The History of Philanthropy in the United States from the Gilded Age to Present

Meeting Day/Times: Thursdays, 4:10-6:00 pm, 302 Fayerweather

Instructor: Micah McElroy

Contact: mdm2200@columbia.edu

Office Hours: Fridays, 4:00-6 pm, Brownie’s Cafe, located in the basement of Fayerweather and Avery Halls. Please send me an email in advance if you would like to meet with me.

Course Description: In a period of inequality and a contracting welfare state, the conspicuous wealth of mega-donors such as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and Jeff Bezos has renewed public interest in the role of philanthropy in American life and whether it is compatible with the nation’s democratic ideals. While today’s philanthropic fortunes are sizable, philanthropy has long been an important part of America’s political and social history. Whether philanthropy supports or erodes democracy, moreover, has been a persistent quandary and source of contention. Using recent scholarship in history, sociology, and journalism, this course examines the formation and practice of modern philanthropy from the late 19th century to the early 21st century, with a particular focus on philanthropic foundations and their engagement with public policy, social movements, and the alleviation of poverty. By introducing students to historical debates about how Americans understood and realized their social obligations to each other, it aims to equip them with the ability to make public and academic contributions to contemporary discussions of philanthropy.

Organized in two parts (the past, the present), the course proceeds chronologically, beginning with how philanthropy diverged from charity during the late 19th century using Andrew Carnegie’s “Wealth,” followed by case studies of how early foundations engaged in public policy and Jim Crow. After discussing how foundations attempted to address poverty in the American South, the seminar reviews how foundations translated those experiences abroad via the Green Revolution. The course returns to the United States to survey philanthropic engagement with mid-century social movements, including the Civil Rights Movement and the Farmworkers Movement in California. Subsequent sections discuss how foundations identified and understood social problems, and how their social research fomented partisan debates about the place of philanthropy in American democracy. As part of these discussions, the course examines various state efforts to regulate philanthropy and whether such a task is possible—or desirable. Part 1 of the seminar concludes by examining philanthropy and its relationship to Black Power and the conservative movement. Part 2 enters contemporary discussions of philanthropy, familiarizing students with modern practices and debates in organized giving.
Topics include philanthrocapitalism, venture philanthropy, strategic philanthropy, and the donor-advised fund. We close in what is commonly called the “New Gilded Age” in which concern about wealth and income inequality has combined with renewed criticism of mega-philanthropy. The final week turns to broad questions of the ethics and democratic potential of philanthropy in the United States.

**Prerequisites:** Familiarity with the history of the United States from the 1890s to the present is desired.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film Review (Extra Credit)</td>
<td>5% (extra credit)</td>
<td>Due February 27 at start of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due March 12th at start of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Review Paper – First Draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due April 9th at start of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Courseworks Posts</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Due Thursday morning by 10 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Due April 16th at start of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Review Paper – Final Draft</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Due May 12th by midnight (Tuesday)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Participation:** Participation is composed of in-class participation (20%) and reading responses (15%). In lieu of written exams, you are asked to participate in a shared study of the arguments of historians, the evaluation of historical documents, and oral discussion and debate with the goal of understanding each text’s significance, persuasiveness, and relevance to contemporary problems. Your verbal and written participation—and those of your peers—is critical to the success of these goals. We will learn more about our texts and the history of philanthropy when each of us comes prepared having read all the assignments, contributes constructive questions and answers, and respond to the comments of our peers.

**Discussion posts (20%):** In order to prepare for a robust discussion and debate about the history of philanthropy, I ask that you post a brief reflection on the reading to the appropriate forum on Courseworks (20% of final grade) by 10 AM Thursday. Your post should be at minimum one paragraph long and no more than two paragraphs, or 100 to 400 words. All posts should follow this format: Minimum one paragraph and no more than two (or 100 to 400 words), include at least two questions that you would like to ask the class, and two keywords or concepts you found to be important from the texts. For full credit, posts must be completed and submitted online by 10:00 AM before class. I will read and grade these posts and return them to you in class the following week. Your grade will reflect the strength of your post’s engagement with the assigned readings and with the themes of the course. I award more points to those reflections that use more than one reading, and which demonstrate comparisons or connections between texts or use multiple texts to answer an assigned question.

