

Syllabus for
Sociology 3920 – Philanthropy Lab
Spring 2024
Thursday -
3:00 – 5:50 pm
Seigle Hall Room 206

Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary. --Martin Luther King Jr.

Instructor: Barbara Levin, MSW

Email: blevin@wustl.edu;

Office Hours: [Coffee with Barbara](#)

As an adjunct professor without an office, I offer “coffee hours.” Every student and team will meet with me at least once. The times are available throughout the semester.

Course Overview and Learning Objectives

The basic premise of this class is that you are now stewards of tens of thousands of dollars, and your job is to give it all away—the decisions about where that money will go reside with you, not me. You are responsible for making the decisions and giving the money away; I serve only as your advisor. You are responsible for determining what it means for your “foundation” to do good. You are responsible for determining where we focus attention. Will it be on homelessness, hunger, health, education, the arts, research, refugees, domestic violence, or something else? Will it be on one issue area or multiple areas? You are responsible for achieving good, and this responsibility—though it sounds simple—is incredibly complex.

Over the semester, you will use theory and skills to research, solicit funding proposals from, critically review, and select a nonprofit or multiple nonprofits to fund. Through the generous support of the Philanthropy Lab, Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement, and the Department of Sociology, the class will have approximately \$40,000 to grant to one or more nonprofit (501c3) organizations. In addition, students will be expected to “visit” (e.g., conduct phone calls and learn more about different organizations) nonprofits outside class time.

The course is taught in partnership with the Philanthropy Lab. Based in Fort Worth, Texas, the Philanthropy Lab aims to expand student interest and participation in philanthropy. Since 2011, the Lab and its partners have invested more than \$13 million in 32 partner schools to facilitate experiential courses on philanthropy for 4,252 students. In addition to the donations, students are also invited to develop and post their own giving pledges to be posted on The Philanthropy Lab’s website and evaluate their grants two years later. Alumni representatives of each class are invited to participate in an annual Ambassadors Conference. Learn more at thephilanthropylab.org/.

The course content examines how societies take action to address social issues of moral and social concern. Many moral and religious frameworks engage questions of equity and support some form of benevolence and charity. However, societies have different ways of thinking about the appropriate actors for addressing social issues. In this class, we will consider the roles of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations. This course investigates the nature of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations and their influence on civil society.

The philanthropic investments in the class will be made through teams that will act as mini-foundations and will have an allocated pool of funds available (final amount to be confirmed based on final student enrollment count at drop / add) to invest in registered 501(c)3 organizations. Any additional bonus money earned from Philanthropy Lab incentives will be allocated through a class discussion near the end of the semester.

Throughout the course, assignments will build on each other to lead to the final funding decision. While giving away money may appear straightforward, doing it well is not. Being strategic about how one gives and to whom is critical. Power dynamics between the grantor and the grantee create challenges. Core to this class is the recognition that as “difficult” as it is to give money away, it is far more difficult for the nonprofit organizations that are on the ground serving people and communities and raising the funds that allow them to do so. As we move through the course, students will actively research many of the topics examined. Individual and group projects allow students to apply what they learn from the readings and become the foundation for class discussions.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives:

Goals:

- Appreciate complex and elaborate social problems philanthropy aims to address.
- Understand the nature of philanthropy and nonprofit organizations.
- Concern ourselves with the needs of others, the health of the community, and the ways we might promote the public good using our resources.
- Build a vision for yourself as a philanthropist.

Specific Learning Objectives: Students will learn to:

1. Analyze the roles, relationships, and tensions between different actors in the philanthropic process.
2. Define an approach/vision for philanthropy that emphasizes equity, racial justice, and community voice.
3. Examine nonprofits’ financial health, transparency, and efficiency in making donation decisions.
4. Evaluate a donation's short- and long-term impact on a nonprofit organization.
5. Identify best practices in the social impact world, understanding the challenges and limitations of specific organizations.
6. Demonstrate general awareness of the problems affecting our communities and the resources available to tackle those problems in an effective, efficient, and sustainable way.
7. Demonstrate ability to collaborate, work in teams, and assess impact in a creative, innovative, and effective way.

8. Develop a personal philanthropic ethic, considering how one's time, talent, and treasure might benefit the public good.

Readings

All readings are available on Canvas.

Reading is a crucial component of this class. You are expected to complete all readings by the assigned date and be prepared to participate in discussions, raise additional questions, and answer questions about the readings in class. The style of reading materials is varied. Some are journalistic accounts of particular people and places, while others are more analytical or abstract scholarly materials. In either case, absorbing the readings and considering their implications will require time and investment.

