

PHILANTHROPY & SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING

- *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*
- *If you're in the luckiest one percent of humanity, you owe it to the rest of humanity to think about the other 99 percent. –Warren Buffett*



Course Syllabus

Introduction

This course provides you an opportunity to engage in the practice of philanthropy while learning about charitable giving, social problem solving, and the philanthropic and non-profit sectors. Working in teams, you will distribute \$25,000- \$45,000 or more (donated by our partner, the Philanthropy Lab, with totals depending on bonuses you earn, to local non-profits.) To do so, you will analyze community needs, consider approaches to social problems, investigate the effectiveness of organizations in solving them, and make plans to evaluate your gifts in the future. At the same time, you will read about different approaches to philanthropy including both philosophic approaches and organizational structures in the philanthropic sector and critiques of that sector.

Instructor:
Dr. Kimberly Bess

Office Location:
Mayborn 115C

Email:
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Class Location:
6 Magnolia 214

Class Time:
T/TH 2:45 - 4:00

This course aligns with the HOD mission of preparing students to “find solutions to human problems in organizations and communities.” The course is rooted in the philosophy of American Pragmatism and John Dewey and emphasizes linking academic knowledge and theory to personal and professional practice through tackling organizational and community issues and concerns. The class will be run as a lab, with much of the work done in student teams and committees. Students will serve as the Board of Directors of the HOD Philanthropy Lab Foundation to decide how and where to donate the funds.



Course Prerequisites

In the same or a prior semester, students must have taken courses in group processes, organizations, and systematic inquiry/research methods (HOD 1300, 2100, 2500 or equivalent), so that they are prepared to work in teams and to analyze both social problems and the organizations that aim to deal with them. Exceptions made with permission of the instructor.

Meeting & Communicating with Professor Bess

I love meeting with students! I value the opportunity to connect with YOU about Philanthropy or any other topic, so please reach out to me! I am available by appointment and am happy to meet in person or on ZOOM. You can reach me by email (Kimberly.d.bess@vanderbilt.edu). If you email me during the week (Monday through Friday), I will respond as soon as possible. If you email me on the weekend, I may not be able to respond until the following Monday. So please make sure that you plan for all assignments! I look forward to serving as a resource for your learning and growth.



Structure & Course Deliverables

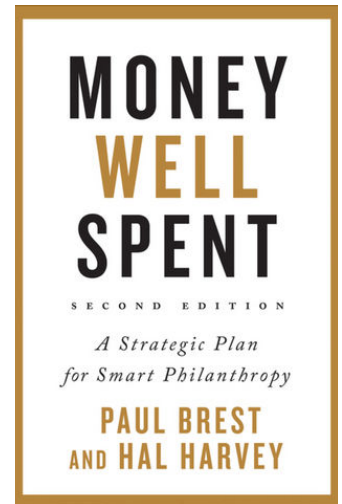
While employing some traditional learning methods (e.g., reading, analysis, reflection), this course draws heavily on experiential learning strategies. It is designed to mirror the activities and structure of a foundation. In the **HOD Philanthropy Lab**, we will spend our time engaging in **learning activities** related to three areas:

- **Professional Development & Continuous Learning**
- **The Grant-Making Process**
- **Lab Operations and Administration**

1. Professional Development (PD) & Continuous Learning

In many fields, including philanthropy, organizations prioritize continuous learning and professional development as part of their strategy for improving the effectiveness of their philanthropic efforts. The HOD Philanthropy Lab is no different in this regard. This semester we will read Brest & Harvey's *Money Well Spent* as well as numerous other texts that have been selected to deepen our understanding of philanthropy and ongoing debates in the field. You are expected to complete assigned reading and come prepared to discuss them.

- Brest & Harvey: *Money Well Spent* can be purchased through the Vanderbilt Book Store or from online booksellers. It is also available online through the Vanderbilt Library.
- Links to other readings are posted on Brightspace under CONTENT.



