

SOC 131: PHILANTHROPY AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Fall 2016

Harvard Hall 103, Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2pm

Instructor(s): Shai Dromi

Course website:

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/14639>

Office Hours: Thu. 10:00am-11:30am at
Lamont Library Café or by appointment.

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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 and 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 corporate actors engage in philanthropic work.

As a culminating active learning exercise, 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 have a unique opportunity to 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.

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) examine nonprofits for financial health, transparency, and efficiency in order to make donation decisions.
- (d) evaluate the short- and long-term impact of a donation on a nonprofit organization.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance policy: Attendance in every meeting is mandatory. Please email me 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 of each week and

bringing it to class with you. Your active and engaged participation is crucial for the quality of our course.

Technology: Please do not use laptops or cellphones during class. Laptop and cellphone use during classes can cause distraction not only to yourselves, but also to students sitting around and behind you.

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

Communication: You are welcome to come to my office hours. The best way to reach me at other times is by email (smd327@fas.harvard.edu). I respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours over weekends. Please upload your assignments to Canvas (rather than emailing them to me).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Group assignment: memo #1 – due September 29, 2016. 10%

A 3-5 page double-spaced memo from each group describing group giving goals and philosophy, and relating them to at least two of the reading items from weeks 1-3.

Research paper proposal – due October 28, 2016 10%

Group assignment: memo #2 – due October 31, 2016. 10%

A 5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing the criteria used to finalize the decision, including a discussion of the charities 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. At least 3 of the reading items should be included substantially in the discussion.

Group assignment: presentation – November 22 or 29, 2016. 15%

A presentation that delivers detailed information about each group's top choice. Each student must play a role in the presentation and each student will be graded individually. Presentations should include:

- The general case for this type of charity
- Why you believe the organization you chose makes an impact in their field
- What gif size are you asking for, what restrictions (if any) are you suggesting, how will the budget fit into the organization's overall budget and activities, how will the money be used in order to make an impact.
- What would count as "success" in the case of your donation and what would indicate a successful intervention.

Research paper – due December 12, 2016. 35%

Analytic question – due on 5 weeks of your choice on Monday by 8pm. 10%

Students will formulate a one-paragraph *substantive* question about that week’s reading material and upload it to Canvas (under “assignments”) the day before the Tuesday class, by Monday at 8pm. Questions can take many directions. For example, they can point out some confusing aspect of the text, or inquire about the relationship between the text and an example from class or from your own experience.

Questions should include some contextualization (e.g., “Scholar A claims X but the example discussed in class actually demonstrates Y”; “Scholar B only discusses one type of examples but not others which may also be relevant”).

Specific understandability questions are always welcome and encouraged (e.g., “the concept on page x was not quite clear to me”), but they do not fulfill this requirement.

Students are required to send a question on at least 5 weeks of their choice out of the term.

Participation and attendance. 10%

The final grades will follow the College’s grading system:

A, Earned by work whose excellent quality indicates a full mastery of the subject and, in the case of the grade of A, is of extraordinary distinction.

B+, Earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student’s full engagement with the course requirements and activities.

C+, Earned by work that indicates an adequate and satisfactory comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and participating in class activities.

D+, Earned by work that is unsatisfactory but that indicates some minimal command of the course materials and some minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

E Earned by work which is unsatisfactory and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

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 must 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 9, 2016**. 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

Reading material is reserved at the library, and many of the items also are available electronically under "Library Reserves" on the course website. Direct links are provided on the syllabus where available.

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 1, 2016 – Introductions.

The first session will be devoted to introducing ourselves, setting course expectations, and providing key definitions that will be used throughout the course.

Unit 1: The sociology of philanthropy.

Week 1 - September 6 and 8, 2016 - The social meanings of giving.

In the first week, we will consider how charitable giving connects to broader social dynamics by relating several contemporary examples to readings in cultural and economic sociology.

For Sept. 6: Mauss, Marcel. *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. Translated by W. D. Halls. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2000.

Library reserves, and also available online: <https://libcom.org/files/Mauss%20-%20The%20Gift.pdf>

For Sept. 8: Zelizer, Viviana A. Rothman. "With strings attached: The earmarking of charitable cash." In *The social meaning of money*, 143-169. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997. Library reserves, and also under "Files".

Group activities

-By September 8 students should fill in their group preferences.

Week 2 - September 13 and 15, 2016 – Values and philosophies of giving.

This week we 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.

Schervish, Paul G. "Major donors, major motives: The people and purposes behind major gifts." *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, no. 47 (2005): 59-87.
Link available under "Library Reserves".

