

ENGL UN3738: Philanthropy and Social Difference
Monday 12:10-2 PM

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Philanthropy is a practice deeply rooted in American society and culture, dating back to the founding of the United States and practiced today by individuals and institutions alike. The study of philanthropy is the study of what binds us together as a community and a nation, but it requires an understanding of structures that hold some people in positions of disadvantage. Informed and effective philanthropy rests on an understanding of global and local structures of inequality and social difference – that is, on an understanding how and why poverty, discrimination, and disenfranchisement are perpetuated. *Philanthropy and Social Difference* will allow Columbia undergraduate students to learn about the history of philanthropy, to debate its best practices, to understand the role of social difference in sustaining inequality, and to consider what it means to give and receive aid at different scales.

The course approaches the study of philanthropy through the humanities, reading texts by writers including George Orwell, Tsetse Dangarembga, Virginia Woolf, and Andrew Carnegie, and drawing from these texts both an experiential perspective and a richer understanding of how ethics, values, identity, and imagination drive and define giving practices.

Through grants from The Philanthropy Lab and an individual donor, students will also participate in philanthropy themselves. The class will have at least \$50,000 to give away by the end of the term to nonprofit organizations, and one of our chief objectives for the term will be deciding as a group how to distribute these funds as productively as possible. Students will work in groups to research potential grantees, recommend to their fellow students how and where class funds should be invested, and construct a reporting system for assessing the efficacy of grants awarded. Aviva Zablocki, a philanthropy professional at Columbia, will partner with you on this process and serve as a second instructor for the course.

Course texts:

Addams, Jane. *Twenty Years at Hull House* (1935)
Carnegie, Andrew. *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (1889)
Dangarembga, Tsetse. *Nervous Conditions* (1988)
Orwell, George. *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933)
Poppendieck, Janet. *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1999)
Singer, Peter. *The Most Good You Can Do* (2016)
Walker, Darren. “Toward a New Gospel of Wealth” (2015)
Freeman, Tyrone. *Madame C.J. Walker’s Gospel of Giving: Black Women’s Philanthropy During Jim Crow* (2020)

Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas* (1938)
Articles posted on CourseWorks

Class schedule:

January 24

Introductions and a challenge

January 31: The Roots of Modern Philanthropy

Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*

Bill Gates, “Harvard Commencement Address” (2007)

Darren Walker, “Toward a New Gospel of Wealth” (2015)

<https://www.fordfoundation.org/just-matters/just-matters/posts/toward-a-new-gospel-of-wealth/>

February 7: Roots of Philanthropy 2

Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, chps. IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, XIV.

Addams, “The Subtle Problems of Charity” (1899)

Freeman, Tyrone. *Madame C.J. Walker’s Gospel of Giving: Black Women’s Philanthropy During Jim Crow* (Introduction and Conclusion)

Receive group assignments and meet to discuss overall goals for giving

Assignment #1 due

February 14: Poverty and hunger

Henry Mayhew, “The Watercress Girl,” *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851)

Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (focus on the London section)

Distribution in class of Philanthropy Lab grant letter

February 21: Poverty and hunger 2

Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity*, Introduction and chs. 1, 2, 7, 8, Conclusion

Jeanette Walls, *The Glass Castle* (selections) (2006)

A Place at the Table (dir. Lori Silverbush and Kristi Jacobson) (2012)

Assignment #2 due

February 28: Towards social equality

Woolf, *Three Guineas*

Richard Gunderman, “Imagining” and “Four Gifts” (2009)

March 7

Guest speakers: Ann and Andrew Tisch

Review <http://givingpledge.org>

March 14

No class – spring break

March 21: Colonization/Decolonization

Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 2nd ed. (2020)
Tsetse Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (selections)

Assignment #3 due

March 28: White Saviors

Teju Cole, “The White-Savior Industrial Complex” *The Atlantic* (2012)
Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)
Ariel Levy, “A Missionary on Trial,” *New Yorker* (2020)

April 4

Guest speaker: tba

Assignment #4 due

April 11: Effective Altruism?

Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do*
Singer, “What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?” (2006)

Deadline to post giving pledges

April 18: Extreme altruism and the future of kinship

Larissa MacFarquhar, “For Do-Gooders, It Is Always Wartime,” “The Children of Strangers” (2015)
Richard Powers, “A Little More Than Kin” (2021)
<https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/a-little-more-than-kin/>

Assignment #5 due

April 25

Groups present to the class

May 2

Read other groups’ final memos
Vote on amounts to be given to each organization
Groups notify selected organizations and invite them to the giving ceremony

May 3

Giving ceremony, 3-5 PM. Class will take place in 408 Lewisohn Hall. Attendance is required.

