Critical Issues in Philanthropy: 
Power, Possibility, Paradox and the Private Foundation 

NMGM 5078, CRN 8203 

Class Meetings: January 24 – May 15, Mondays 4:00 - 5:50 

Location: 72 5th Avenue, Room 713 

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Office hours: Mondays & Tuesdays 1:00-4:00pm 
Please e-mail to schedule an appointment 

Course Description: 

This course is an advanced level graduate seminar to examine popular debates and new academic scholarship on the politics of private philanthropy in the context of renewed philanthropic commitments to addressing poverty and inequality in the United States and around the globe. Recent empirical studies show how private foundations operate as key stakeholders in large-scale political reforms in major sectors ranging from public education, global health, agriculture, criminal justice and women’s rights. Through a deep reading of new books in this field and in class engagement with practitioners and scholars, students will explore the following questions: If philanthropy is broadly understood as the mobilization of private assets for public benefit, then how is this public benefit assured and by whom? Recently, inequality has become an organizing framework for a few major foundations and the projects they choose to fund. What kinds of work is enabled and disabled by such a framework and with what consequences? In their focus on inequality, many foundations seek to promote broader social change. Yet foundations often require short-term measurable impact when social change is a slow, non-linear, and uneven process. How might foundations support long-term movement building in our current political economic moment? And what are the specific limits they face as institutions created by private wealth produced in capitalist markets that produce inequality?
**Course Goals:** In this course students will learn to think critically about contemporary social, political, and economic issues that the field of philanthropy currently seeks to address. By reading both popular journalism and new books in this field students will gain a broad analysis of current debates and a deep understanding of the empirical realities explored in the academic texts assigned. Specific course goals include:

- An understanding of the critical issues facing social justice philanthropy today.
- An understanding of the contested history of American philanthropy, and the institutional form of the private foundation.
- In depth knowledge of specific philanthropic institutional strategies and theories of change.
- Skills in collaborative critical thinking and group work.
- Practice using the ‘Strategic Questioning’ method of personal and collective growth.
- Qualitative research and report writing skills.
- Capacity to conduct research, write, edit, and publish compelling OpEds

**Required Readings:** We will read journalistic essays and blogs (links provided in the syllabus), book chapters and academic journal articles (posted on our class Canvas site), and the following books. Please purchase these books with plenty of time to read by the assigned date. Amazon has new, used, and kindle options for most of these books. Please let me know if you need assistance in purchasing the following:


Relevant Blogs and News Sources

Chronicle of Philanthropy http://philanthropy.com/
HistPhil https://histphil.org/
Nonprofit with Balls http://nonprofitwithballs.com/
Inside Philanthropy http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/
Nonprofit Quarterly https://nonprofitquarterly.org/
How Matters http://www.how-matters.org/
Philanthropy News Digest http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/
National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy https://www.ncrp.org/
Nonprofit Law Blog http://www.nonprofitlawblog.com/
Transformation: a journal of OpenDemocracy https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation

Selected Journals with a Focus on Nonprofit Organizations and Philanthropy

- Antipode: a Radical Journal of Geography
- Nonprofit Management & Leadership
- Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly
- Public Administration Review
- Journal of Policy Analysis and Management
- Social Work
- Annals of Public Analysis and Management
- New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising
- Research in Higher Education
- Journal of Applied Behavioral Science
- American Sociological Review
- American Economics Review
- Stanford Social Innovation Review
- International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing
- Voluntas: The International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations
- Social Forces
- Social Problems

University Resources

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic excellence. These resources include:

a) The University (and associated) Libraries: http://library.newschool.edu
b) The University Learning Center: http://www.newschool.edu/learning-center
c) University Disabilities Service: www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/

In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to me. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course.
Course Requirements/Grading:

1. **Class Participation:** Regular participation in online and in class discussion is a core requirement of this course. Participation should be based in the readings, with a focus on the theoretical questions and practical implications raised. Students are expected to come to class ready to take risks in communicating ideas and to be supportive and responsive to others. **Everyone is required to post weekly ‘reading responses’ on our Canvas page by 6:00pm the day before class.** These responses are not summaries but rather should include a key question, dilemma, discovery or problem raised for you in the readings. **Reading your fellow students’ postings is also required.** Each reading response will be counted as one point towards your overall participation grade. (30%)

2. **Personal Account, 5-7 pages (double spaced). Due in print form in class, February 6.** This first paper is intended as a personal narrative that engages in a critical analysis of your own experience with foundations, philanthropy, charity, or the simple act of giving and helping others. Please base this analysis within the context of experiences, realities and perceptions of inequality, poverty, and / or relationships of power. You may be a giver, receiver, manager, bystander, or indirect participant in this story. What is most important is that you tell a story about your relationship to the experience of philanthropy and /or charity and critically analyze what this means to you today, how it makes you feel, and what your thoughts are (if you have any) about the possibilities and challenges of using philanthropy, charity, or wealth to address inequality and/or poverty. You are not required to conduct academic research or use academic citations for this paper. (10%)

