

SOC 1131: PHILANTHROPY AND THE NONPROFIT SECTOR
Spring 2023
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am - 10:15am, Harvard Hall 202

Course head:

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Course schedule:

Lecture

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am - 10:15am, Harvard Hall 202

All site visits will take place during lecture time.

Section

Friday, 10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

Friday, 12:00 PM - 01:15 PM

Campus philanthropy and nonprofit events (attend at least 2 of your choice)

Students are asked to attend two events of their choice out of [a list of available enrichment workshops and talks](#) that will take place on campus throughout the semester.

Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/117440>

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.

The course offers students two unique activity-based learning opportunities in order to gain skills and experience in the world of nonprofit organizations:

- 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 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.
- Through a partnership with the [Lemann Program on Creativity and Entrepreneurship \(LPCE\)](#), student groups will develop their own nonprofit ventures to address the social impact of COVID-19. Student ventures will receive startup seed funding and, upon successful completion of the course, will compete over additional seed money. The course will include a series of guest lectures and workshops on entrepreneurship to support student venture development.

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) identify community needs and evaluate demands for nonprofit intervention;
- (d) define clear nonprofit intervention strategies;
- (e) design minimum viable product for nonprofit venture;
- (f) pitch nonprofit venture for funding support;
- (g) evaluate existing nonprofit organizations in terms of their financial stability and their transparency and accountability.

ENROLLMENT

- Undergraduate students from all concentrations and years are welcome to take this course.
- Students who wish to enroll should
 - (a) fill out the online questionnaire [at this link](#) by 8pm on January 18, and
 - (b) request permission to enroll through their Crimson Carts.Students will be informed of enrollment decisions by mid-day on January 19.
- Graduate / professional students are welcome to audit the course with course head permission but cannot enroll for credit. If you wish to audit the course please fill out the questionnaire [at this link](#).

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Environmental Health & Safety: All course participants are expected to abide by Harvard's [Environmental Health & Safety](#) policies at all times. Students who require accommodations with respect to these policies should contact Disability Access Office (DAO) as soon as possible.

Attendance policy: Attendance in lectures and sections is mandatory. Please email your TF 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 each week and having it readily available on your computer so you can refer back to it during our discussion. Your active participation is crucial for the quality of our course.

Group work: It is crucial that all group members contribute equally to group work and remain engaged throughout the semester. We will conduct some group-building exercises early in the semester and will offer support and periodic check-ins throughout the course. However, we expect all students to do their parts in the group projects.

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. Students who require accommodations with respect to these policies should contact Disability Access Office (DAO) as soon as possible.

Assignment submission: All assignments must be submitted through Canvas as a Word Document or a PDF file. Any other submission type (e.g., by email or through Google Docs) will not be accepted. When submitting a file on Canvas, students must ensure the document was processed correctly either by checking that the document appears in the preview window or by clicking on View Feedback to check if their submission was uploaded correctly. We will consider an assignment submitted only once a valid file is uploaded to Canvas.

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

Communication: You are welcome to join us for office hours to discuss any aspect of the course (e.g., brainstorming policy memo ideas, clarifying concepts discussed in class, etc.). If you are not able to join our posted office hours, please feel free to reach out to any one of us and we will schedule another time for a meeting. You can expect a response to your emails within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours over weekends.

EXPECTATIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

We **may** hold several of our course meetings on Zoom, to accommodate guest speakers. Online learning is still a new experience for many of us, and it is therefore crucial for everyone to follow these guidelines:

- While on Zoom, please close any apps that are not directly related to the course – email, Facebook, Messenger, and the likes – and put away your phone.
- Please turn on your video and keep it on throughout section and lecture times.
- On most sessions, students’ Zoom apps will be initially muted. Please use the “raise hand” function on Zoom to ask a question. Questions can also be typed into the chat box.
- On occasion, students will be unmuted for collaborative work. In these situations:
 - Please take care not to speak over other students. Keeping in mind that there may be a lag on some students’ computers, please wait one second after another student has finished talking before starting to talk.
 - In addition, please be mindful of any background noises in your surroundings that may be audible to other students (it may be necessary for you to mute yourself while not speaking).

Lecture and section recordings

- In order to respect all course participants’ privacy and to maintain a safe learning environment, we are asking you:
 - Not to make your own recordings of online course session.
 - Not to circulate existing course recordings.
 Such actions would violate the mutual trust that our shared learning experience requires. On our end, we will delete the recordings as soon as they are no longer needed by students who were not able to make the live sessions, and no later than the end of the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Click on each assignment for the full handout.

Individual assignments **70%**

[Research paper proposal](#) – due April 9, 2023. 10%

[Research paper](#) – due May 13, 2023.* 40%

*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 2pm. 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 2pm.