PD Deliverables

Reading Response Posts (RRPs) Learning is enhanced when students have done the required reading in advance and reflected on it before the class meets. For this reason, a portion of your grade for this class will be associated with a series of responses to weekly readings (RRs). You will post each RR to the Class Discussion Board and will post at least ONE response to a post from your colleagues (RRR). Your RRR should critically engage the substantive issues raised by the post. You might discuss, for example, new insights gained, questions the post raises for you, or areas of disagreement. Specific questions for each RR are on Brightspace under Discussion/ Topics. Reading Responses (RRs) are due by 12:00 noon on Monday. (It is important to meet this deadline to give your colleagues time to read and respond to your post.) RRR's are due before class on Tuesday. **Please Note: RRs posted after 12:00 noon on Monday are considered late. Because RRs & RRRs are intended to support class discussion RRs & RRRs will not be accepted after 2:45 on the Tuesday.**

10 Dollar Exercise Discussion Post: At the end of the second class you will be given \$10. Your task is to do the "most good" you can with the \$10. You are allowed to give it away however and to whomever you choose. Through the Brightspace discussion thread, report back to the class about your experience. In your post, make sure you discuss what you did with the \$10, what you hoped to achieve, and whether you believe you achieved the intended results.

Philanthropy Learning Activity Post: There are many ways that we will learn about Philanthropy this semester. For this activity, you may choose one of the following outside of class learning opportunities: 1) Visit the Community Foundation of Middle TN. Use their resources for your research and/or attend an CFMT event or 2) Volunteer for a few hours with an organization or group that is addressing your teams' issue or concern. Through the Brightspace discussion thread, report back to the class about your experience.

Final Reflection: My relationship to Philanthropy Past, Present, Future. In this final reflection you will respond to Kramer and Phillips arguments in the article: "Where Strategic Philanthropy Went Wrong" and consider the following questions: In what ways do you agree or disagree with their argument? Considering what you have learned through course readings, reflections, and experience, where do you position yourself within the field of Philanthropy?

2. Grant Making Process Activities

This semester, the HOD Philanthropy Lab will have four grant making teams, which will be formed early in the semester based on students' philanthropic interests. These teams will be responsible for identifying, researching, and deciding on organizations to put forth for funding consideration. Grant-making activities will include the following:

Part 1: Issue Identification. Class members will be broken up into teams based on their interest in particular issue areas (4 groups expected). Each team will identify problems and/or opportunities in their area and research conditions within Nashville. For example, if your broad area is education, your problem area might be dropout rates; college admissions; gifted and talented programs; opportunities for advanced study; absenteeism; suspensions; teacher turnover; test scores; performance differentials by neighborhood, race, gender, etc.). Individual students will pitch their preferred issue to the team based on a firm empirical grounding in the area selected, and teams will select an issue to pursue.

Part 2: Approaches to Change. Teams will conceptualize potential interventions to address problems or promote opportunities in the areas identified. What interventions align with different definitions of the problem or opportunity: services or advocacy? prevention or remediation? Incremental or transformative change? individual options or organizational or systems-level interventions? What is the evidence for the different theories of change? What is the role of the non-profit sector with respect to the problem? What leverage might philanthropic dollars have? Individual students will pitch particular approaches to the team, based on the evidence they assemble, and teams will select one or two to pursue.

Part 3: Evaluating Organizational Approaches.

Drawing on the issue identified and the conceptual approaches to addressing this problem, teams will identify a small pool of local organizations (defined as anywhere you are willing to visit) that fit the selected approach, analyze these organizations to determine those likely to have the greatest impact. You will conduct site visits with three to four finalists, and select an organization to propose to the class for funding. Teams will prepare briefing books that reflect their decision and all the stages that led up to it. Teams will also decide how to evaluate the success of their grant.



Part 4: Decision-making. Students will make decisions at several stages in the class (e.g., choosing the problem or issue to pursue), and at the end will make final decisions about how they, acting as a Foundation, will allocate their resources for maximum impact on the issues identified. Groups will make presentations to the class to make the case for funding based on their research and analysis, and the class will decide.

Grant Making Process Deliverables

Deliverable 1. Each student will submit a paper, pitching a particular problem or opportunity to their team, with documentation of a) the magnitude of the problem or scope of the opportunity and changes over time; b) the importance of this issue (using whatever criteria you choose); c) who is affected; and d) who is being served.

Deliverable 2. Each student will submit a paper considering at least two alternative conceptual approaches to the issue that their TEAM has selected for focus, each of which is embodied by a local organization. How does each approach define the issue, and how do different definitions imply different courses of action? What is the theory of change? Include a logic model for each approach. Cite high-quality evidence from the research literature. Indicate where you must make assumptions for lack of direct evidence. Note – you are NOT expected to contact organizations for this deliverable. The sole point of identifying organizations is to make sure that your approach exists. You should use the research literature to evaluate approaches, although you may, optionally, include evidence from organizational websites.