If you’re having a hard time developing questions that can solicit opinions or answers from your peers, here are some suggestions: Questions can be **clarifying** (for example, questions aimed at helping you understand a scholar’s argument or claims by gathering answers from your peers), **challenging** (for example, questions that challenge, contradict, or scrutinize a writer’s claims or ideas which you’d like your peers to evaluate), or **expanding** (for example, questions that ask about the larger relevance of the text or place it in relation to other readings, puzzles or problems). We’ll generate examples of good questions in our first week.

**In-Class Participation (20%):** Your active participation in the seminar is critical to the success of our shared exploration of philanthropy’s history and its continuing relevance to today. You should come prepared having read all the assignments, arrive on time, and be willing to ask questions as relevant, and actively respond to the comments, puzzles, or questions posed by your peers. You should also be prepared to discuss your reading response and the questions you wrote in advance, as I may call upon you to present them to our seminar. I will be evaluating you on how proactive you are in contributing to our in-class conversation, your respect for your peers (meaning that you do not interrupt others, disagree politely, and do not minimize the contributions of your peers), and your ability to comment or pose additional questions to your peer’s contributions in seminar. I also encourage you to speak, even if you believe your idea is
half-formed, as our seminar is meant to be a place for you to test out of new ideas, work out puzzles, and gather the feedback of your colleagues.

**Written Assignments:**

**Op-Ed (5%)**: You’ll write a 700 to 1100 word op-ed piece (about 1-2 pages), which should reflect on a contemporary debate, issue, or event pertaining to US philanthropy from a historical perspective. In writing your op-ed, you should think about how history can help the public better understand the present. You have a wide degree of creativity. For some ideas: You might comment on a contemporary issue, such as education, climate change, inequality, or so on, and how philanthropy ought to engage that issue. Or you might draft an op-ed that makes an argument about how philanthropy can "do better"--or how its critics are wrong. Or you might ponder recurrent questions in our course, such as: Can philanthropy foster democracy? How? Should it? In addition to reading the articles in our syllabus, I would strongly recommend reading op-eds and articles on philanthropy in periodicals such as *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and *The Guardian*. Not only will these articles familiarize you with writing conventions, but they also help you identify contemporary events that you can write about in your op-ed. You should write your op-ed as if a public audience were to read it in a popular newspaper or magazine, which means avoiding jargon, wordiness, and the passive tense, while advancing a clear, informative argument. You’ll upload and share your op-ed on a shared Google doc: . For more guidance on op-eds, see: [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/tips-for-aspiring-op-ed-writers.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/tips-for-aspiring-op-ed-writers.html)

**Field Review Paper (35%)**: You’ll have the opportunity to delve deeper into one of our course’s topics or themes, or to address a specific subject in the history of philanthropy in the United States that we will not have time or space to address. Your task is to write a 10-12 page review of these chosen texts, placing them in conversation, and evaluating their relative strengths and weaknesses. In other words, you’ll be writing a “state of the field” or a “historiography” of your chosen subject. The field review paper requires you to select five texts, three of which must be book-length, and asks you to identify each historian’s argument, the evidence they employ, and what they contribute to our understanding of your selected topic and the broader history of philanthropy in the United States. Moreover, your paper should evaluate the relative strengths of each historian’s text, helping your reader understand the limits of each historian’s work as well as how historians might advance our understanding of your chosen subject through further study.

Don’t worry if this assignment is unfamiliar to you: several times throughout the semester you will be able to get feedback on your proposed ideas as well as your first draft. You may also wish to use the resources available to you in the Columbia Writing Center.

**Paper Proposal (10%)**: You will submit a two-to-three page prospectus in which you state the theme and text you have selected and explain your choices. You should also provide some indication of what you think the relationship is between your chosen texts: How are they in
historiographical conversation with each other? You might argue, for example, that your chosen texts reveal broad consensus on the topic, or that they indicate a progression of thought on a particular theme, or sharp differences about the origin or consequence of a particular historical event or moment. You do not need to read all of the texts, but you should have a basic understanding of each author’s argument and contribution.

