

PUBPOL 475: Philanthropic Foundations in the Public Arena
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy
Winter Semester 2014

Contact information

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Class schedule

Tuesdays, 8:30-11.30 AM
Location: Weill Hall 1230

Course overview

Private philanthropic foundations in the U.S. have long played central roles in advancing social change and shaping policy priorities, while simultaneously being relatively unconstrained by democratic accountability mechanisms. While this autonomy allows foundations to innovate, experiment and take risks that may lead to effective policy outcomes, it has also historically led to normative concerns about the power of private wealth within the public realm.

The core framework of the course will engage with these questions by utilizing an experiential approach, wherein students will participate in a hands-on process of making actual grants to nonprofit organizations. The Once Upon A Time Foundation has provided a grant of \$50,000 that the class will allocate as a course-long project, directly applying the concepts discussed during class through a practical lens. Students will determine the mission and objective of the funding based on students' values; the organization(s) to which funding will be allocated; the number of and size of the gift(s) that will be made; how the gift(s) will be awarded; and how the impact of the gift(s) will be evaluated and assessed.

The course is open to undergraduates from all departments at the University of Michigan.

Because this is a new course on a timely topical matter, the syllabus is likely to undergo some iteration based on responsiveness to student interests, direction of discussion, and current events, and the instructor reserves the right to make reasonable changes to the syllabus throughout the course of the semester, with appropriate notice to students.

Grading and assignments

Students will be evaluated based on their performance in five areas of the course.

- Beginning reflection memo: 10%
- Concluding reflection memo: 10%
- Blog posts: 15%
- Class participation (discussion contributions and preparation): 30%
- Class project: 35%
 - Two presentations in teams of four people: 10% each (20% total)
 - Final group presentation: 15%

Reflection memos. At the outset of the course, students will compose 5 page memos that reflect upon their past experience with charity and philanthropy, the major issues that interest them, and the charitable and philanthropic organizations that they admire and why. At the end of the course, students will compose 10 page memos that reflect on their learning in the class, how the process of engaging in grantmaking contributed to their development, and their ideas regarding charitable and philanthropic engagement going forward after the class.

Blog posts. Each week, students will briefly respond to a blog prompt that will extend discussion outside of class, prime questions for a future session, or raise questions about relevant current events or news stories.

Class participation. The course is highly interactive and discussion-based, and as such, participation is a substantive component of students' experiences. Contributions in class should reveal a substantial familiarity with the assigned readings, a capacity to analyze the issues and problems under discussions, and an ability to incorporate, synthesize, and constructively criticize the comments of classmates.

Class project. Students will form teams of four people, each of which will meet outside of class to determine several nonprofit organizations to present as candidates for possible funding allocation. Teams will then formally present the following components to the class: A) the process by which they arrived at their decisions and B) a case for the organizations they chose. These mini-presentations, which should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length, will be made on February 11 and March 11. The teams will then make a final presentation on April 15, detailing their final recommendations regarding funding candidates and reporting on their experience with the funding exercise.

Course policies

- Students are expected to attend class regularly and on time, and to notify the instructor of all planned absences and late arrivals in advance.
- Paper extensions require prior arrangements with the instructor. There will be no exceptions to this policy, barring emergencies. Late papers will receive a deduction of one course grade per day.
- Students may use laptops and e-readers in class to take notes and access the course textbook, but no internet use is permitted in class.
- Students are expected to conduct themselves with academic honesty and integrity as established at http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/, particularly with regard to plagiarism.

Class schedule

All readings will either be posted on the course CTools website or are available online as indicated in the syllabus.

Tuesday, January 14. Introductions; overview of course structure; discussion of class values and priorities

- Fleishman, J. 2007. *Foundations: A Great American Secret*, pp. 1-45. New York: Public Affairs.

Tuesday, January 21. Charity vs. philanthropy

- Gross, R. 2003. "Giving in America: From charity to philanthropy." In Friedman, L. and McGarvie, M. (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Sealander, J. 2003. “Curing evils at their source: The arrival of scientific giving.” In Friedman, L. and McGarvie, M. (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Singer, P. 2006. “What should a billionaire give – and what should you?” *The New York Times*, December 17. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/17/magazine/17charity.t.html?pagewanted=all>.