Deliverable 3. Teams will prepare for visits to organizational finalists. To do so, a) describe your criteria for evaluating organizations b) develop an interview guide. After the team narrows the list of organizations under consideration each student will participate in AT LEAST one in-person or virtual team visit to an organizational finalist. [Ungraded, but member participation will influence the final grades of the briefing books. Visit reports are included in an Appendix to the briefing book.]



Deliverable 4. The team will prepare a briefing book describing the need or opportunity identified (with evidence), the definition of the issue and the theory of change (with evidence), the funding strategy, the evaluation of organizational finalists (with evidence), the recommended organization, why it was selected, how money would be used at different levels of funding, and how the change efforts should be evaluated. (Keep these realistic!) An appendix should a report about each organization visited including the date of the visit, who at the organization was interviewed, and who in the team participated.

Deliverable 5. For each briefing book other than your own, discuss pros, cons, and questions.

Deliverable 6. Each team will make a presentation to the class about their issue, and the organization they nominated for funding (based on that organization's anticipated impact on this issue in Nashville), and how impact should be evaluated. Each member of the team must participate in this presentation.

Deliverable 7. Develop an evaluation plan for your organization. Think about your busy selves 1-2 years in the future, as well as how much you are contributing to the organization's budget. Propose a modest plan for how you will evaluate your grant.

3. Lab Operations & Administration

Philanthropy Lab Partnership

For this class, we are very fortunate to be able to partner with The Philanthropy Lab, a nonprofit organization based in Fort Worth Texas, that is dedicated to supporting Philanthropy courses in colleges and universities. Through your participation in activities with the Philanthropy Lab, you and your classmates will earn funds that will allow you to donate to local non-profits at the end of the semester. That's right -- REAL MONEY! In addition, the Philanthropy Lab offers students opportunities to participate in their annual Ambassadors Conference and Grant Writing Workshops. For More information about the Philanthropy Lab visit <https://thephilanthropylab.org/>.

Philanthropy Lab Main Goals

- To spark and expand students' interest and participation in philanthropy
- To increase the prevalence and priority of philanthropy education in U.S. colleges and universities
- To create partnerships with top students and professors from around the country to multiply the resources of our small staff, enabling us to thoughtfully and analytically distribute millions of dollars annually, a capacity we wouldn't have otherwise
- To become self-sustaining at our partner schools, allowing The Philanthropy Lab to leverage funds to expand the program to other universities.

Lab Administration & Operations Committees

Each student will serve on one of the following student-run committees this semester: Leadership, Finance, Learning Conference, Board Meeting, and Giving Ceremony. Committees are designed to maximize student voice and agency and to provide students with practical experiences in leadership, developing organizational processes, meeting and event management, negotiation, and collaborative decision making.

Lab Operations & Administration Deliverables

Philanthropy Lab Portal Activities

- Grant Review
- Pre-Course Survey
- Post-Course Survey
- Giving Goals

Grant Making Team Performance Assessment

- **Midterm Team Check-in Form:** The mid-term check-in is an opportunity for you to reflect on your team's strengths and challenges and to address any concerns that you might have about your own or your teammates' participation and contributions to this point. A link to the form for your team is posted on Brightspace.
- **Team Contribution Form.** This form gives you the opportunity to rates and describe the contributions of each team member, including yourself. This form is ungraded, but your contribution to your team will be 12.5% of your final grade. A link to the form for your team is posted on Brightspace.

Overview of Deliverables, Due Dates, & Grades

Domain	Deliverable	Points	Due Date
Professional Development & Continuous Learning	Reading Responses Posts (9 with 2 lowest dropped)	10 each 70 Total	See weekly schedule on Brightspace
	10 Dollar Exercise Discussion Post	10	1/16
	Philanthropy Learning Activity Post	10	TBA
	Final Reflection: My relationship to Philanthropy Past, Present, Future.	75	4/20
Grant Making Process	Deliverable 1: Problem or Opportunity Pitch (Individual)	120	1/23
	Deliverable 2: Alternative Approaches Paper (Individual)	200	2/6
	Deliverable 3: Prepare for Visits to Finalists (Team)	15	2/13
	Deliverable 4: Briefing Book Deliverable (Team)	250	3/26
	Deliverable 5: Pros Cons and Questions (Individual)	30	4/1
	Deliverable 6: Team Presentations to Class (Team)	50	4/1 & 4/3
	Deliverable 7: Evaluation Plan for Organizations (Team)	35	4/17
Lab Operations & Administration	Student Grant Review	1	5 points Total Completed In-Class
	Student Pre-Course Survey	1	
	Student Post-Course Survey	1	
	Student Post Giving Goals	2	
	Mid-Semester TEAM Check-in Form	5	2/25
	Final: Team Member Contribution Form (Individual)	125	4/17
Participation	Instructor Discretion +/- up to 3% of Final Course Grade	--	--
TOTAL		1000**	

***Note: For this course, a "1000 point" grading scale is used. To convert your final point total to your percent grade, simply move the decimal point one position to the left (e.g., 836 points = 83.6%).