First Draft (10%): In your first draft, we will focus on (1) the clear articulation of your thesis regarding how your chosen texts address the theme and relate to one another; and (2) the organization of your argument. I will review, edit, and comment upon your draft and return it to you in time for you to revise and edit before the final version. You may either submit a minimum of half of your essay (e.g. an introduction paragraph and five-six pages of body paragraphs) or an introduction paragraph and a detailed outline explaining what you will discuss in each paragraph.

Movie Review (Extra Credit 5%): You will write a movie report for Rosenwald, using the readings from "Philanthropy and Jim Crow" in addition to any other readings in the course to analyze any issue presented in the film. You have the freedom to focus on any element of the film you wish, but you should write your review as if it were for a general audience and assess how well the film serves to educate the public about the history of philanthropy. The movie report should be 4-5 double-spaced pages with most of the review engaging in analysis rather than a summary. The complete review is due on February 27.

Class Policies: Students are required to arrive on time and unexplained tardiness or absence from seminar will diminish your final participation score. Consecutive tardiness or absences can result in a failing grade. In addition, cell phone devices are not permitted in seminar. Out of respect to Columbia’s custodial workers and to minimize distraction, no food (excluding beverages) is allowed in the classroom. Please contact me if you require an exception. Computers are fine, but only for drawing up course readings and taking notes.

All written work must be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins, composed in Times New Roman 12-point font. All sources must be cited with footnotes using Chicago Style Citation. Guidance on how to compose citations can be found in Turabian’s A Manual for Writers.

Drafts: I will review any draft given to me no later than two weeks before the deadline. I will not, however, tell you what grade you will receive based off of that draft, or promise you a particular grade should you make any of my suggested changes.

Deadlines: Students are expected to turn in all assignments completed and on time, which is at the beginning of class on the specified due date. In the case of lateness, students will be docked a half letter grade for each day an assignment is late, starting the day after it was due.
**Academic Integrity:** The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

**Disability Accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability and have an DS-certified ‘Accommodation Letter’ please come to my office hours to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 and disability@columbia.edu.

**Academic Support Services:**

The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students. In one-on-one consultations and workshops, their consultants offer feedback and strategies to help you improve at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. Any registered Columbia or Barnard student may schedule an appointment with the writing center. You may find their help very useful for your literature review. (https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center)

**Required Textbooks**
No textbooks are required for purchase. Please note that I will make scans of chapters from most of our readings and post them on Courseworks. I have also noted when particular readings are available for free through Columbia as electronic books. are not expected to read texts listed as “optional;” I have only listed them there should you wish to engage the subject further, either for your research or for seminar, but I will not require or expect you to have read them.

These texts are available via library course reserves at Butler should you wish to read a hard-copy: Karen Ferguson Top Down, Anand Giridharadas Winners Take All, Rob Reich et. al Philanthropy in Democratic Societies, Judith Seelander Private Wealth and Public Life, Olivier Zunz Philanthropy in America, Rob Reich Just Giving, Alice O'Connor Social Science for What?

January 23: Introduction [19 pages]

- Benjamin Soskis, “The Importance of Criticizing Philanthropy” The Atlantic (May 12, 2014) [5 pages]


January 30: From Charity to Philanthropy [117 pages]

● **Primary Source:** W.E. Gladstone, “Mr. Carnegie’s ‘Gospel of Wealth’: A Review and a Recommendation” Nineteenth Century (November 1890) 677-693 (16 pages)

● **Primary Source:** Reverend Hugh Price Hughes, “Irresponsible Wealth” Nineteenth Century (December 1890)  (https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101065273474&view=1up&seq=904)

● **Primary Source:** Washington Gladden, "Tainted Money" Outlook Vol. 52, Issue 22 (Nov 30, 1895)


February 6 Foundations and Public Policy in the Early Twentieth Century [168 pages]


