



## BGS 380, Investing in Philanthropy

03170

Spring 2026

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**CLASS MEETS:** 9:30 - 11, TTH, RRH 3.402

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9-10:30, Wednesdays or by appt.

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## Course Description

### UNIVERSITY CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION:

THE OBJECTIVE OF INVESTING IN PHILANTHROPY IS FOR YOU TO LEARN ABOUT PHILANTHROPY FROM THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BASES AS WELL FROM A MAJOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COMPONENT. THE COURSE WILL ENABLE YOU TO LEARN ABOUT THE POWERFUL FORCE OF PHILANTHROPY THROUGH CLASSROOM LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS, GUEST SPEAKERS, AND ACTUALLY PRACTICING PHILANTHROPY BY GIVING UP TO \$85,000 IN GRANT MONEY TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. THESE FUNDS HAVE BEEN GENEROUSLY DONATED BY A FOUNDATION, AS WELL AS BY THE PHILANTHROPY LAB. THE COURSE IS BASED ON INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK, DRAWING FROM ECONOMICS, FINANCE, MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, PHILOSOPHY, POLICY, ETHICS, BIOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE, AMONG OTHER AREAS. THE GOAL IS THAT YOU WILL LEARN HOW TO THINK ABOUT AND APPLY THE ETHICS, ECONOMICS, STRATEGY, AND PRACTICE OF PHILANTHROPIC GIVING AS WELL AS HOW TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. THE COURSE IS DESIGNED TO PREPARE YOU TO BE EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL STEWARDS OF YOUR OWN RESOURCES, AND TO PREPARE YOU TO BE EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIBLE BOARD MEMBERS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

### WHAT WILL I LEARN?

#### MAIN SKILLS AND ATTITUDES TO BE DEVELOPED:

- Why do people and organizations give to charity?
- What are the primary vehicles for charitable giving and for making the world a better place?
- What role can I play as a philanthropist, and how can I be most effective?

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Understand the many aspects of the philanthropic sector.
2. Develop a strategic approach for evaluating charitable organizations and becoming be the best philanthropist possible.
3. Create a personal philosophy for giving.

### LEADERSHIP AND THIS COURSE

The Texas MBA program is designed to develop influential business leaders. The MBA Program has identified four fundamental and broad pillars of leadership: knowledge and understanding, communication and collaboration, responsibility and integrity, and a worldview of business and society.



In this course, you will explore the philanthropic sector and understand how your role as a philanthropist will make a difference in your life and in the lives of others, regardless of what career path you take. The notion of “those to whom much is given, much is expected” underscores the Philanthropy Lab’s investment in this course, and the experiential nature of the course ensures students get real world experience collaborating with peers to make philanthropic giving decisions with a focus on desired outcomes, necessary trade-offs, and strategic thinking. All course activities are designed to help students become more informed as leaders and as responsible citizens.

### HOW WILL I LEARN?

Class sessions will be interactive discussions facilitated by the professor and/or guest speakers. There will be team projects and team presentations after Spring Break; each team will practice informed grant making and share its approach with the class. A Giving Ceremony event will take place in the final weeks of class that all students will be expected to help plan and execute. All students will be involved in the process of making charitable grants and will also take pre-course and post-course surveys, collectively contributing to each student’s ability to set personal philanthropic giving goals for the future.

### PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE COURSE:

None.

### HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE:

Students will be successful when they come to class with an open mind and an open heart AND having read the materials assigned in advance. Class participation will be the most critical component of our learning process and will count for a significant part of the semester’s grade. Each student’s willingness to share ideas and listen critically to comments shared by speakers and classmates will drive debate and discussion and will contribute to everyone’s growth. Team projects will require collaboration with classmates and the application of lessons learned about various approaches to philanthropy, culminating in a team presentation to the class outlining its grant-making decisions. Students will be expected to reflect on their philanthropic goals for the future, articulating their own philosophy for charitable giving by the end of the semester, as well, in a final paper.

## Course Requirements

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. Required book: [The Everyday Philanthropist](#) by Dan Pallotta
2. Content posted on Canvas



## CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

**Class attendance:** Missing class will negatively impact your attendance and class participation grade; however, everyone has bad days, illnesses, and emergencies. If you are unable to attend class, please notify me by email as soon as possible, preferably before class. You will be allowed up to two absences without penalty. After two absences you will lose a half letter grade in the class (i.e., B+ becomes B). If an illness or emergency causes you to have more than two absences, I will require documented proof. You should also contact [Student Emergency Services](#) regarding medical and personal emergencies.

**Class participation:** I look for quality, not quantity. Everyone benefits from carefully listening to diverse ideas and unique perspectives, and I will be looking at how your preparation and engagement advances the learning and growth of others throughout class discussions and team project work.

**Behavior expectations:** Students are expected to abide by the McCombs Professionalism Policy and be respectful towards each other and towards professors, speakers, and guests.