Grading

- Although each assignment will have a specific set of criteria for grading, in general, a grade of "A" is earned for exceptional work, indicating that the student is performing at the top of the class and demonstrating mastery of course material.
- A grade of "B" is earned for good work; A "B+" indicates a strong performance. A student who earns a grade of "B" demonstrates high levels of effort and in some, but not all, areas of the assignment.
- A grade of "C" indicates that a student is consistently underperforming across all areas of the assignment. Important elements are missing and/or substantial improvement is required.
- Ds and Fs are received when it is evident that little or no effort was put forth.

Grading Scale:

A = 94-100	B- =80-83	D+=67-69	Note: Final grades will be rounded up (e.g., 83.6 will become 84 or a B)
A- = 90-93	C+=77-79	D = 64-66	
B+= 87-89	C = 74-76	D-= 60-63	
B = 84-86	C-= 70-73	F = Below 60	

HOD Philanthropy Lab Norms, Policies, & Procedures

It is my goal that everyone has an opportunity to succeed in this course. The following policies and procedures are designed to create a positive, productive, and fair learning environment for everyone.

Participation and Learning Culture

It is no secret that members who are engaged and actively participate learn more. This class by its very nature is experiential, and as a result, your ongoing participation and engagement are critical for meeting course learning objectives and creating a vibrant learning community. Although there is no participation grade for the course, I expect you to be an active participant in course experiences. This includes completing Philanthropy Lab activities (e.g. surveys, giving goals) through their online portal. There are rare times when a student may perform way above or way below the standard expectation for students. For these circumstances, I reserve the right to recognize truly outstanding participation by adding extra points to a student's final grade (up to 3%) or deducting points (up to 3%) in cases in which a student fails to meet minimal participation requirements.

Examples of Opportunities for enhancing participation:

- Class Volunteer – Volunteering above and beyond what is expected, such as assisting instructor in a demonstration or volunteering to record discussion points on the white board, etc.
- Team/Committee Engagement -- Taking an active role in maintaining your team's focus during class activities. Taking on committee responsibilities. Peer recognition as someone who makes a positive contribution to their learning.

Expectations for Participation

- Arrive to class on time ready to participate.
- Complete readings in advance and come to class prepared to discuss material and share ideas.
- Contribute to discussions on a regular basis through talking and listening.
- Recognize, encourage, invite, and respect the participation of other Lab Members.
- Provide ongoing support and challenge to members of your learning community.
- Maintain high levels of professionalism inside and outside the classroom, including preparation, punctuality, and communication with instructor, classmates, and community members.
- Step into leadership role when needed by your team or committee.

Attendance Policy

This class is designed to meet many of its core learning objectives through in-class activities. As a result, class participation and attendance are mandatory. An excused absence is defined as a serious medical issue/family emergency (e.g., illness requiring hospitalization), an officially recognized religious holiday, or mandatory participation in an officially sanctioned Vanderbilt event (e.g., sports, other competitions). Inevitably, other circumstances do arise that do not rise to the level of an "excused absence" – such a 24 hour stomach bug, a migraine, or your brother's wedding. To accommodate these circumstances, you will be allowed to miss three classes without affecting your final grade. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in the following deductions from your final grade:

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-3 absences = no deductions • 4-5 absences = 4% deduction • 6-7 absences = 8% deduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 absences = 12% deduction • 9 or more = 20% deduction |
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HOD Philanthropy Lab Norms, Policies & Procedures Continued



Tardiness

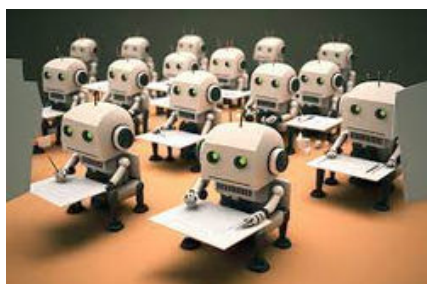
Class will begin promptly at the scheduled class time. Please plan to arrive a few minutes early so that you are ready to begin. Frequent and consistent tardiness may adversely affect your final course grade (see Class Participation under Approach to Learning above).

