

Brown University
Non Profit Organizations (PPAI 1700V S01)
Course Syllabus & Outline Spring 2009

PP1700V

Nonprofit Organizations

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Course Overview

At a time when the competence and relevance of all types of institutions are being called into question, this course will look at what is sometimes referred to as the “third sector,” the nonprofit organization. The role of these institutions is pervasive in contemporary American society. The course will focus on institutions within this sector that develop and build communities and shape public policy. Over the past two decades, many more community-based nonprofits, such as community development corporations (CDCs), coalitions and local grassroots advocacy organizations have assumed prominent roles. The course will focus on what is necessary for a nonprofit agency to be a high performing organization and on models of nonprofit practice that are successful and achieve impact.

The course will begin by examining trends and issues impacting this sector and its role, including a critical look at the growth and role of nonprofit institutions, their relevance and whether they are organized appropriately and have the flexibility and temperament to take on significant issues and problems. The course will proceed to examine the fundamental principles and practices which when applied have contributed to high performance. Included will be building communities by building social capital, strategies used in community development, the power of data and strategic alliances in influencing public policy, community organizing to empower communities and their residents to enhance self-determination and self sufficiency, building organizational capacity, relations between nonprofits and government and nonprofits and for-profits, and the influence and impatience of the charitable donor who is asking for more accountability and documented results on the impact of their investments.

Seminar discussion will often be based on case studies on nonprofit practice. Using these cases, related readings and other resources students will be encouraged to examine critically the contemporary role of nonprofits and to identify those new or modified principles, practices and strategies which significantly improve the impact of these institutions. As well, students will be encouraged to determine characteristics of these institutions which need revision and reform. They will be encouraged to detail these gaps and inefficiencies and conceptualize new models which “connect the dots” in a systems approach to community and policy change.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

- Appreciate the growth of nonprofit institutions, their role in shaping public policy and building communities, including trends and issues that shape their impact.
- Identify principles which are fundamental to the role of successful nonprofits in changing community conditions and public policy.

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- Compare and contrast interventions and strategies used by nonprofit institutions to change communities and public policy.
- Analyze the community systems within which nonprofits operate, the strategic relationships they establish and the social capital they build within these systems.
- Examine the role of selected nonprofit institutions have to enhance the self-sufficiency of individuals and communities.
- Interpret how the expectations of government, corporations, foundations and individual donors for concrete measurable results are impacting the management and governance of nonprofits.
- Synthesize models of high performing nonprofits based on a critical analysis of models of practice which are reviewed throughout the course. Identify a mix of principles, standards and strategies which should characterize the nonprofit and which would increase the impact these organizations can have in communities and in shaping policies of the future.

Teaching Methods

This course is built on a seminar format which is designed to integrate theory and practice through class discussion. It will feature case studies, lectures, readings, student presentations, videos and discussions with nonprofit leaders.

Required Texts

Letts, C., Ryan, W., Grossman, A. *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Great Impact*. Wiley. 1999

Schorr, Lisbeth B. *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*. New York. Anchor. 1997

Wagner, David. *What's Love Got to Do with It? A Critical Look at American Charity*. New York. W.W. Norton & Company. 2000

Tough, Paul. *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*. Boston. Houghton Mifflin Company. 2008

Crutchfield, Leslie, Grant, Heather. *Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass. 2008

Assignments

Students will be required to post in weekly discussion forums, prepare as part of a group a paper and related presentation and complete a mid-term and a final case analysis. Details of these assignments will be covered in class.

Grading

Grades will be based on: class participation (15%), completion of the paper/presentation critically examining nonprofits (30%), weekly postings (15%) and a mid-term (20%) and final (20%) case analysis assignment.

Session 1: Overview and Introduction (January 21, 2009)

The course will begin with a critical look at the role of nonprofits in American society. Key issues and questions to be examined in these sessions and throughout the course:

- Are nonprofits really grounded in communities?
- Which nonprofit role has a greater impact: dispensing charity or promoting justice and promoting sustainable change?
- Nonprofits: Are they effective. Are they relevant?
- Are there too many nonprofits?
- How significant is the impact of nonprofits?
- Are nonprofits in the best position to impact communities and policies or should some other institution undertake this task?
- Are nonprofits controlled by government?
- Are nonprofits flexible enough to meet future challenges?
- What role do members of a community play in advancing nonprofit agendas?
- What interactions with corporate leaders do nonprofits need to engage in to create and sustain community change?

