SOC 143a: Social Justice and Philanthropy  
Sociology Department, Brandeis University  
Fall 2013

Instructor: Rebecca Riccio  
email: rriccio@brandeis.edu  
phone (cell): 617-795-9504  

TA: Rachel Mayo  
email: rachel.m.mayo@gmail.com

Class time: Tuesday 5 – 7:50 p.m.  
Office hours: Tuesday 4- 5:00 p.m. or by appointment

Class location: Pearlman 202  
Office location: Pearlman 208

Course Description

This course provides students an opportunity to learn about philanthropy and its place in American society. An academic framework grounded in sociological theory and a semester-long experiential learning exercise in grantmaking enable students to explore philanthropy from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The course will address individual, institutional, and societal-level factors that affect philanthropic efforts to create social change. Social justice will serve as an overarching theme to guide this inquiry.

Philanthropy may sound simple and attractive, but it is in fact very difficult to do well. Effective giving requires a deep understanding of complex social issues and community dynamics as well as the ability to look at them from others’ perspectives, a willingness to take calculated risks, and a tolerance for ambiguity.

This course will use theories from sociology to explore debates about roles, responsibilities, and trends in philanthropy as they relate to issues of social justice. Important concepts from social movement theories such as movement emergence and social networks will be explored. Organizational theories will also be used to understand issues such as resource dependency and isomorphism. Political sociology concepts will be drawn upon to better understand the ways in which philanthropy can influence policy.

The experiential component of this course will enable students to explore the theoretical concepts’ relationship to practice as they engage in their community as grantmakers. They will be expected to organize themselves, their priorities, and their process. They will also decide on selection criteria, evaluate organizations, debate the merits of different qualities, and finally come to a decision about which organizations to fund. Group dynamics and individual leadership skills will also be discussed as important aspects of the experiential portion of the course. Through readings and group activities, students will learn how to negotiate, reach consensus, and execute the plan they design.

Strategic grantmaking requires a skills set including negotiation (with grant seekers as well as family or foundation board members, who will be represented by classmates), research, relationship building, selection and investigation skills, critical thinking and analysis, and decision making. Evaluating applications challenges one’s values and helps clarify and sharpen one’s goals and objectives. The grantmaking process for this course calls upon students to develop and use all these skills.
Course Objectives

- To engage students theoretically and practically in the sociological, social, cultural, organizational, political, and strategic dynamics of social change and philanthropy.

- To challenge students to consider how they as individuals are influenced by political, geographic, economic, cultural, social, and family factors and to reflect on, articulate, and explain their own belief systems.

- To provide students with a rich understanding of the role that philanthropy plays in the United States and the complex relationships between social institutions, including nonprofit organizations, government, and philanthropy.

- To engage students in service to their community through a grant making experience designed to provide a deeper understanding of societal issues and encourage leadership, critical thinking, and effective communication. Through this experience students can assimilate and put into practice the knowledge and ideas gained through readings and academic discourse.

Course Structure

During the first class, the instructor will lay out the expectations and tasks of the course, which include the assimilation of reading materials, critical analysis of the field of philanthropy and its role in social change, active participation in the discussion and development of a strategy, policies, and procedures for awarding one or more grants, and completion of written assignments, as described below. Subsequent classes will consist of discussion of background readings, group decision making about the grantmaking process, and the implementation of tasks associated with the grantmaking.

Part of each class period will be dedicated to the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of readings. The remainder will be dedicated to the experiential component of the course, which will include guest speakers and other activities to prepare students to make grants with a social justice lens. Students will rotate responsibility for serving as the chair of the board and taking notes as the secretary each week. These positions will rotate and will be established during the first week, depending on the size of the group.

Course Requirements

Attendance: Due to the experiential nature of this course, it is critical that students attend all sessions. If you need to miss a course meeting, prior arrangements should be made with the instructor.

Participation: Active participation in classroom discussion and group decision making is essential. The quality and quantity of participation will be assessed by the instructor and by classmates.

Preparation: All readings and assignments must be completed on time. With the exception of the two required books, all readings can be found posted on LATTE. The background they provide is critical to a successful, informed, and shared process. Within the experiential portion of the course, the group will
collectively define and decide how to approach each task, delegate assignments, and set timelines for completion. Group members will be depending on each other and holding each other accountable. Independent research on various aspects of grant making and the nonprofit sector is likely to be required to complete some tasks.

Professionalism: Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of professionalism when interacting with grantees and conducting site visits and to respect the confidentiality of the applicants and their clients.

**Assignments and Grading**

Both individual and group work will be assessed for grading purposes. Assignments must be completed on time. Any late assignments will be reduced one letter grade for the first 24 hours and another letter grade for each subsequent day late. Extensions will only be given in the event of an extreme, documented family or personal emergency.

Due to the experiential nature of this course, use of technology will be restricted during class times in order to avoid distractions. Laptops will not be allowed unless the instructor grants special permission. Cell phones and other devices must be silenced or turned off.

Grades will be based on the following assignments and responsibilities:

**Class participation: 15%**
Active participation in this experiential learning opportunity is essential. Students will be expected to actively engage in discussion, incorporate readings into their process, and work together with peers. Participation in the discussion of other students’ Philanthropy in the News articles (see below) counts toward the class participation grade, so students are expected to read those articles in advance.

**Reflection Papers: 20%**
Due dates: Sept. 24, Oct. 29, Dec. 3
Students will be expected to write three brief reflection papers on assigned topics over the course of the semester. These papers will provide an opportunity for self-reflection and will challenge students to think critically about what they are learning. Incorporation of readings is required in reflection papers with credit being given for appropriate and insightful references to concepts, arguments, and perspectives from readings.

