

The Evergreen State College
Master of Public Administration Program
Nonprofit Management
Spring 2025 draft 2 18 25

Larry Geri, DPA. Lab I, 3002. geril@evergreen.edu
Office Hours: By appointment.

Meeting Dates: Monday evenings March 31 to June 3rd, 6 pm–9:30 pm. Sem II, E2109.

Course Description: US law and civic practice encourage people to band together to try to solve public problems. One structure through which this civic action occurs is the formal nonprofit organization. Our society relies heavily on these entities to deliver social and health services, support the arts, and assist with many other tasks, and government agencies regularly contract with them to perform vital functions. Although interest in and research on nonprofits has exploded, the sector largely remains an enigma. We still tend to define the sector based on what it isn't (profit-seeking), other ways of defining it have not gained traction (third sector, civil sector), and the reality that nonprofits can't be run either like businesses or government agencies is poorly appreciated. It is critical for us to try to better understand the sector and improve our capacity to run these important organizations with skill.

This course will focus on the unique characteristics of the nonprofit sector and will cover the basics of what it takes to manage a nonprofit effectively. Nonprofits exist symbiotically with the philanthropic sector and often depend extensively on foundation and government funding. Nonprofit organizations also have unusual governance structures, rely heavily on volunteers, and are mission-driven in more fundamental ways than public organizations. They must also manage the tension between their mission and funders' demands, which often conflict. Nonprofits are increasingly involved in policy making at the local and international level. They provide critical social and health services and so have insights into public problems and solutions that are essential to managing chronic issues such as homelessness, making them key partners in collective impact initiatives. Finally, funders in the sector are demanding increased professionalism, which in turn is being supported as more people enter the sector with a background in nonprofit management education.

For this course we will read several texts plus a variety of articles, governmental reports, and research studies, and discuss these in class. Lectures, films, guest presentations and workshops will be featured during our class sessions. Students will write several short papers, and prepare one longer paper, on which they will deliver a presentation the last day of class.

Learning Objectives: In this course, students will gain:

1. Knowledge about the nature of the nonprofit sector and its context, including its relationship to the philanthropic/foundation sector; and issues specifically relevant to the sector;
2. An understanding of the uniqueness of the nonprofit sector in relation to the public and private sectors, with an emphasis on nonprofit governance structures;
3. An understanding of essential management skills related to nonprofit organizations including strategy, human resources, financial management & fund raising;
4. Insights into what it is like working inside a nonprofit organization;
5. Improved skills in organizational analysis;
6. Improved skills in analysis and writing.

Expectations, Credit & Evaluation:

Credit and Evaluation: Students will receive 4 credits at the completion of the course if all course requirements have been successfully completed. Plagiarism (i.e., using other peoples' work as your own without acknowledging the source), failing to complete one or more assignments, completing one or more assignments late (without having made arrangements before the due date), or multiple absences may be grounds for denial of credit. Partial credit will be awarded only under unusual circumstances. Consistent with MPA program requirements, a self-evaluation will be required for credit. A faculty evaluation is strongly advised. An evaluation conference is optional.

Expectations: All students are expected to contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program. Evergreen e-mail will be used for communication about class work; course documents will be available on the course Canvas site. Faculty will be prepared for class, responsive to questions and provide prompt feedback on completed assignments.

Canvas. This syllabus is a draft. The latest updates to the course will be posted on the class Canvas site at <https://canvas.evergreen.edu/courses/7168>. All students will be expected to log in regularly with the Canvas site to keep up with any changes to readings or the class schedule.

Multiculturalism & Diversity: Faculty and students will actively work towards contextually weaving multiculturalism and diversity throughout our learning as related to readings, lectures, seminar, and group projects. In a learning community students and faculty share the responsibility for the teaching and learning environment. Multiculturalism and diversity are defined as: aiming to promote constructive community discourse about issues of culture, power, and differences.

Technology Use & Learning Styles: We all have different ways of learning. Faculty will actively work towards providing information in multiple formats: tactile, auditory, visual, experiential, etc. However, we are limited to means appropriate for the virtual classroom environment. Surfing the internet, checking social media, reading e-mail, playing with cell phones during our online sessions are not an appropriate use of class time. Consult your faculty to discuss technology use and learning style options.

Accommodations. Reasonable Accommodations will be provided for any student who qualifies for them through a working relationship with Access Services. To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the office of Access Services for Students with Disabilities (867-6348 or 6364). If the student is already working with the office of Access Services, the faculty should have received a letter clearly indicating the student has a disability that requires academic accommodations.