Reflection memo due

Tuesday, January 28. Philanthropy and issues of democracy

- Reich, R. 2013. “What are foundations for?” (lead article and all responses). *Boston Review*, March 1. Available at <http://www.bostonreview.net/forum/foundations-philanthropy-democracy>

Tuesday, February 4. Locus of control: Case studies of philanthropy for the education of Black children and Give Directly

- Anderson, E. and Moss, A. 1999. Excerpt from *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930*.
- Walker, V. 1996. Excerpt from *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*.
- Listen to NPR’s *This American Life* 503, “I was just trying to help,” August 16, 2013, at <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/503/i-was-just-trying-to-help>
- Goldstein, J. 2013. “Is it nuts to give to the poor with no strings attached?” *The New York Times*, August 13. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/18/magazine/is-it-nuts-to-give-to-the-poor-without-strings-attached.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1

Tuesday, February 11. Philanthropy workshop: first round of team presentations; Midterm Student Feedback session

Tuesday, February 18. Philanthropic influence in policy: Case study of the Gates Foundation

- Gates, B. 2013. Annual letter from Bill Gates to Gates Foundation stakeholders. Available at <http://annualletter.gatesfoundation.org/>
- Reckhow, S. 2013. Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 in *Follow the Money: How Foundation Dollars Change Public School Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barkan, J. 2011. “Got Dough? How Billionaires Rule Our Schools.” *Dissent*, Winter.

Tuesday, February 25. Strategic and venture philanthropy: Case study of U.S. charter schools

- Letts, C., Ryan, W., and Grossman, A. 1997. “Virtuous capital: What foundations can learn from venture capitalists.” *Harvard Business Review*, March-April.
- Sievers, B. 1997. “If pigs had wings: The appeals and limits of venture philanthropy.” *Foundation News and Commentary* 38(6).
- Scott, J. 2009. “The politics of venture philanthropy in charter school policy and advocacy.” *Educational Policy* 23(106).

Tuesday, March 4. Spring break; no class

Tuesday, March 11. Philanthropy workshop: Second round of team presentations

Tuesday, March 18. Theories of change and strategic management: Case study of the Hewlett Foundation

- Mackinnon, A., N. Amott, and C. McGarvey. 2006. "Mapping Change: Using A Theory of Change To Guide Planning And Evaluation." *GrantCraft*.
- Excerpt from Anderson, A. "The Community Builder's Approach to 'Theory of Change.'" Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change.
- Arrillaga-Andreesen, L. 2006. "The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation." Stanford Graduate School of Business case, SI-63.

Tuesday, March 25. Measuring impact: Case study of the Robin Hood Foundation

- Ebrahim, A. and V.K. Ragnan. 2011. "The Limits Of Nonprofit Impact: A Contingency Framework For Measuring Social Performance." Harvard Business School working paper.
- Kramer, M. and R. Graves. 2005. "From insight to action: New directions in foundation evaluation." FSG Social Impact Advisors.
- Ebrahim, A. and C. Ross. 2011. "The Robin Hood Foundation." Harvard Business School case.

Tuesday, April 1. Accountability, collaboration and community responsiveness: Case study of the Meyer Foundation and Southern Partners Fund

- Silver, I. 2005. "Living up to the promise of collaboration: Foundations and community organizations as patterns in the revitalization of poor neighborhoods." In Faber, D. and D. McCarthy (2005). *Foundations for social change: Critical perspectives on philanthropy and popular movements*.
- Eikenberry, A. 2006. "Philanthropy, voluntary association, and governance beyond the state: Giving circles and challenges for democracy." *Administration and Society* 39(7).
- Arrillaga-Andreesen, L. 2010. "Burt and Mary Meyer Foundation and the Southern Partners Fund." Stanford Graduate School of Business case, SI-118.

Tuesday, April 8. Philanthropy and inequality

- Roelofs, J. 2005. "Liberal foundations: Impediments or supports for social change?" In Faber, D. and McCarthy, D. (eds.), *Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Buffett, P. 2013. "The charitable-industrial complex" (op-ed and responses in Letters). *The New York Times*, July 26. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/27/opinion/the-charitable-industrial-complex.html?_r=0 and <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/30/opinion/on-charity-doing-a-better-job-of-doing-good.html>
- Husock, H. 2013. "What Peter Buffett gets wrong about philanthropy." *Forbes*, July 27. Available online at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/howardhusock/2013/07/27/what-peter-buffet-gets-wrong-about-philanthropy/>
- Moskowitz, D. 2013. "Peter Buffett and the media-'Karpman Drama Triangle' complex." Available at <https://medium.com/i-m-h-o/625c1bf280c8>, July 29.

Tuesday, April 15. Final presentations, deliberation on funding decisions, voting on funding candidates

Tuesday, April 22. Concluding comments, presentation to grantee organizations and class celebration

Final reflection memos due