**Philanthropy in the News: 10%**
Due date: as assigned
One to two students each week will be asked to present a current philanthropic news story. Students will be expected to submit to the professor a one-paragraph synopsis of their news by 5pm the day before their presentations. Students are also required to post their news story or article on LATTE by 5pm the day before their presentations so their peers have adequate time to read them in advance.
Case Study and Presentation: 30%  
Subject selection due: October 1  
Case study due: November 19  
Presentations: November 19 and 26

Students will write a 10-page midterm case study on a foundation or philanthropist of their choice. Students will identify their subject and write a one-paragraph summary in advance. No duplicates will be allowed. The case study will need to incorporate analysis from readings in the course. Students will give a 5-minute presentation on their subject.

Final Group Product and Presentation: 25%  
December 3

Each group will be required to create a single binder which comprehensively compiles all of their information to tell the story of how they developed their granting decisions. The group’s product will be equivalent to a final paper. During the last class each group will be asked to present their final products and decisions.

Academic Integrity

If a student violates university policies on academic integrity as stipulated in Section Four of Rights and Responsibilities (attached), s/he could fail an assignment, the course, and/or be suspended from the University. Please read the handbook for definitions of plagiarism.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible.

If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x6-3470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu.)

Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Course Materials

*Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements* Edited by Daniel Farber and Deborah McCarthy

*Money for Change: Social Movement Philanthropy at Haymarket People’s Fund* by Susan Ostrander

Assigned articles will be posted on LATTE.
## Weekly Topics, Readings, and Assignments

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments due for this class</th>
<th>Grant making activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 3</td>
<td>Introductions, Course Overview</td>
<td>In class, students will break into grant making teams based on general interests, review past grant making materials, set up a Google Docs site, and begin developing operating procedures and a grant making system.</td>
<td>Brainstorm desirable attributes and practices of foundations and nonprofit organizations; propose mission and funding priorities; begin creating grant making system.</td>
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<td><strong>Assignment due (ungraded):</strong> Use melissadata.com (<a href="http://www.melissadata.com/lookups/np.asp">www.melissadata.com/lookups/np.asp</a>) and <a href="http://www.guidestar.org">http://www.guidestar.org</a> to learn as much as you can about nonprofit organizations in Waltham in preparation for choosing this semester’s funding priorities.</td>
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<td>Sept. 17</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>Declare your case study subject online.</td>
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*Drowning in Paperwork, Distracted from Purpose: Challenges and Opportunities in Grant Applications and Reporting*, by Project Streamline. Downloadable from: [http://www.projectstreamline.org/](http://www.projectstreamline.org/)


**Recommended:** *Giving USA 2013 Report Highlights*  

**Reflection 1 due:** Coming into class, what was your perception of philanthropy’s role in society? Now that you have been given $10,000 to award to a local nonprofit organization, what, if any, responsibilities do you feel you have as a philanthropist?

Case study subject due: One paragraph describing the foundation you have chosen to research. | Finalize applicant pool, RFP, and cover letter; submit to Rebecca for approval before release; submit applicant contact information to Rachel. |
| Oct. 4 | RFP RELEASED | Release RFP with cover letter from Rebecca. |
| Oct. 8 | NO CLASS (Brandeis Day) |  |
| Oct. 15 | Donor Motivation | “Major Donors, Major Motives: The People and Purposes Behind Major Gifts,” Paul Schervish in  
Develop application evaluation rubric; prepare for site visits. |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>GRANT PROPOSALS DUE.</td>
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<td>Process site visits; begin reviewing proposals.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event/Activity</td>
<td>Reading/Resource</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Half of student presentations.</td>
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<td>Prepare binder, presentation.</td>
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| Dec. 3 | Group Presentations/Award Ceremony                                           | **Final reflection due:** What are the most important lessons you learned about yourself, working in a group, and the philanthropic process as a result of this course? Are there ways you hope to apply these lessons moving forward?  
**Binder due.** |                                                                                  |
Brandeis University Student Code of Conduct

Rights and Responsibilities 2012-2013 (Excerpt)

Section 4. Maintenance of Academic Integrity

4.0. Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student’s own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions (see Section 21). A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty in a course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Any academic integrity report submitted to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards is subject to review by the appropriate academic school, department, or program. In the case of an allegation against a graduate student, the appropriate program personnel will consult with the Assistant Provost for Graduate Student Affairs to determine if the student should be referred back to the department to address quality of work concerns or if the student should be referred to a conduct process for integrity concerns.

4.1. A student’s name on any written exercise (e.g., examination, report, thesis, theme, notebook, laboratory report, computer program, etc.), or in association with an oral presentation constitutes a representation that the work is the result of that student’s own thought and study. Such work shall be stated in the student’s own words, and produced without the assistance of others, except for quotation marks, references, and footnotes that accurately acknowledge the use of other sources (including sources found on the Internet). Talking during an examination, or possession or use of materials or equipment during an examination constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. Attempting to receive credit for work not originally submitted also constitutes an infringement of academic honesty.

4.2. In some instances, a student may be authorized by a faculty member to work jointly with (an)other student(s) in solving problems or completing projects. However, students may not collaborate on assignments without explicit permission from the instructor. To provide, either knowingly or through negligence, one’s own work to assist another student in satisfying a course requirement constitutes an infringement of academic honesty. Aid from personnel associated with University-sanctioned tutoring services is acceptable.

4.3. Unless permission is received in advance from the faculty member in charge of the course involved, a student may not submit, in identical or similar form, work for one course that has been used to fulfill any academic requirement in another course at Brandeis or any other institution. A student who perceives the possibility of overlapping assignments in courses should consult with the appropriate faculty members before presuming that a single effort will fulfill requirements of both courses.

Source: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srsc/rr/RR1213.pdf