Lynn, Elizabeth, and D. Susan Wisely. "Four Traditions of Philanthropy." In *The Civically Engaged Reader*, edited by Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn, 210-217. Chicago, IL: The Great Books Foundation, 2006.
Available under "Files".

Singer, Peter. "What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?" *The New York Times Magazine*. December 17, 2006.
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/17/magazine/17charity.t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1

Group activities

-September 13 students will receive their group assignments and touch base to begin discussion of overall goals for giving.

Week 3 - September 20 and 22, 2016 – Contemporary approaches to charitable giving.

This week we will turn to contemporary approaches to the study of charity, nonprofits and philanthropy, and examine together key study cases.

Snell Herzog, Patricia and Heather Price. "Chapter 5: Giving Webs of Affiliations." in *American Generosity: Who Gives and Why?* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 212-272.
Available as e-book under "library reserves" and at this link: [View Online](#).

Recommended:

Hwang, Hokyū, and Walter W. Powell. "The Rationalization of Charity: The Influences of Professionalism in the Nonprofit Sector." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2009): 268-298.
[View Online](#)

Boris, Elizabeth T. and C. Eugene Steuerle. "Scope and dimensions of the nonprofit sector." In *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*, edited by Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg, 66-88. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2006.
Available under "files"

Group activities

-Groups continue discussion of overall giving goals.

Unit 2: The nonprofit sector-sociological and organizational perspectives.

Week 4 - September 27 and 29, 2016– Historical overview of the nonprofit sector.

In the fourth week, we will examine several historical moments in the development of the nonprofit sector and observe the social processes discussed last week in action.

Mohr, John W. and Vincent Duquenne. "The duality of culture and practice: Poverty relief in New York City, 1888—1917." *Theory & Society* 26, no. 2/3 (1997): pp. 305-356.

<http://link.springer.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/article/10.1023/A%3A1006896022092>

Huysen, David. "Chapter 5: The Business of Godly Charity; Chapter 6: Reaching Out to the Rich." In *Progressive inequality: Rich and Poor in New York, 1890-1920*, 89-122. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014.

Available under Files > Week 4

Recommended: Zunz, Olivier. "For the improvement of mankind." In *Philanthropy in America, a history*, 17-21. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2012.

Group activities

-By September 29 groups decide on their giving goals and philosophy.

- Each student is charged with finding three charitable organizations that meet the goals of the group.
- Students will need to compile some basic information about their three organizations before the next group meeting.

-Due September 29: a 3-5 page double-spaced memo from each group describing group giving goals and philosophy, and relating them to at least two of the reading items from weeks 1-3.

Week 5 - October 4 and 6, 2016 – Evaluating “public benefit”.

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. This week, 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.

<http://evi.sagepub.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/content/18/2/213>

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.

Available as e-book under “library reserves”.

Recommended: Friedman, Eric. "Chapter 10: Choosing a charity; Chapter 11: Project selection (or deciding not to select projects)." In *Reinventing philanthropy*, 105-127. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013.

Available as e-book under “library reserves”.

Week 6 – October 11 and 13, 2016 – 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.

Reich, Rob. "A failure of philanthropy: American charity shortchanges the poor, and public policy is partly to blame." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, no. Winter (2005): 24-33.
http://ssir.org/articles/entry/a_failure_of_philanthropy

Allard, Scott W. "Tackling today's poverty with yesterday's philanthropy." *The Avenue*. August 1, 2011. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/the-avenue/posts/2011/08/01-philanthropy-allard>

Amsterdam, Daniel. "The shortcomings of billionaire philanthropy." *The Atlantic*. December 5, 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/the-shortcomings-of-billionaire-philanthropy/418938/>

Reckhow, Sarah. "Can philanthropists engineer effective school reforms?" *Scholars Strategy Network*. December 2013. <http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/brief/can-philanthropists-engineer-effective-school-reforms>

Group activities

-By October 13 - Group meetings to narrow the organizations to be considered to 1 per member of the group.

- Should be based on criteria established by the group.
- Each organization is assigned to one member of the group for further study.

-A representative of each group should email me the list of organization assignments by October 13.

Week 7 – October 18 and 20, 2016 – 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. We will look closely at IRS form 990, which will be central to student groups' evaluation of potential beneficiaries.

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* published online before print, 2014.

<http://aas.sagepub.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/content/early/2014/09/03/0095399714548268>

Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. "Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony." In *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no 2 (1977): 340-363.

https://www2.bc.edu/~jonescq/mb851/Mar26/MeyerRowan_AJS_1977.pdf

Familiarize yourself with IRS form 990: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990.pdf>

*Read Philanthropy Lab grant letter (distributed in class).

Recommended Friedman, Eric. "The paucity of helpful information." In *Reinventing philanthropy*, 39-53. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013. Available as e-book under "library reserves".