Session 2 High Impact Nonprofit Organizations (January 28, 2009):

The next two sessions will continue to establish a foundation for the seminar (Salamon and Poppendieck) and look at those practices that characterize nonprofits (*Forces for Good*) that are having a significant impact on the lives of those in need. Increasingly, as we will see later in the seminar, donors are giving high marks to those nonprofits that are achieving impact.

Required Readings:

Case: *Larkin Street Youth Services, The Bridgespan Group, 2005.*

Crutchfield and Grant, *Forces for Good*, Introduction, Chapters 1,2,3,4 & 5, pp 1-128.

Salamon, Lester, *The Resilient Sector: the State of Nonprofit America*. The State of Nonprofit America. Lester Salamon:

[http://www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7BDEB6F227-659B-4EC8-8F84-8DF23CA704F5%7D/SOS%20-%20Chapter%201%20Highlights%20Overview%20\(09-10.02%20Snapshots\).pdf](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7BDEB6F227-659B-4EC8-8F84-8DF23CA704F5%7D/SOS%20-%20Chapter%201%20Highlights%20Overview%20(09-10.02%20Snapshots).pdf)

Poppendieck, Janet. *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*. New York. Viking Penguin. 1998. 256-287

Session 3: High Impact Nonprofit Organizations – Continued (February 4, 2009):

Required Readings:

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Case: *The Justice Project: Using Urban Planning to Increase the Impact of Advocacy*. The
Bridgespan Group, 2008

Crutchfield and Grant, *Forces for Good*, Chapters 6, 7, 8, & 9, pp. 129-207

Stanford Social Innovation Review, spring, 2008:
- Neuhoff, Alex and Searle, Robert, *More Bang for the Buck*,
- Foster, William and Fine, Gail, *How Nonprofits Get Really Big*

Session 4: Building Communities: the Harlem Children's Zone (February 11, 2009)

This session will examine a nonprofit organization, the Harlem Children's Zone. President Obama during his campaign took note of the role this nonprofit is playing in revitalizing an urban neighborhood. We will take a critical look at how this organization operates and examine what appears to be working and areas that might need improvement.

Required Readings:

Case: Tough, *Whatever It Takes, Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, pp 1-267

Session 5: Children & Families: Building a Shared Vision for Achieving Impact (February 18, 2009)

This session will look at the ambitious agenda of Lisbeth Schorr which focuses on expanding and building on what works for children and families. Discussion will center on strategies to significantly impact community problems and why society does not do more to replicate and expand programs which have proven records of success.

Required Readings:

Case: *Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BAYCES)*, The Bridgespan Group, 2005

Schorr: Part One, *Spreading and Sustaining Success*. 3-154.

RI Kids Count Issue Briefs:

Issue Brief: Building Better Lives for Youth Leaving Foster Care, May 2006

Issue Brief: Child Poverty in Rhode Island, September 2007

Session 6: A Higher Standard for Nonprofits: Building Value and Capacity (February 25, 2009)

Discussion in the next two sections will focus on identifying those principles, standards and practices which could significantly enhance the value, role and impact of those nonprofits. Characteristics of high performing organizations will be examined. Discussion questions will include: What standards currently guide nonprofits? Should nonprofits be held to a higher standard of accountability similar to new standards of accountability now required of the profit-

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making corporation? How do the underlying principles of individual nonprofits inform the development of their missions? Are nonprofits' programs and practices aligned with their mission and what impact does the degree of alignment have on their success in meeting their goals.

Case: In class case.

Required Readings:

High Performance Nonprofit Organizations, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4; pp 1-83

Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice: A Guide for Charities and Foundations *Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, Independent Sector, October 2007*

Session 7: A Higher Standard for Nonprofits: Building Value and Capacity - Continued (March 4, 2009)

Required Readings:

Case: American Red Cross

- Democratic Staff of the US House Committee on Homeland Security, Trouble Exposed: Katrina, Rita & the Red Cross: A Familiar History
- NYT articles on Red Cross

High Performance Nonprofit Organizations, Chapters 5, 6, 7, pp 85-143

Bradley, Bill, Jensen, Paul, Silverman, Les. *The Nonprofit Sector's \$100 Billion Opportunity*. Harvard Business Review. May 1, 2003

Session 8: The Engaged and Impatient Donor (March 11, 2009)

March 11, 2009: Mid-Term Case Analysis Due

These two sessions will look at news trends in philanthropy and the changing relationship donors seek with nonprofits. Increasingly, donors want to be engaged in their funding of nonprofits, have a role in how their contributions are used and see that their contributions have positive impact. Discussion will focus on how results can be measured and what information matters to donors. Also, does the highly engaged funder have a more positive impact on the institution funded than the more passive giver? Donor rules and regulations: more or less, what works best? Why are donors impatient? Given all that has been invested in services to date, why have community conditions been slow to change? What changes do nonprofits have to make (to program, staff, boards) to meet the changing demands of donors? How is technology impacting philanthropy?