Cell Phones & Computers

Cell phones and other electronics can be extremely distracting and can impede learning. I request that you turn off your cell phone during class. If you feel you need to have your phone available during class (i.e., ongoing family emergency), please let me know in advance. If you have a laptop, I recommend that you bring it to class as they it be useful for engaging in class activities and accessing resources. However, your laptop must remain closed until required for such activities. The research suggests that students learn more during class, if laptops are not open (See Dynarski [2017] Brookings Institute Report: [For better learning in college lectures, lay down the laptop and pick up a pen.](#))



Use of AI in this Class



In this class the use of AI tools such as GPT4, Bing, Claude, or Bard is **permitted** only for **research, brainstorming, and editorial aid**. Use of AI is **prohibited** as a **text-generation tool**. In other words, you may not submit text written by AI as your own. Please carefully read the full AI Policy description and rational, which you will find on Brightspace under CONTENT, Course Resources. Failure to adhere to this policy, or to acknowledge your use of such a tool, constitutes a violation of Vanderbilt's honor code. Feel free to consult me if you have any questions about this.

Late Submission of Course Deliverables

Completion of course deliverables by the established deadlines is critical to the success of the course. Students who fail to complete by the deadline often place an undue burden on other members of their team. Extensions for assignments are granted only in very rare cases since due dates are established well in advance, providing you plenty of time to complete the work in advance of the due date. Deductions for late deliverables:

1 day late 5%	3-4 days late 10%	7 -14 days late 30%
2 days late 8%	5 -6 days late 15%	15 or more days late 50%

Incompletes

Students unable to fulfill all the requirements due to illness or other satisfactory reasons are responsible for contacting me and completing an "incomplete request form" and submitting it for approval prior to the end of the semester.

Vanderbilt Policies & Resources for Students

Please find links to resources listed below in Brightspace under CONTENT/COURSE RESOURCES

Honor Code

All work submitted in this course is governed by provisions of the Vanderbilt University Honor Code, found in the student handbook. If you have any doubts about how the Honor Code applies to your work in this class, please ask me for clarification. Uncertainty about application of the Honor Code does not excuse a violation.

Classroom Accommodations

Vanderbilt is committed to equal opportunity for students with disabilities. If you need course accommodations due to a disability, please contact [VU Student Access Services](#) to initiate the process. After SAS has notified me of relevant accommodations, we will discuss how these accommodations may best be approached in this class, and I will facilitate the accommodations.

Mental Health and Wellness

If you are experiencing undue stress that may be interfering with your ability to perform academically, Vanderbilt's Student Care Network offers a range of support services. The Office of Student Care Coordination (OSCC) is the central and first point of contact to help you navigate and connect to appropriate resources. You can schedule an appointment with the OSCC at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination/> or call 615-343-WELL. You can find a calendar of services at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/studentcarenetwork/satellite-services/>.

If you or someone you know needs to speak with a professional counselor immediately, the University Counseling Center offers Urgent Care Counseling. Students should call the UCC at (615) 322-2571 during office hours to speak with an urgent care clinician. You can also reach an on-call counselor after hours or on the weekends by calling (615) 322-2571 and pressing option 2 at any time. You can find additional information at <https://www.vanderbilt.edu//ucc/>.

Mandatory Reporter Obligations

All University faculty and administrators are mandatory reporters. What this means is that all faculty and administrators must report allegations of sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence to the Title IX Coordinator. In addition, all faculty and administrators are obligated to report any allegations of discrimination. I am willing to discuss with you such incidents but can only do so in the context of us both understanding my reporting obligations. If you want to talk with someone in confidence, officials in the Student Health Center, the University Counseling Center, and the Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life (when acting as clergy) can maintain confidentiality. In addition, officials in the [Project Safe Center](#) have limited confidentiality, in that they must report the incidents but can do so without providing identifying information. The Project Safe Center serves as the central resource for those impacted by sexual misconduct and intimate partner violence and can assist with navigating all facets of the University's resource and support network and other processes.

Names & Pronouns

If you would like to use a different name or pronouns than those provided through YES, please let the instructor know at any time prior to or during the semester. Information is available through the [LGBTQI Life offices](#) about how to change either or both of these in YES.