**February 13: Philanthropy and Jim Crow [136 pages]**

- **Primary Source:** W.E.B. DuBois "Negro Education" *The Crisis* Vol. 15, No. 4 (February, 1918), 173-178 [5 pages] (available via HathiTrust: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044011044658;view=1up;seq=181)
- *Rosenwald* Directed by Aviva Kempner (Los Angeles, 2015) [100 minutes]


**February 20: Foundations and the World [157 pages]**

- Tore C. Olsson, “Rockefeller Rural Development” and "Green Revolutions" in *Agrarian Crossings: Reformers and the Remaking of the US and Mexican Countryside*

**February 27: Foundations and the Social Sciences [172 pages]**


**March 5: Philanthropy and Social Movements after World War II [154 pages]**

March 12: Regulating Political Advocacy and Private Wealth [169 pages]

★ Proposal Due in Class ★

Read Zunz’s chapter, “In Search of a Nonprofit Sector” after reading Alice O’Connor’s “The Politics of Rich and Rich.”

- Olivier Zunz, “The Regulatory Compromise” and “In Search of a Nonprofit Sector” in Philanthropy in America [59 pages]


March 19: Spring Break
March 26: Philanthropic Activism in the Later 20th Century [142 pages]


- **Primary Source:** The Honorable William E. Simon, “Reaping the Whirlwind” Philanthropy Monthly 13 (January, 1980) [4 pages]


Part II: Contemporary Philanthropy

April 2: Entrepreneurial Giving [154 pages]


● **Past to Present:** Benjamin Soskis, “Apple’s Newest Store and the Perverse Logic of Philanthro-Capitalism” *Boston Review* (May 21, 2019) [7 pages]


**April 9: Strategic and Disruptive Philanthropy [124 pages]**

**Strategic:** (46 pages)

Primary Source: Paul Brest and Hal Harvey, "The Promise of Strategic Philanthropy" in Money Well Spent: A Strategic Plan for Smart Giving (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018) [20 pages]


Disruptive: (54 pages)

Primary Source: Sean Parker, “Philanthropy for Hackers” The Wall Street Journal (June 26, 2015) [5 pages]


Further Reading on Strategic Philanthropy:


Further Reading on Disruptive Philanthropy:


April 16: Puzzles of When and Where Philanthropy Should Occur  [112 pages]

*Op-Eds Due*

Lila Corwin Berman, "Donor Advised Funds in Historical Perspective" Presented at the Washington, DC, Boston College Law School’s Forum on Philanthropy and the Public Good (October, 2016) [22 pages]
(https://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&amp;context=philanthropy-forum)


Primary Source: Douglas Bartholomew, "The Battle for the Buck" The Los Angeles Times (Dec. 21, 1986) [15 pages]


Optional: Future Perfect, "Donors From Beyond the Grave" Vox Podcast (30 minutes) <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect-podcast/2019/6/19/18629804/zombie-donors-on-the-loose>


April 23: The Gospel of Wealth in the Second Gilded Age [142 pages]


April 30: Philanthropy’s Future [172 pages]

- Rob Reich, Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How it Can Do Better (1-168, 195-200) [172 pages]

Optional: The below are short responses to the argument Reich developed in his fourth chapter of Just Giving. I’d encourage you to read them here: http://bostonreview.net/forum/foundations-philanthropy-democracy

- Stanley M. Katz, "Curb Mega-Foundations" Boston Review (March 01, 2013)
- Diane Ravitch, "Funding Conventional Wisdom" Boston Review (March 01, 2013)
- Larry Kramer, "Money, Power, and Constraint" Boston Review (March 01, 2013)
- Pablo Eisenberg, "Less Elitism, More Equity" Boston Review (March 01, 2013)


Op-Ed Assignment:

If you’re looking for examples of op-eds, you might consult our syllabus. Beginning in our first week, we’ll read many articles intended for popular audiences that use history to discuss contemporary philanthropy. I’ve included a few more that model some of the qualities of good op-eds: they’re concise, to the point, and present a novel or creative way of understanding a topical issue.

In addition, please take a look at Bret Stephens' 15 "tips for aspiring op-ed writers." You can find it here:


Example Op-Eds:


<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/27/opinion/the-charitable-industrial-complex.html?_r=0>