Assignments:

Assignment 1 (individual): Identification of needs. In 2-3 pages, what do you think are the most important needs that philanthropy should address and why? What is your criteria for identifying those needs? How can and should philanthropy address them? You must draw on 3-5 sources, which can include course readings, news stories, academic essays and books, or interviews with professors or other experts. Due February 7 in class.

Assignment 2 (group): After discussion of each group member's version of Assignment 1, produce a collaborative document of 2-3 pages outlining your group's goals and philosophy. This document will be your roadmap as you select and research organizations to receive class funds. Recognizing the many different kinds of organizations and approaches to addressing needs, you will need to make priorities that are practical and attainable within the parameters of the course. Know that not all goals are compatible with each other and you should find yourself making difficult choices. In grading this assignment, I will look for logical consistency! Attached to your memo should be a list of at least ten organizations that align with your group's goals as described. Due February 21 in class.

Assignment 3 (individual): In a memo of at least three pages, discuss three organizations that meet your group's goals and philosophy. Describe the organization's mission and goals, key activities and programs, and leadership structure. Why do you believe each organization is doing a good job at serving its target population? For each organization, explain specifically how it aligns with your group's goals and why you have singled it out above others. At the end of your memo, identify ONE organization for a site visit and explain why you chose it above the other two nominees. *Be explicit about how you went about evaluating the three organizations, and why one emerged in this evaluation as your final choice.* Due March 21 in class. During this time, your group should also be making plans for site visits, which need to be completed by April 4th.

Site visits: Site visits are a required element of this course. Working in groups of at least two students, each student will visit at least two organizations, each of which needs to have been selected by you or another member of your group. No later than April 4th please send Aviva Zablocki and me an email with the subject line "site visit report" stating the name of the organizations you visited and the dates of the visits.

Assignment 4 (individual): Philanthropic autobiography. In 3-5 pages, write the story of your life as a giver and a recipient of philanthropic gifts. What kinds of giving/receiving experiences have you had? How have these shaped your goals as a giver? What kinds of organizations are most important to you and why? Are there philanthropists who serve as models for you? Your essay should also look to the future. How do you understand your relationship to your

community? Do you see philanthropy as playing a role in your adult life? Note: this statement does not require you to make any specific commitment about giving; it is an exercise in reflection. Your paper should make reference to at least three course readings. Due April 4.

Assignment 5 (group): Final memo. In a collaboratively written memo of at least 5 pages, each group should identify the leading organization your group has selected to move to the final round of decision-making for funding. You should describe the criteria used arrive at your decision, including a discussion of the organizations 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. The memo should reflect serious study of your selected organization, identifying mission, program effectiveness, capacity of management and board to lead the organization, fiscal strength, etc. Students will need to interview a representative from the charity (face-to-face or over skype). The memo should identify the amount needed to make an impact at the organization, and make a convincing case for why it deserves that portion of our class's giving dollars. At least two of the course readings should be included substantially in the discussion. Due April 18th.

Assignment 6 (group): To accompany your memo, your group should design a 10–minute presentation to share with the rest of the class. This will be your final opportunity to pitch your organization and the gift amount you think they need. Due April 25th.

Assignment 7 (group): prepare a letter to the recipient of the gift that justifies the gift to the foundation, and letters of declination to non-funded organizations that members of your group visited. Letters should be sent to Aviva Zablocki no later than May 3rd (note the tight turnaround on this.)

Grading rubric:

Assignment 1: 15%

Assignment 2: 15%

Assignment 3: 15%

Assignment 4: 10%

Assignment 5: 20%

Assignment 6: 10%

Assignment 7: 5%

Class participation and group work: 10%

Note: there is no assignment in this class after May 6th. Students will be invited to speak at our giving day ceremony about the class and the organization(s) selected to receive funding. Details to follow.

POLICIES

Academic integrity

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each

one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Attendance and participation.

You are expected to attend each seminar meeting and to arrive promptly. Excessive absence will result in a lowered or failing grade. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for turning in any assignment due that day, and for notifying me about the absence.

You are expected to complete the assigned reading for the day prior to the start of class, and to have questions, ideas, and provocations to share with the rest of the class in discussion. You are also expected to bring a copy of the reading to the class where it will be discussed.

Disability policy

Columbia University is dedicated to facilitating equal access for students with disabilities and to cultivating a campus culture that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of students. Please let me know, either through the Office of Disability Services, or by contacting me individually, if you need special accommodations because of a disability.

Electronic devices in class

There is strong evidence that the use of laptops impedes learning in many typical students. Please do not use electronic devices in class except by special permission of the instructor, arranged in advance.

COVID-19 policy

I hope our work together will not be disrupted by COVID-19, but it's a possibility we need to consider. If you need to be absent from class because of illness or quarantine, I am happy to work with you to help you stay engaged with the class. Please be in touch about your needs.