Contact information

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Office hours: Thursdays, 1-3 PM (sign up in advance at http://tinyurl.com/METSofficehours)

Class schedule

Thursdays, 8:30 AM-11:30 AM (class begins on Michigan time at 8:40)
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, a role that has historically created controversy about the power of private wealth within the public realm. The core framework of this course engages with these questions, considering the respective roles of philanthropy and of the state in determining the public good.

The course utilizes 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.

Grading

Students will be evaluated based on their performance in three areas of the course:

- Written process journals: 30% (10% for each installment)
- In-class participation (discussion contributions and preparation): 50%
- Final reflection: 20%

Assignments

Written process journals. Students will keep journals of their reactions to the grantmaking process, and will submit them at three intervals during the semester, as noted on the syllabus. These journals are intended to be predominantly a formative tool, enabling students to process their reactions, emotions, and reflections during the course of the semester in a concrete manner, and recording these written observations in order to serve the creation of final reflections. Students are expected to regularly write about their reactions to the process, questions they may have, and ideas to share with classmates.

Class participation. The course is highly interactive and discussion-based, and as such, participation is a significant and crucial 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. Students are expected to read all the readings assigned for every class session and to actively
engage in all in-class exercises, which will include small-group work as well as larger-group discussions
and debates.

Grantmaking project. On the first day of class, students will form small teams, which will meet outside
of class on a weekly basis to discuss their values and interests and to research organizations for the class
to consider as possible grantees. The teams will present the outcomes of these discussions in a first round
of full class deliberation, which will occur on February 25. The teams will then re-form and repeat the
process of discussion and research for the second half of the term, which will be presented in final full
class deliberations on April 7.

Final reflection. Students will compose 15-20 page papers 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. Students are expected to integrate
and apply the relevant readings and conceptual material discussed in class in order to contextualize these
analyses. The instructor will provide samples of papers completed by former students.

Unless otherwise stated in class, written assignments are to be completed in Times New Roman 12
point font, double-spaced, and submitted to Drop Box on CTools in Word format.

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, barring emergencies. Students who have more than
one unexcused absence will relinquish their spaces in the class. Instances of lateness to class of
more than 15 minutes, again barring emergencies, will be counted as unexcused absences.
Students must be present on the first day of class in order to remain enrolled, except by prior
arrangement with the instructor.
- 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,
and papers that are more than two days late will not be accepted.
- Laptops are not permitted in class, except when accommodations are necessary for students’
learning. Accommodations should be arranged with the instructor in advance of the course with
appropriate documentation.
- Students are expected to conduct themselves with academic honesty and integrity as established at
http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/ and at
http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations, which details the Ford School’s formal
policies.
- The instructor reserves the right to make reasonable changes to the syllabus throughout the course
of the semester, with appropriate notice to students, in the event of timely news developments that
may align with relevant topics under discussion. As such, students should rely on the copy of the
syllabus that will be posted and updated regularly on CTools.
All readings will either be posted on the course CTools website or are available online as indicated in the syllabus.

Week 1. Thursday, January 7. Introductions and overview of course
No readings

Week 2: Thursday, January 14. Charity vs. philanthropy
Readings:

Week 3. Thursday, January 21. Philanthropy and values: Instrumental vs. expressive giving
Readings:

Week 4. Thursday, January 28. Strategic philanthropy and technical vs. adaptive approaches to grantmaking
Readings:
Process journals due

Week 5. Thursday, February 4. Philanthropy and inequality: Charity vs. justice

Readings:


Week 6. Thursday, February 11. Philanthropy and democracy

Readings:


Week 7. Thursday, February 18. Locus of control in philanthropy: GiveDirectly

Readings:

- Peruse http://www.givewell.org/international/top-charities/give-directly
- This American Life 503, “I was just trying to help,” August 16, 2013. Listen to the radio programme at http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/503/i-was-just-trying-to-help
Process journals due

Week 8. Thursday, February 25. Full class discussion; first round of grantmaking decisions


Week 10. Thursday, March 10. Foundations and public partnerships: Detroit bankruptcy and the Detroit Art Institute

Readings:
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Week 11. Thursday, March 17. The supply side: Altruism and the “warm glow” of philanthropy

Readings:

Week 12. Thursday, March 24. Measuring impact; case study of the Robin Hood Foundation

Readings:
• Pallotta, D. 2013. “The way we think about charity is dead wrong.” TED (watch the talk online at http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wrong?language=en)

**Process journals due**

**Week 13. Thursday, March 31. Accountability, collaboration and community responsiveness: Case study of the Meyer Foundation and Southern Partners Fund**

**Readings:**

**Week 14. Thursday, April 7. Full class discussion; final grantmaking deliberations**

**Week 15. Thursday, April 14. Selection of grantees and class celebration (brunch at instructor’s home)**

**Final reflections due**