It would be best if you took notes on the readings—not by trying to jot down every detail but rather by doing two key things:

1. As you read, write a few summary statements at the end of major sections (or at the end of the reading for shorter pieces). For example, if you have just read a long passage and are struggling to write a 1-2 sentence summary, that is a sign that you should go back and re-read that section.
2. Once you've finished the readings for the day, write down 1-2 questions or comments that you'd like to raise in class. In addition to our regular discussions, I will occasionally ask what other questions/comments you want to raise.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- 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
- National Council of Nonprofits, the umbrella for state associations. www.councilofnonprofits.org

Class Interactions

I value student interaction in class and know that many (but not all) students also value these interactions. Therefore, I will build a classroom culture that encourages and supports participation. In addition, you all must come to class prepared to engage with course material and ideas. Finally, I recognize that scheduling group projects can be challenging. Therefore, I will use some class time for group meetings.

Respect: The readings in this course will show you that there are many ways to interpret the topics I will discuss. Because of that, I hope that we will be able to have fruitful debates that will challenge all of us to compare different viewpoints. Please remember that our goal should be to debate ideas, not each other as individuals.

Communication and Flexibility: Please be flexible and patient. I will do my best to work with each of you should difficulties arise. Be aware that changes can be made in response to plans that are not working or schedules that need tweaking. If something isn't working, notify me and be patient, and I will see what I can do! I will keep this document up to date if anything changes. Keep in contact with me. If you are having issues, please reach out.

Office Hours, Contacting Me

As an adjunct professor, I have no set office space. I offer, instead, coffee hours. Each student and each team will meet with me at least once during the semester. I am available to talk about class and support your learning and your future goals. Here is a link to my calendar: COFFEE WITH BARBARA

Assessments/Assignments

All assignments are uploaded to Canvas.

Reflection Journals. Two 200 – 500-word reflections on readings, lectures, and class discussions OR two 5 – 8-minute recorded reflections. The reflections should focus on the course material and your values and ideas about philanthropy. Your first journal/recording will be due on **January 25th**. This reflection should answer questions such as,

- What is my experience with philanthropy, "charity", giving, and volunteering up to now?
- What values do I have about supporting people, animals, or the planet?

The second journal entry is due on **April 11th**, allowing you time to reflect on how your views or values are impacted by the readings, course discussions, research, guests, or site visits.

- What changed for you over the semester?
- Would you make a different decision if you had sole control?
- What surprised you the most about philanthropy, nonprofits, or your experience?
- What was a source of questioning for you and why?
- What would you do differently?

Present analytic thinking with a touch of personal reaction to the course material.

Presenting Your Issue: Each student will have **three minutes** (there will be a timer) to "make their case" for an important issue and why it should be considered an area for funding this semester. You will have a wall sheet with a title and at least **three topic points**. After all presentations have been made, students will walk around, topics will be consolidated if appropriate, and decisions will be made on at least 4-5 topic areas, forming the class "foundations." **The paper will be a maximum of three pages** plus references. It should include a summary argument for your "case," a review of at least two articles that provide background evidence, and resources to address interventions that address the issue. The most persuasive case includes St. Louis-based organizations and interventions. You will submit a paper elaborating on your issue before class on **February 1** which is **10%** of your grade.

Partner Funder: Each team will meet a representative from a funding organization whose mission may connect to your team's core issue. The reps will attend class on March 6th, and then your team will work with them to meet at least once more, preferably during the weeks set aside for the site visits. They have an office nearby or can come to campus for that additional meeting. Your team can negotiate that meeting time. You may be asked to read their current or previous grants and learn about their process or give an opinion on current funding. Your team will be asked to summarize the approach and connect it to your team's decision-making process. You will include this information in your team's presentation on **April 18th**.

Final Group Report:

The final project will have several components due over the semester. The goal of the final project is to recommend a nonprofit for funding support. All aspects of the nonprofit – mission, program effectiveness, the capacity of management and board to lead the organization, and its fiscal strength – must be considered.

Part 1: The Foundation's mission and focus area: this includes your mission and a summary of the research related to evidence-based interventions compiled by team members while they were making their case. Due on **February 22**

Part 2: Your Foundation's list of at least five nonprofit organizations in the St. Louis area that address the identified need. The list must include the name, mission, website, CEO/Ed's name, budget, description of the program(s) that address the need, and a paragraph outlining the reasons for including this organization. This is due **February 29**, and all letters are sent no later than March 1– before spring break. If time permits, all teams will share in class.

Part 3: Site visit reports One-page description for each site “visit,” including a description of the organization, analysis of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, what initial perceptions you had that were confirmed, and initial perceptions that were challenged. After discussion with faculty, students will use the classes on March 27th and April 3rd to conduct the site visits. Reports are due **April 11**.