3. **Foundation Case Study, 12-15 pages (double spaced). Due April 17th.** This is an academic research paper designed to explore the three modes of philanthropic critique (plutocracy, philanthrocapitalism, and nonprofit industrial complex) through the lens of one foundation. You may select a foundation, of any size or region, to study and may also select an area of grantmaking to investigate as long as you are able to explore how the grantmaking of this foundation approaches funding to address poverty and / or inequality. For this paper you are required to conduct primary and secondary research. Primary sources may include interviews with foundation staff or grantees, foundation annual reports and archives, or media. Secondary sources may include journalistic accounts but must also include at least three peer reviewed academic books or journal articles, not listed in our course syllabus. These articles must shed light (not necessary in agreement with) the main theories presented in this course about plutocracy, philanthrocapitalism and the nonprofit industrial complex. This paper should be carefully annotated, using the Chicago style manual. (30%)
4. **Publishable Op-Ed or Blog Post (1,500 words):** For the final assignment for this class each student will produce a compelling, timely, well researched and well written opinion piece focusing on current debates about the role of philanthropy in addressing poverty and / or inequality. This assignment will involve conducting research, writing, editing, investigating media outlets, and possibly submitting your piece for publication. You may write about one specific foundation, initiative, or problem or you may choose to write about a more broad trend or problematic. You may also write as a critic, advocate, or scholar of the issues you choose to focus on. (30%)

Late papers, without sufficient explanation, will be penalized a full grade. This is a participatory discussion based seminar so class attendance, promptness, and participation in class time is critical. The final course grade will be computed as follows:

- Class attendance and participation 30%
- Personal Account 10%
- Foundation Case Study 30%
- Op Ed 30%
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<td>Course Introduction / Syllabus Review</td>
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<td>January 30</td>
<td>The Foundation: Understanding the Institution and Its’ Controversial</td>
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<td>February 6</td>
<td>History of the Foundation: Continued</td>
<td>Personal Account</td>
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<td>Three Major Critiques: plutocrats, philanthrocapitalists, and the</td>
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<td>nonprofit industrial complex</td>
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<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>Presidents Day Holiday – No Class</td>
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<td>Feb 27</td>
<td>Philanthropy, Race and Colonialism</td>
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<td>Book 1: <em>Waste of a White Skin</em></td>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td>Philanthrocapitalism</td>
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<td>Book 2: <em>No Such Thing as a Free Gift</em></td>
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<td>Charity and Disaster Capitalism</td>
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<td>Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Housing</td>
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<td>Book 4: <em>Driven from New Orleans</em></td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Philanthropy and Education Reform</td>
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<td>Book 5: <em>Policy Patrons</em></td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Student Presentations: Foundation Case Studies</td>
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<td>Student Presentations: Foundation Case Studies</td>
<td>Foundation Case Study</td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>Philanthropy in the Trump Era: renewing the call for</td>
<td>Guest Speaker: TBA</td>
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<td>progressive philanthropy</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Philanthropy and Democracy</td>
<td>Public Lecture: David</td>
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<td>Book 6: <em>The Givers by David Callahan</em></td>
<td>Callahan, Author</td>
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<td><strong>OpEd Draft Due</strong></td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>New models of giving &amp; radical philanthropy</td>
<td>Guest Speaker: TBA</td>
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<td>Book 7: <em>Smart Risks</em></td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Future of Philanthropy Continued</td>
<td>OpEd Due/Presentations</td>
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Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Week 1 - January 24: Course Introduction and Overview

Reading:

*Strategic Questioning: An Approach to Creating Personal and Social Change*, by Fran Peavy. (Posted on Canvas)

Week 2 - January 31: Understanding the Foundation & Its Controversial History


Week 3 – February 6: History of the Foundation: Continued

*Personal Account Due*


Week 4 – February 13: Three Major Critiques: plutocrats, philanthrocapitalists, and the nonprofit industrial complex

The Nonprofit Industrial Complex:


Also from Scholars and Feminists Online, view selected videos from Queer Dreams and
Nonprofit Blues: Understanding the Nonprofit Industrial Complex:

Plutocratic Power


Philanthrocapitalism


Feb 20  Presidents Day Holiday – No Class

Week 5 – February 27: Philanthropy, Race and Colonialism


Week 6 – March 6: Philanthrocapitalism

Book 2: No Such Thing as a Free Gift by Linsey McGoey (2016)

Week 7 – March 13: Charity and Disaster Capitalism


MARCH 20 – SPRING BREAK

Week 8 – March 27: Nonprofit Industrial Complex and Housing

Book 4: Driven from New Orleans by John Arena (2012)
Week 9 – April 3: Philanthropy and Educational Reform


Week 10 – April 10: Student Presentations

Foundation Case Studies

Week 11 – April 17: Student Presentations

*Foundation Case Study Due, email to Instructor*

Foundation Case Studies

Week 12 – April 24: Philanthropy in the Trump Era, Renewing the Call for Progressive Social Movement Philanthropy

Guest Speaker: TBA

Readings: Select at least three articles to read from the annotated bibliography of current debates (Posted on Canvas).

Week 13 – May 1: Philanthropy and the Future of Democracy

*OpEd Draft Due to Editing Partner and Instructor*


Guest Speaker: Author visit with David Callahan, *The Givers*

Week 14 – May 8: New Models of Giving, Philanthropy and New Social Movements

Book 7: Smart Risks by Jennifer Lentfler and Tanya Cothran (2017)

Please also review the websites of the following groups/networks:

- Solidaire: https://solidaire.wpengine.com/
- Resource Generation: https://resourcegeneration.org/
- Womens Donor Network: http://www.womendonors.org/
- IDEX / Movement for Black Lives:
Week 15 – May 15: New Models and Future of Philanthropy Continued
OpEds Due/Presentations and Final Reflections