Participation and attendance 10%

Group assignments **30%**

Group contract (ungraded requirement) – due date February 5, 2023. ---

Groups will set their own rules for appropriate member conduct and for ensuring equal work distribution, and will task each group member with specific parts of the work.

Memo 1: Problem statement – due date February 13, 2023 10%

A 3-4 page double-spaced memo. Groups will receive initial funding upon satisfactory completion of this assignment.

Draft: Lean Canvas (ungraded requirement) – due in class March 30, 2023 ---

A 1-page business plan is due in class for peer feedback.

Memo 2: Nonprofit Selection – due April 24, 2023 10%

A 5-page double-spaced memo presenting the nonprofit you would like to support, describing the criteria on which your selected nonprofit excels and a summary of your research into its activities.

Memo 3: Grant application – due date April 24, 2023 10%

A 5-6 page double spaced memo, along with lean canvas.

Donation Proposal Pitch– April 25, 2023 ---

Student groups will pitch their selected nonprofit organization to the class for donation.

Nonprofit Venture Pitch— April 27, 2023 ---

Student groups will present their venture in class and will award seed funding by class vote.

Grading criteria

Each assignment handout will include a grading rubric. We follow the Harvard College Student Handbook’s [guidelines](#) for assigning letter grades. Students taking the course on a P/NP basis will receive a Pass grade for letter grades from A to D-.

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 10, 2021**. 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

- All reading items are available electronically - links are provided on the PDF version of the syllabus.
- There is no need to buy any of the course books.

WRITING AND RESEARCH HELP

Writing Help: The Departmental Writing Fellow (DWF) assists anyone taking a sociology course with individual consultations and with workshops. You can find out more about the DWF's work and schedule a meeting [here](#). In addition, there is a [video of a writing workshop](#) in sociology online, which may be useful to course students. The [Harvard College Writing Center](#) is also available for consultations.

Research Help: The Sociology Department also offers advising in quantitative and qualitative methods – please see the [Department's website](#) for details.

Academic Coaching and Time Management: The [Academic Resource Center \(ARC\)](#) offers support to help students develop their learning and organization skills, and overcome challenges like procrastination and writer's block. Students can sign up for individual consultations, accountability groups, or workshops.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – January 23 and 25, 2023 – Introductions, and how to stop being passionate about philanthropy

We often talk about philanthropy and nonprofit work in terms of passion. "I'm so passionate about education policy! That's why I want to launch a nonprofit venture!" However, when it comes to making a positive social impact, our passions can easily lead us astray. Indeed, by

following our passions, we risk serving our own preconceived notions of good interventions instead of empowering the populations we want to help. The first week will begin exploring the gap between an abstract desire to help and an impactful intervention. This tension will serve as the main theme for this course. In these first two meetings we will also be introducing ourselves, setting course expectations, and providing key definitions that will be used throughout the course.

Recommended reading:

Cech, Erin A. "What Is the Passion Principle?" Pp. 33-75 in [*The Trouble with Passion: How Searching for Fulfillment at Work Fosters Inequality*](#). Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021.

Andersson, Fredrik O. "[The Bumpy Road of Nonprofit Creation: An Examination of Start-Up Problems Encountered by Nonprofit Entrepreneurs](#)." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2019): 194-207.

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 2 – January 31 and February 2, 2023 – 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). This week, 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.

Recommended

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.

Week 3 – February 7 and 9, 2023 – 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.

Listen

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

Recommended

Wilkis, Ariel. “[Chapter 3: Donated money](#).” Pp. 74-92 in *The moral power of money: Morality and economy in the life of the poor*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2018.

Week 4

February 14, 2023 - Workshop 1: Understanding the problem and who you will serve

Main topics: Problem statements, unseating tricky problems, creating a user persona

Facilitated by **Rebekah Emanuel**, Head of Social Entrepreneurship, Harvard Innovation Lab

Preparation for this meeting:

o Each student lists out the top 3 problems they believe drive the issue your group is trying to address

o Listen to 5 whys video: <https://hbr.org/video/2189146765001/5-whys>

o Listen to Sam Clemens video on minimum viable product and user

interviews: <https://vimeo.com/445594185>^[SEP]PW: Spring2020VP (assigned are minutes 22:48-53:04 Optional: minutes 12:30-on and 53:04 on)

o Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hla1jzhan78> (3 min video on the Mom Test) and read this blog post outlining practical tips from the Mom

Test <https://studiozao.com/resources/what-customer-discovery-questions-to-ask-to-validate-pain-points>

February 16, 2023 – 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

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

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.

Week 5

February 21, 2023 - Values and philosophies of giving.