Recommended Simon, John, Harvey Dale, and Laura Chisolm. "The federal tax treatment of charitable organizations." In *The nonprofit sector: A research handbook*, edited by Walter W. Powell and Richard Steinberg, 267-306. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2006.

Week 8 – October 25 and 27, 2016 – Volunteering.

While most of our course discussion covers monetary donation, we will also consider other ways of donating. This week we will examine why and how people volunteer, as well as the wider-scale outcomes of volunteer work.

Eliasoph, Nina. "Introduction, chapters 1,2, 6, and conclusion." In *Making Volunteers: Civic Life after Welfare's End*, ix-xviii, 1-47, 231-259. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011. Available as e-book under "library reserves".

Recommended: Friedman, Eric. "Volunteering and other ways of donating yourself." In *Reinventing philanthropy: A framework for more effective giving*, 128-139. Lincoln, Nebraska: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2013. Available as e-book under "library reserves".

-Due October 28 – research paper proposal.

Unit 3: Nonprofits and their relations with politics, business, and entertainment.

Week 9 – November 1 and 3, 2016 – Nonprofits and advocacy.

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.

Chaves, Mark, Laura Stephens, and Joseph Galaskiewicz. "Does Government Funding Suppress Nonprofits' Political Activity?" *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 2 (2004): 292-316. <http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/docview/218823003/fulltext/41D2A8F69E8C4791PQ/1?accountid=11311>

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 10 – November 8 and 10, 2016 - 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.

Barman, Emily. "Morals and finance: Socially responsible investing" and "Just good business: Responsible investment." In *Caring capitalism: The meaning and measure of social value*, 93-120, 147-174. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2016.
Available as e-book under "library reserves".

Schulman, Dan. "Time to democratize the banking system." *CNBC*. July 21, 2015.
<http://www.cnbc.com/2015/07/21/paypal-ceo-time-to-democratize-the-banking-system-commentary.html>

Group activities

-By November 2 - Groups decide on their finalist charity

-Due November 2 – a 5-page double-spaced memo from each group describing the criteria used to finalize the decision, including a discussion of the charities 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. At least 3 of the reading items should be included substantially in the discussion

Over the next weeks, groups organize due diligence research, further data collection, and tasks for group members. Each group will undertake serious study of their selected charity.

- All aspects of the organization – mission, program effectiveness, capacity of management and board to lead the organization, fiscal strength, etc. must be considered.
- Students will evaluate the charities using the tools learned in class
- Students will need to interview a representative from the charity (face-to-face or over skype)

Week 11 – November 15 and 17, 2016 - Philanthropy, entertainment, and recreation.

Appeals for donations are often endorsed by celebrities, communicated by social media, and organized in the form of recreation activities. This week we will discuss philanthropy in the context of entertainment and recreation.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. "The Celebrity-Icon." *Cultural Sociology* 4, no. 3 (2010): 323-336.
<http://cus.sagepub.com/content/4/3/323.short>

Hart-Brinson, Peter. "New ways of bowling together?" *Contexts* 10, no. 4 (2011): 28-33.
<https://contexts.org/articles/new-ways-of-bowling-together/>

Lewis, Kevin, Kurt Gray, and Jens Meierhenrich. "The structure of online activism." *Sociological Science* 1, no. February (2014): 1-9.
<https://www.sociologicalscience.com/structure-online-activism/>

Mitchell, Katharyne. "Celebrity humanitarianism, transnational emotion, and the rise of

neoliberal citizenship.” *Global Networks* 16, no. 3 (2016): 288-306.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1111/glob.12114/asset/glob12114.pdf?v=1&t=irw80fvk&s=5076db5f98b816cf26fd379357babb22e26edfb8>

Daniels, Alex, and Anu Narayanswamy. "Online Giving Grows More Sophisticated." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. May 18, 2014. <https://philanthropy.com/article/Online-Giving-Grows-Up/150541>

Unit 4: Decision-making and vote.

Week 12 – November 22 and 29, 2016 - Student presentations.

Presentations will provide the class with detailed information for each group's top choice.

Wrap up and vote – December 1, 2016.

In our last meeting, the class will be voting on the amounts of money to give to each of the charities.

-Due December 9 – Research paper.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Philanthropy Lab. An organization that funds philanthropy education activities -- including the grant associated with this course. Includes information about other grants and initiatives available to students. <https://www.thephilanthropylab.org/>

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

Guidestar. Provides basic data about nonprofits and their financial information. www.guidestar.org

GiveWell. Provides in-depth information and recommendations about charities. www.givewell.org

Giving What We Can. Charity reviews and recommendations. www.givingwhatwecan.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