Part 4: Foundation's Recommended Organization for Funding: Groups will deliver a 15-minute in-class presentation on the organization they recommend to the class with the reasoning for the recommendation. The presentation should include a summary of the need, including relevant data, a description of the organization and its programs, a comparison to other organizations considered, and the criteria used for selection. *It will also include a summary of your experience with the partner funder.* These presentations will be given **on April 18th**.

Part 5: Giving Summary Groups will submit a written document that outlines the social problem/needs they are trying to address, the approach they selected to address it, the organization(s) they invited to apply and the reasons for choosing those organizations, a comparison of organizations based on site visits and organization's grant proposal, and reasons for selecting the organization they recommended for funding. This document is due **April 25th**.

Attendance and Class Participation: Attendance includes attending class, site visits, and group meetings that may occur outside of class time. Student participation means engaging in each session thoughtfully and productively by raising thought-provoking questions, listening attentively, sharing your examples and experiences, participating in polls if applicable, and making the classroom vibrant, civil, and exciting. Each

student will be asked to submit a short assessment of his/her/their contributions to group assignments. Illness does occur; however, please inform me in advance. Participation is worth **10%** of your course grade.

Philanthropy Lab Assignments: 100% completion of each component equals more money to distribute to our organizations.

The following assignments will provide the current and future class with additional money to grant to local organizations and provide opportunities for students to become involved in philanthropic efforts. Completion of all the assignments is **5%** of your course grade.

1. Read and Sign the Grant letters – Jan 18
2. Complete the pre and post-surveys – Jan 18 & March 21
3. Write and Post Giving Goal – March 21

Late Work: Assignments should be submitted on Canvas on their due dates. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from completing your work on time, please email us in advance to discuss your strategy for completing the work and its impact on your grade. Otherwise, you will lose a third of a letter grade per day that your homework is late (i.e., A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, etc.).

Grades:

Assignments and Calendar of Important Dates

Assignment	Type	Points	Due Date
Participation and Attendance	Individual	10	Throughout
Philanthropy Lab Requirements Read and sign grant letters. Pre-survey – in class or before Post your giving goals. Post- survey	Individual	5	January 18 March 7 March 21
Reflection Journal Part 1	Individual	5	January 25
Make Your Case	Individual	10	February 1
Foundation Giving Report Part 1- Your mission and focus	Team	10	Feb 22
Foundation Giving Report Part 2	Team	10	Feb 29
Partner Funder	Team	5	March 7 & April 18
<i>Organizations submit applications</i>			<i>April 8</i>
Student Reflection #2	Individual	5	April 11
Foundation Giving Report Part 3- Site Visit reports	Team	5	April 11
Foundation Giving Report Part 4- Present funding recommendations	Team	15	April 18
Foundation Giving Report Part 5	Team	20	April 25

Celebration of Giving	All of Us!		May 2* or a date that will allow the Chancellor to attend
		100 Points	

Inclusive Learning Environment:

The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere where all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their ideas and those of others. Every participant is responsible for fostering a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences. However, instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. I encourage you to speak with me about any suggestions or concerns about this course’s inclusivity. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System (brss.wustl.edu).

Academic Integrity:

Effective learning, teaching, and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work submitted for academic credit or conducted in the broader arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all community members to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work presented as original must be, in fact, original. Therefore, faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at Washington University in St. Louis.

Additional details on the university-wide Undergraduate Academic Integrity policy can be found [here](#). I recommend using the [American Sociological Association’s guide for citations](#) in your written work.

Student Accommodations:

At Washington University, we strive to make the academic experience accessible and inclusive. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability, please contact Disability Resources at 314.935.5970, disabilityresources@wustl.edu, or visit our website for information about requesting academic accommodations. See: <https://students.wustl.edu/disability-resources/>

Mental Health Services:

Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties which can affect a student's academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide. See: <https://students.wustl.edu/mental-health-services/>. Additionally, see the mental health services offered through the RSVP Center.

Center for Diversity and Inclusion:

The Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI): The Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) supports and advocates for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations, collaborates with campus and community partners, and promotes dialogue and social change to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures, and identities. See: <https://diversityinclusion.wustl.edu>

Writing Center:

The Writing Center, located in Olin Library, offers free one-on-one writing tutorials to WashU students, as well as workshops designed to help students become better writers. The Writing Center staff can assist you in improving your writing by providing feedback on the strength of an argument, clarity, and organization. Contact them at 935-4981 or writing@wustl.edu. [Visit them here.](#)

Gephardt Institute:

State and local elections can have direct and immediate impacts on our communities and will be happening here in St. Louis and around the country this year. Make sure you stay current on upcoming elections at all levels by registering as a voter, requesting an absentee ballot, or getting election day reminders. You can do all this for any of the 50 states and Washington D.C. [here](#). If you are ineligible to vote, you can still participate by referring your friends who are eligible to the TurboVote link to register and by engaging your peers in local issues. If you have any questions about the voting process [visit this link](#).