This meeting 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

Giridharadas, Anand. "[Chapter 1](#): But how is the world changed?" Pp. 13-34 in *Winners take all: The elite charade of changing the world*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.

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.

Watch

"[The why and how of effective altruism](#)" – a TED talk by Peter Singer.

Recommended readings

Carnegie, Andrew. "The gospel of wealth" Pp. 14-49 in [The gospel of wealth, and other timely essays](#). Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran & company, inc., 1933.

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

February 23, 2023 - Workshop 2: Understanding community needs and active listening **Facilitated by Caitlin Schmid, Asst Director of Engaged Scholarship, Mindich Program**

Unit 2 – Making a good intervention.

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

Week 6 – February 28, 2023

We will tour **Widener Library** and examine how the Widener family gift to Harvard University continues to affect campus life. We will be meeting **Jehan Sinclair**, Anti-Black Racism Librarian and Archivist for Harvard Library, **Kristine Grieve**, Head of Teaching and Learning for Houghton Library, and **Kathleen Sheehan**, Research Librarian.

We will meet on Widener Library's front stairs at 8:55am sharp – please be on time!

Reading items for the 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).

March 2, 2023 – 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.

Recommended readings

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

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

Week 7 – March 7, 2023 - Workshop 3: Developing an elevator pitch and thinking through the lean canvas

Facilitated by **Rebekah Emanuel**, Head of Social Entrepreneurship, Harvard Innovation Lab

In preparation for this week:

- Watch Elevator Pitch: <https://vimeo.com/481276132/1082c0144d> (minutes 0-9:20)
- Read Lean Canvas for Nonprofits: <https://blog.leanstack.com/why-and-how-to-model-a-non-profit-on-the-lean-canvas/>
- Attempt to make a 1 liner that fits the form “For [user] who has [x problem] we [what you do]”
 - Hint: Try to use the 3 negative adjectives from workshop 1 with Rebekah for the problem, and the 3 positive adjectives for what you do.
- Attempt to fill in Lean Canvas boxes in this order:
 - First fill this out for the Beneficiaries. Fill out first the 1. problem (think: 3 negative adjectives) 2. customer segment (think: your persona) 3. solution (think: 3 positive adjectives) 4. unique value proposition
- Read this power point on [when your user is not your payor](#). Think about who might pay.
 - Then model for the funder/donor. Fill out first the 1. problem 2. customer segment 3. Unique value proposition 4. solution

March 9, 2023 – 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.

Students will complete an online module about the IRS-990 in preparation for our March 9 meeting.

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.

Skim the [IRS form 990](#) and familiarize yourself with the Chronicle of Philanthropy [“Mining the 990”](#) toolkit.

Week 8 – March 21 and 23, 2023 - 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 meetings, 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.

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 – March 28, 2023 - Workshop 4: Developing hypotheses and testing demands

Facilitated by **Rebekah Emanuel**, Head of Social Entrepreneurship, Harvard Innovation Lab
In preparation for our workshop...

- Update the elevator pitch and lean canvas
- Make a list of the top 5 “throw in the towel” risks—eg “People don’t want to use this” “I can’t get money for this” etc
- Listen to the “Easiest Ways to Test User Demand” <https://vimeo.com/523944821/636ff5e35a>
- Come up with 2 ways to test one of your top risks, using suggestions from the video

March 30, 2023 – In-class feedback on lean canvas

Week 10 – April 4, 2023 - 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 and how philanthropists further their political agendas through donation. 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.

Recommended:

Farrell, Justin. "[The growth of climate change misinformation in US philanthropy: evidence from natural language processing.](#)" *Environmental Research Letters* 14, no. 3 (2019): 1-10.

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.

Week 11 – April 11, 2023 - 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.

Anderson, James D. [The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935](#). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014: 238-278.

Listen

Podcast: *Diversity and Philanthropy at African American Museums: Black Renaissance*, by Patricia A. Banks, on [New Books Network](#).

April 13, 2023 – Visit to the Harvard Athletics Department

Meeting with **Jennifer Downing**, Associate Director of Development - Major Gifts at the Harvard Athletics Department.

Week 12 – April 18, 2023 – Hearing from course alumni

April 20, 2023 – 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." Pp. 93-120 in [Caring capitalism: The meaning and measure of social value](#). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016. (Also recommended "Just good business: Responsible investment," pp. 147-174).

Recommended

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

Unit 4: Decision-making.

Week 13 – April 25 and 27, 2023 - Group presentations.

We will hear from students on April 25 about the nonprofits they have evaluated and on April 27

about their own nonprofit ventures. After each session, students will allocate funding to nonprofits and to student ventures by vote.

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