Case Study: The Social Sector Entrepreneurship Foundation and the Citizens Homeless Initiative Part (A) Executive Director Anton Williams (Case # 1563.0) & Part (B) Business Director

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Wendy Milner (Case #1564.0), Kennedy School of Government Cases. Kennedy School of
Government Case: www.ksgcase.harvard.edu

Required Reading:

Wagner, *What's Love Got to do with It?* 1-180

Session 9: The Engaged and Impatient Donor – Continued (March 18, 2009)

Required Readings:

Case: Bruck, Connie. *Millions for Millions*, The New Yorker, October 30, 2006.

High Performance Nonprofit Organizations, Chapter 9; pp 169-191

“This is not Charity: How Bill Clinton, Ira Magaziner, and a team of management consultants are creating new markets, reinventing philanthropy and trying to save the world.” The Atlantic. October 2007.

The Economist. *The business of giving: a survey of wealth and philanthropy*. February 25, 2006. (special section)

Looking Out for the Future: An Orientation for 21st Century Philanthropists (executive summary)

Porter, Michael and Kramer, Mark. *Philanthropy's New Agenda: Creating Value*, Harvard Business Review. November-December, 1999: 121-130

Bono: Commencement Speech at U Penn 5/17/04

Traub, James. The Statesman, New York Times Magazine, September 18, 2005

West, Darrell, *Angelina, Mia and Bono: Celebrities and International Development*

Session 10: Leveraging Power, Partnerships and Information to Impact Public Policy – Making It Work (April 1, 2009)

The next two sessions will examine nonprofits as agents of policy change. It will look at the role power, partnerships and information have in influencing this change. Focus in session #11 will be on the collective broad-based action which resulted in the Rhode Island Family Assistance Act of 1996, judged by many to be one of the most progressive welfare reform laws in the country. The theoretical framework of this bill will be examined (Session #10) in a review of community-based programs which promoted self-sufficiency for poor displaced workers, known as *Making It Work*. Questions for discussion will include: do partnerships really work? What are the ingredients of successful collaborations and partnerships? What are the most effective strategies in dealing with a legislative body?

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Required Readings:

Final *Making It Work* Report

Session 11: Leveraging Power, Partnerships and Information to Impact Public Policy – The Family Assistance Act of 1996 (April 8, 2009)

Required Readings:

Case: Anton, T., Combs, J., Francis, R. & Sharkey, P. *Against the Tide: Welfare Reform in Rhode Island*. Alfred Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions. Providence, R.I., 2001, pp. 1-10

Christner, A., *Rhode Island's Family Independence Act: Research Demonstrates Wisdom of Putting Families First*. RI Department of Human Services, United Way of Southeastern New England & Rhode Island College School of Social Work. Providence, RI. 2002

Issue Brief, Welfare Reform: How Will We Know If It's Good for Children? Providence, RI. Rhode Island Kids Count. 1995

Sessions 12: “Connecting the Dots”: A Design for the Future (April 15, 2009)

This session will bring into focus recommendations for revision and reform of nonprofits based on analysis done throughout this course. What works and what needs to change? What new models would have a more significant impact on communities and policy? What is the appropriate mix of strategies, procedures and practices to significantly enhance the impact of the nonprofit of the future?

Required Readings:

Case: Ellis, Caroline, *Communities and Banking, Thinking Holistically: Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation*, Fall 2005, 14-17.

Schorr, Chapter 9: *Synergy: Putting It All Together to Transform Neighborhoods*. 301-385

High Performance Nonprofit Organizations, Chapter 10; pp 193-202

Sessions 13 & 14 (April 22, 2009 and April 29, 2009)

Groups will make presentations. Last part of session 14 will feature a wrap-up discussion on the semester.

May 11, 2009, 5PM: Final case analysis due.

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