If any student has a health condition or disability that may require accommodations to effectively participate in this class, please do the following: Contact Access Services to receive a letter of accommodation prior to the start of class. Information about a disability or health condition will be regarded as confidential. Please refer to Evergreen's Students with Disabilities Policy.

Conduct & Conflict Resolution: Please refer to the MPA Student Handbook: <https://www.evergreen.edu/mpa/studenthandbook/conflictresolution>. Discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved (so long as the

concerned party feels safe doing so). Possessing respect for others is fundamental to an open, free, and educational dialogue. All students are expected to support and contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom and learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program. All students will be held accountable for maintaining the highest of academic standards.

Social Contract. We will abide by the social contract: WAC 174-121-010 College philosophy. We will abide by the student conduct code (including academic integrity and plagiarism): Chapter 174-123 WAC, Student Conduct Code & Grievance/Appeals Process: <http://www.evergreen.edu/studentaffairs/student-conduct>
We will abide by the non-discrimination policies and procedures at TESC.

Communicating: Email and Canvas are our primary means of communication. Students are responsible for checking their Evergreen email and Canvas regularly – minimally once each weekday and weekend.

Use of Student Work Posted to Canvas: Students post their work to an online learning platform known as “Canvas”. Our class canvas site is accessible to faculty and students registered for this course only. The work students post on canvas is their private intellectual property and may not be used or distributed without their expressed consent. Some work may also be owned by governments, organizations, or communities. Their informed and voluntary consent would also need to be obtained for use and appropriate cultural protocols would also need to be followed.

Audio or Video Recording: No audio or video recording may occur during class without the informed and voluntary consent of all students, guests, and faculty involved.

Texts to Purchase/Obtain

LeRoux, Kelly and Mary K. Feeney (2014). *Nonprofit Organizations and Civil Society in the United States*. New York: Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415661455. ISBN-13: 978-0415661454

Worth, Michael J. (2024). *Nonprofit Management: Principles and Practice, 7th Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1071884089. Paperback. (Earlier editions are OK).

Texts/Chapters on Canvas

Salamon, Lester A. (2015). *The Resilient Sector Revisited*. Brookings Institution Press. ISBN: 978-0-8157-2425-4. Paperback.

Renz, D.O., Ed. (2015). *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management, Fourth Edition*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. (Selected Chapters).

Weikart, L.A., G. Chen and E. Sermier (2013). *Budgeting & Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations*. Los Angeles: Sage. (Selected Chapters)

Readings (Posted to Canvas)

Buse, K.; Bernstein, R.S.; Bilimoria, D. (2016). “The Influence of Board Diversity, Board Diversity and Practices, and Board Inclusion Behaviors on NP Governance Practices.” *J. Bus Ethics* 133: 179-91.

Economist report on Philanthropy. 2024.

Flannery, H.; Collins, C. and B. DeVann. (2023). "The True Cost of Billionaire Philanthropy." Institute for Policy Studies.

Independent Sector (2024). "Health of the U.S. Nonprofit Sector Annual Review." Available at: <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-Health-of-the-U.S.-Nonprofit-Sector-Annual-Review.pdf> and on Canvas.

Malloch-Brown, M. (2024). "Why Philanthropists Should Become Heretics: Donors Must Challenge, Not Comfort, the Existing Order." *Foreign Affairs*. January 15th.

Peck, S. (2013). "The Art of Asking." Available at: <https://medium.com/startup-pregnant/the-art-of-asking-or-how-to-ask-and-get-what-you-want-9e7455ca375b>.

Weisinger, JY; Borges-Méndez, R; and C. Milofsky (2016). "Diversity in the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol 45

Assignments

Assignment 1. What is your conception of the current role of the nonprofit sector, and nonprofit organizations, in relation to US civil society? What limits, if any, should be placed on nonprofit action? Do you feel their role in the US is appropriate? (2-3 pages, double-spaced).

Due March 31st.

Assignment 2. The philanthropic sector and nonprofit sector are symbiotic. Although the relationship is mutually beneficial, the power relationship is asymmetric: foundations providing funding have power over the recipients. And the US foundation sector is increasingly criticized for exacerbating inequality while doing relatively little to improve the country's quality of life. How would you change the way that philanthropies are structured and operate in the US, if you could? (3-4 pages, double-spaced). **Due April 7th.**

Class Prep Assignment 1. The readings for this course describe the wide range of knowledge and skills needed to be an effective nonprofit leader. Reflect on your own knowledge and skills in relation to that list. What would you say are the two or three top areas where you feel confident in your knowledge and skills? Where might you need to strengthen your skill set to work productively as a nonprofit leader, and what approaches might you pursue to make that happen? We will hold a workshop on this. **Due April 14th.**

