

# The Giving School

Course Syllabus · IST 199

Instructor: Brian Forrester University Honors, Ronald E. McNair Scholar

Ben Anderson-Nathe Associate Professor Program Director, Child & Family  
Studies PSU School of Social Work [banders@pdx.edu](mailto:banders@pdx.edu)

## Course Description

The Giving School is designed to cultivate civic engagement and leadership among university students, using philanthropy as a teaching tool. During the first few weeks of the course, students will explore the work of nonprofits through classroom learning and site visits. In the latter half of the course, students have the opportunity to put theory into practice by forming a classroom foundation; evaluating proposals and awarding real funding to local nonprofits. The Giving School is a working laboratory that empowers students to identify and respond to local needs, explore their own potential as philanthropists, and assume the role of change agents within their community.

## Learning Objectives

This course will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement of Campus- Wide Learning Objectives of Creative and Critical Thinking, Diversity, Communication, Ethics and Social Responsibility, Sustainability and Engagement. Additional learning objectives:

- Articulate joys and challenges (personally and professionally) associated with philanthropy
- Exercise critical thinking skills
- Articulate basic structure and goals of nonprofits and foundations

- Demonstrate individual and group decision-making skills in challenging or contested contexts
- Critically analyze grant proposals and verbal pitches

## **Community Connection**

By the nature of its design, this course relies heavily on a connection to the community. Throughout the course, students will meet with and learn from nonprofit directors, philanthropy professionals, donors, and individuals who are supported by philanthropy. The course includes two off-campus site visits: the first with a nonprofit and the second with a group of local foundations and funders. Both sites are a short distance from PSU.

- P:ear, a youth-arts nonprofit (or an organization equivalent to P:ear)
- Aschenbrener Center for Philanthropy

## **Required Readings**

Links to readings are available online at [www.hopclass.weebly.com](http://www.hopclass.weebly.com) and will be announced weekly or distributed in class.

## **Grading**

The grading process for this course will be in alignment with traditional standards: A-F. 90-100: A, 80-89: B, 70-79: C, 60-69: D, below 60: F. Your grade will be determined according to a point system, out of 100 points possible for the course.

- Commentaries 25%
- Final Paper 25%
- Attendance 20%
- Case Study 15%
- Midterm Quiz 15%

## **Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to submit their own work and to cite all references uses correct APA or MLA format. Any form of academic dishonestly will result in a failing grade for that assignment in accordance with PSU

## **Accessibility**

If you have a documented disability through the Disability Resource Center (DRC), please contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange the accommodations to which you are entitled. If you feel as if you might have a learning disability please contact the Disability Resource Center online at [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu).

## **Late Assignments & Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to submit their assignments in on time. Late assignments will be accepted on an individual basis for half credit, no later than one week following the original deadline. Unexcused absences will result in a loss of 2.5 points toward your final grade. If you need to contact me, DO NOT email me through D2L. Email me at [bforrester@pdx.edu](mailto:bforrester@pdx.edu).

## **Assignments**

**Commentaries:** These commentaries will be associated with a prompt, which will be given on Thursday. Commentaries must be at least 500 words and are due every Sunday by midnight, (except for week 10). These assignments will not be graded based on content, so please be open and honest in your writing. I will attempt to respond to your commentaries and send them back to you electronically within the week.

**Case Study:** In Week 3 you will break into small groups and choose a nonprofit organization to study. This project will result in a 5-10 minute group presentation to the classroom. You will be asked to profile the nonprofit of your choice, one of their funders and describe in detail who (or what) is being served by this

organization. Detailed instructions will be provided in Week 3.

**Final Essay:** The Final Essay is worth 1/4 of your grade in this class. You will get to choose a prompt of your choice (from a list), but are welcome to propose your own. This assignment is intended as an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences in this class and to discuss what it means to be a “changemaker.”

### **Online Component (aka The Interwebs)**

There are 2 websites dedicated to this class: the first is D2L. This is where you will a) Turn in Assignments, and b) Check Your Grades. The second site is also very important and can be found at [www.hopclass.weebly.com](http://www.hopclass.weebly.com). There you will find the resources you need in order to be successful in this class (Syllabus, Links to Readings, etc). You will also notice there is a link to social media. You are encouraged, but not required, to participate in a Facebook discussion group. I will also attempt to create a Google Calendar that will make it easy for you to see when assignments are due and that you can integrate into your Gmail.

### **Pedagogical Philosophy**

My intent in designing this course was to create an opportunity for you to connect with the community through inquiry, listening and impact. Moreover, my core hope is that you gain a deeper awareness of your own power to create positive change. I’ve been blessed with several opportunities to be a changemaker and it is my goal to help others access and explore some of those same life-altering opportunities.

My approach to teaching is influenced by my personal experience as a student. In reflecting on my previous four years in college, I can count the number of courses I actually remember on one hand. What did they have in common?

1. They made me care about the subject.
2. The learning was interactive and process-based

This course is process-based, and as long as you participate and engage I believe you will find yourself learning, having fun and growing all at the same time.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you. If for any reason you don't feel comfortable approaching me with questions or concerns, please contact Ben Anderson-Nathe, the faculty advisor for this course, by emailing [banders@pdx.edu](mailto:banders@pdx.edu).

### **Blog Disclosure**

I will be authoring 6 blog posts throughout the term in order to keep our funders up to date. You may find links to the blog (once it is set up) on the Course Website ([www.hopclass.weebly.com](http://www.hopclass.weebly.com)). You will not be identified personally in any of these posts. If you are concerned with this aspect of the course or have further questions please speak with me personally.

### **Research Disclosure**

This course is the subject of a research study being conducted through the University Honors program. You are not required to participate, but your participation is greatly appreciated. Participation, or lack thereof, will not impact your final grade. Research methods will take the form of surveys, interviews and document analysis.