*Throughout the semester, it may be necessary to make changes to the course schedule—including assignment due dates. These changes will be announced in class and with email reminders as early as possible.

DATE	CLASS TOPIC	READING BEFORE CLASS	ACTIVITY	ASSIGNMENT/NOTES
1 Jan 18	Introduction <i>Why this class?</i>	Watch “The Why and How of Effective Altruism” Listen This American Life: act one “Money for nothing and your cows for free.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review thephilanthropylab.org ✓ \$10 Challenge ✓ Open your profile. ✓ Sign Grant Letter 	Complete pre-survey Sign grant letter
2 Jan. 25	<i>What is the history/role of philanthropy?</i>	The Gospel of Wealth;” (pp. 1-15) But How is the World Changed? Four traditions of philanthropy Gospel of Giving (pp. 185-208) A New Gospel Giving Dashboard Watch: https://gospelofgiving.com/#single/0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discuss readings ✓ Process \$10 challenge ✓ Meet student ambassadors and evaluators 	Reflection Journal #1
3 Feb. 1	<i>What is the relationship to the Nonprofit sector?</i>	Nonprofit Management, Michael J. Worth; 2021, chapter 2, 19-47. Nonprofit Starvation Cycle St. Louis Map Watch Unlocking the potential of nonprofits: A conversation with Dan Pallotta LIVE STREAM-- YouTube (Minutes 13-27 in particular)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review the STL NPO landscape. ✓ Guidestar.org ✓ Map of STL ✓ How do you connect? ✓ Make your case 	What is your issue? Make your case
4 Feb 8	<i>What should philanthropy achieve?</i>	Mackenzie Scott Explore: Opportunity Atlas Atlanta Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guest: Ryan Ripple, Gates Foundation ✓ Teams define their mission and begin the search 	Teams form and meet

		CrossSectorInfographic_Spreads.pdf		
		Decision Making and Equity		
5 Feb 15	<i>What is our impact?</i>	Nonprofit Management, Michael J. Worth, Chapter 6, pp. 159-182; Mapping Change	✓ Develop a logic model for your team	
6 Feb 22	<i>Equity, Ethics, and Accountability</i>	Centering Equity in Collective Impact-- Winter-2022-Feature-Kania-Collective-Impact Trust-based Philanthropy TBP+v.+Conventional+Grantmaking.pdf TBP+Racial+Equity+2023.pdf Trauma Informed Philanthropy (pp13-18) Overcoming Racial Bias in Funding Implicit bias in philanthropy Watch Edgar Villanueva Decolonizing Wealth SkollIWF 2019 - YouTube	✓ Guest: Dr. Jason Q. Purnell, James McDonnell Foundation	Teams schedule meetings with Barbara <i>Giving Report Part 1 due</i>
7 Feb 29	<i>What is our impact on the organization?</i>	Meet with Nonprofit Professionals	✓ Meet with professionals	Class meets at Delmar DeVine
8 March 7	<i>Who else is doing the work?</i>	Community Centric Fundraising 6 Questions to ask	✓ Guests TBA ✓ Teams present organization candidates ✓ Review RFP & send ✓ Students post giving goals	<i>Giving Goals due</i>
9 Mar 21	<i>How do we decide and how do we visit?</i>	8 Questions to ask Mining the 990 Data	✓ Practice site visits	<i>Post-class survey due</i>

10 Mar 27	Site visits	Teams must submit their visit calendars in advance. Barbara will be available. Students use these two weeks for all site visits. We will have a discussion of how to conduct these so that they are not a burden to the organization or to students		
11 April 3	Site visits			
12 April 11	How do we use data in decision making?	Weaponized data: How the obsession with data has been hurting marginalized communities – Nonprofit AF Regional Data alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Teams present decision tree ✓ Guest: TBA 	Application deadline- April 8 Student reflection due Giving Report Part 3 – site visit reports
13 April 18	Who will we fund?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Teams present their choices 	Giving Report Part 4 – Funding Recommendations
14 April 25	What is the future of Philanthropy?	Spoiler Alert: Future Philanthropic Leadership is About More Than Just Money Giving USA Self-Inquiry Future Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share your learning and future 	Final Project Due
15 May 2	Let's Celebrate	The “celebration awards event” will be held somewhere between April 18 and May 1. We want to have Chancellor Martin attend, therefore the final date and time, will depend on his calendar – IF POSSIBLE		