – November 21, 2017 – Nonprofits, advocacy, and activism.

A key way in which nonprofits work is through advocacy, and in this week we will take a critical look at how nonprofits interact with the political sphere. We will also look at emerging ways by which nonprofits try to engage activists and donors.

Readings

Chaves, Mark, Laura Stephens, and Joseph Galaskiewicz. "[Does government funding suppress nonprofits' political activity?](#)" *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 2 (2004): 292-316.

Lewis, Kevin, Kurt Gray, and Jens Meierhenrich. "[The structure of online activism.](#)" *Sociological Science* 1, no. February (2014): 1-9.

Mitchell, Katharyne. "[Celebrity humanitarianism, transnational emotion, and the rise of](#)

[neoliberal citizenship](#).” *Global Networks* 16, no. 3 (2016): 288-306.

*Daniels, Alex, and Anu Narayanswamy. "[Online Giving Grows More Sophisticated](#)." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. May 18, 2014.

Recommended:

Jenkins, J. Craig. "[Nonprofit organizations and political advocacy](#)." In *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*, edited by Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg, 307-332. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2006.

Assignments

-This is the last week to submit an analytic question.

Unit 4: Decision-making and vote.

Week 12 – November 28 and 30, 2017 - Student presentations.

Presentations will provide the class with detailed information for each group’s top choice. After our last meeting, the class will vote on the amounts of money to give to each of the charities.

Assignments

-Due December 19 – Research paper.

*This date may be updated by the registrar toward midterm.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Philanthropy Lab. An organization that funds philanthropy education activities -- including the grant associated with this course. Includes information about other grants and initiatives available to students. <https://www.thephilanthropylab.org/>

The Chronicle of Philanthropy. National weekly devoted to fundraising and philanthropy. www.philanthropy.com

Charity Navigator. A website that rates charitable organizations and provides information on finances and transparency. www.charitynavigator.org

GiveWell. Provides in-depth information and recommendations about charities. www.givewell.org

Giving What We Can. Charity reviews and recommendations. www.givingwhatwecan.org

Guidestar. Provides basic data about nonprofits and their financial information. www.guidestar.org

Independent Sector. Nonprofit advocacy and policy. www.independentsector.org

Foundation Center. Includes a database on grantmakers and grants and does research, education, and training. www.fdncenter.org

Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.
Academic center focused on philanthropy. www.philanthropy.iupui.edu

Non-Profit Quarterly www.nonprofitquarterly.org