Assignment 3. Case Analysis. Read the assigned case and prepare a case analysis of no more than three pages. **Due April 21st.**

Assignment 4. Budget and Finance Assignment. Prepare a simplified, unified budget for a nonprofit AND a simplified balance sheet or "statement of financial position." Use information from the organization's Form 990 or other sources. Don't be concerned about getting it exactly right—the goal is to give you experience with crafting spreadsheets for the budget and finance side of nonprofits. Additional details will be provided in class and on Canvas. **Due April 28th.**

Assignment 5. Fundraising is one of the primary challenges of any US nonprofit organization. It is a relentless and inescapable need for a nonprofit to continue to operate. Select a nonprofit you know of (not the one for Assignment 6) and/or have had some involvement with and analyze its fund-raising model. What guidance could you give to the agency to improve its fundraising practices? 3-4 double-spaced pages. **Due May 5th.**

Class Prep Assignment 2. During class on May 12th, we'll discuss "helping." As we'll see, "help" is not always either wanted or appreciated. Think about two different occasions; one where your offer to "help" was accepted and generated positive benefits for both you and the recipient. And another when your "help" offer was either rejected....or did not turn out to have the results you had hoped. How did you feel after each situation, and how (if at all) did it impact your willingness to engage in "helping" behaviors in the future? We'll do a workshop on this in class. **Due May 12th.**

Class Prep Assignment 3. What do you see as the future of the nonprofit sector in the US? How might structures, relationships, funding patterns change in ways that would strengthen nonprofits and benefit US society? We'll do a workshop on this in class. **Due May 19th.**

Assignment 6. Organizational analysis. Each student will complete an organizational analysis of a nonprofit organization. This may be an agency for which you are an intern or volunteer, but please choose a different organization than one for which you are on staff or the board. It could also be a foundation or place of worship. **Interview the executive director or someone else with organizational decision-making authority.** You will not need to complete a Human Subject Review application if you follow the parameters outlined in class.

Your paper should be about 8-10 pages (double-spaced) and provide recommendations on how the organization could improve its performance. Provide citations and references and be prepared to deliver a 10-minute **presentation** on your analysis the last day of class (June 3rd). **A DRAFT is due May 19th; Final version due June 3rd.**

The paper will need to include a description and analysis of the organization's

- Size (personnel and budget), structure, revenue sources & overall finances, board;
- History, mission, vision, strategy (include a brief SWOT analysis);
- Services or goods provided, statistics describing those services/goods, and any data on effectiveness/efficiency and overall reputation;
- An analysis of the organization's marketing, using the Marketing Mix;
- Challenges and/or lessons learned; innovations implemented; future pursuits;
- Relationship to other sectors and/or non-profit organizations;
- Relationship to issues and topics discussed in the course.

We will discuss this assignment in class in much more detail.

Tentative Schedule: Subject to Change

Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 Mar 31	What, exactly, is a “nonprofit”? Theories of the nonprofit sector	Worth, Part I, Ch. 1,2,3 LeRoux & Feeney Ch. 1,2,3	Assignment 1
Week 2 Apr 7	Civil Society Philanthropy and the NP “Ecosystem” ; The Legal and Political Environment	LeRoux & Feeney Ch. 4, 5,6, 7 Salamon Ch. 1, 2 <i>The Economist</i> on Philanthropy; “The True Cost of Billionaire Philanthropy”	Assignment 2
Week 3 Apr 14	Nonprofit Governance Leadership and Nonprofits	Worth, Part II, Ch. 4,5	Class Prep Assignment 1
Week 4 Apr 21	How do you “manage” a nonprofit? Capacity Building: the Holy Grail	Worth, Ch. 7, 8, 9	Assignment 3
Week 5 Apr 28	Budgeting and Managing Money	Weikart, Chen & Sermier, Ch. 2 Worth Part IV, Ch. 12, 15	Assignment 4
Week 6 May 5	Fundraising!	Worth, Ch. 13, 14. 16; Peck; Renz, Ch. 18 (Nathan & Tempel); Ch. 19 (by Young & Soh)	Assignment 5
Week 7 May 12	Marketing and Collective Impact On “Helping”	Renz, Ch. 13 (by Gainer); Worth Ch. 10, 11	Class Prep Assignment 2
Week 8 May 19	Performance & Accountability DEI (Yes, DEI) and Nonprofits The Future of the Nonprofit Sector	Worth, Ch. 6; Weisinger, et al; Buse, et al. Renz, Conclusion ; LeRoux & Feeney Ch. 10	Draft of Assignment 6 Class Prep Assignment 3
Week 9 May 26	NO CLASS: MEMORIAL DAY		
Week 10 June 3	Final Presentations		Assignment 6; Presentations