**McCombs Classroom Professionalism Policy.** The highest professional standards are expected of all members of the McCombs community. The collective class reputation and the value of the Texas MBA experience hinges on this. You should treat the Texas MBA classroom as you would a corporate boardroom. Faculty are expected to be professional and prepared to deliver value for each and every class session. Students are expected to be professional in all respects. The Texas MBA classroom experience is enhanced when:

- Students arrive on time. On time arrival ensures that classes are able to start and finish at the scheduled time. On time arrival shows respect for both fellow students and faculty and it enhances learning by reducing avoidable distractions.
- **Students display their name cards.** This permits fellow students and faculty to learn names, enhancing opportunities for community building and evaluation of in-class contributions.
- Students are fully prepared for each class. Much of the learning in the Texas MBA program takes place during classroom discussions. When students are not prepared, they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual, but their peers who count on them, as well.
- Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues. Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.
- Students do not confuse the classroom for the cafeteria. The classroom (boardroom) is not the place to eat your breakfast tacos, wraps, sweet potato fries, or otherwise set up for a picnic. Please plan accordingly. Recognizing that back-to-back classes sometimes take place over the lunch hour, energy bars and similar snacks are permitted. Please be respectful of your fellow students and faculty in your choices.



- Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks. The learning environment improves when disruptions are limited.
- Students attend the class section to which they are registered. Learning is enhanced when class sizes are optimized. Limits are set to ensure a quality experience and safety.
- Technology is used to enhance the class experience. When students are surfing the web, responding to e-mail, instant messaging each other, and otherwise not devoting their full attention to the topic at hand they are doing themselves and their peers a major disservice. Those around them face additional distraction. Fellow students cannot benefit from the insights of the students who are not engaged. Faculty office hours are spent going over class material with students who chose not to pay attention, rather than truly adding value by helping students who want a better understanding of the material or want to explore the issues in more depth. Students with real needs may not be able to obtain adequate help if faculty time is spent repeating what was said in class. There are often cases where learning is enhanced by the use of technology in class. Faculty will let you know when it is appropriate.
- Phones and wireless devices are turned off. We've all heard the annoying ringing in the middle of a meeting. Not only is it not professional, it cuts off the flow of discussion when the search for the offender begins. When a true need to communicate with someone outside of class exists (e.g., for some medical need) please inform the professor prior to class.

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Assignment 1:** *Team Project (25% of grade)*

Students will be divided into teams and tasked with grant-making decisions. Teams will work collaboratively and do a formal presentation to the class to share their process and desired outcome. We will discuss this assignment in class, and grades will be based on professionalism and content.

2. **Assignment 2:** *Personal Giving Philosophy (25% of grade)*

By the end of the semester, you will be expected to submit a written statement integrating what you've learned in the course to articulate your approach to philanthropy going forward. We will discuss this assignment in class, and I will post detailed guidelines later in the semester.



### GRADING FOR THIS COURSE

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Point Possible	Percent of Total Grade
1. Class Participation	100	50%
2. Team Project	100	25%
3. Personal Giving Philosophy	100	25%

### COURSE OUTLINE

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics and essential information will be on the Canvas website at [utexas.instructure.com](https://utexas.instructure.com). Check this site regularly and use it to prepare for class and ask questions.

**Changes** to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure you receive the changes with as much advanced notice as possible.

Week	Class Topic
1.	What is Philanthropy? Why It Matters?
2.	Why Do People and Organizations Give to Charity?
3.	Considerations for Giving
4.	Nonprofit Sector Overview
5.	Primary Vehicles for Charitable Giving
6.	Corporate Philanthropy
7.	Workplace & Collective Giving
8.	Foundations & Donor Advised Funds
9.	Individual & Family Philanthropy
10.	Let's Give: Team Projects
11.	Let's Give: Team Projects
12.	Team Presentations
13.	Giving Ceremony & Reflections



## Policies

### CLASSROOM POLICIES

#### STATEMENT ON LEARNING SUCCESS

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

#### GRADING POLICIES

Grades will not be curved, and assignments will be worth points, not letter grades. Class participation grades will be based on attendance and quantity, but mostly on quality. High quality contributions are those that get the discussion off to a productive start, shape the class discussion in useful ways, change the direction of discussion in helpful ways, provoke useful debate and inquiry, and/or summarize the comments of others in an integrative and concise manner.

Grade	Cutoff
A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	74%
C-	70%
D	65%
F	<65%

#### LATE WORK

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis.



### ABSENCES

Missing class will negatively impact your attendance and class participation grade; however, I recognize that all of us have bad days, illnesses, and emergencies. If you are unable to attend class, please notify me by email as soon as possible, preferably before class. You will be allowed up to two absences without penalty. After two absences you will lose a half letter grade in the class (i.e., B+ becomes B). If an illness or emergency causes you to have more than two absences, I will require documented proof. You should also contact [Student Emergency Services](#) regarding medical and personal emergencies.

### RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited: No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

### FERPA AND CLASS RECORDINGS

Any class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

### STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

- You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
- You have a right to respect.
- You have a right to be assessed and graded fairly.
- You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.



- You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
- You have a right to meaningful and equal participation, to self-organize groups to improve your learning environment.
- You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with the teaching team and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- You are responsible for acting in a way that is worthy of respect and always respectful of others. • Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers' experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding the teaching team accountable as well.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

**Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT.** Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address:

[deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct](https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct)

### UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus:



#### SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). [diversity.utexas.edu/disability/about](https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/about)

#### COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. [cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html](https://cmhc.utexas.edu/individualcounseling.html)

#### STUDENT EMERGENCY SERVICES:

If at any time you experience an emergency that necessitates your absence from a class requirement (e.g., attendance, assignment submission, or exam), please report your circumstances and absence via the Student Emergency Services website: [deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency](https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency)

### IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, [operations.utexas.edu/units/csas](https://operations.utexas.edu/units/csas)

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.



- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [emergency.utexas.edu](https://emergency.utexas.edu)