

## **NONPROFITS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC POLICY**

**URBG 787.17 (Code 4576)**

**URBS 403.15 (Code 4577)**

**Hunter College Department of Urban Affairs and Planning  
Spring 2008**

**Wednesdays 5:35 – 7:25 pm**

Hunter West 1640

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### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Nonprofit organizations engaging in social welfare, charitable, educational and religious activities make up an important and fast-growing but often under-estimated force in society. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1990s, the estimated number of nonprofit organizations quintupled, growing from 309,000 to 1.6 million. More than half of US adults volunteer their time in nonprofits each year, working alongside the millions of paid staff in these organizations.

Most people are aware that nonprofit organizations play an important role in the delivery of social and health services. Perhaps less understood is their role in anchoring civil society and influencing public policy; the challenges that they face as they try to survive in a competitive and unpredictable environment; and the way their choices in the face of these challenges affect the health and efficacy of the nonprofit sector overall.

The goal of this course is to provide an introduction to the nonprofit sector, particularly as it relates to civil society and public policy concerns.

### **CLASS FORMAT**

This class will be run primarily as a seminar, meaning that most of the teaching and learning will take place through discussion. Thus, reading in advance and active class participation is crucial. Most of the classes will involve a full-group discussion, usually started off by student presentations on the readings. Some classes will involve breaking up into small groups. The final classes will be reserved for student presentations of their final projects.

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Regular attendance and active class participation are expected of all students enrolled in the course. Students assume responsibility for their own learning by preparing for class, completing

required readings, attending class, participating in class discussions, and completing assignments on time. If you will not be able to attend class or will need to leave class early, please do your best to let me know in advance.

## **USE OF BLACKBOARD AND HUNTER E-MAIL**

Students in this course are required to use Blackboard and your Hunter e-mail account. If you do not check your Hunter e-mail account regularly, please configure it to forward your messages to your regular e-mail account.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. I may conduct internet searches or use plagiarism detection services such as Turnitin.com to assess your work.

## **SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

Written assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class the day they are due. In special circumstances, such as illness or family emergency, students can negotiate a later submission deadline by contacting me before the deadline. If an emergency situation prevents you from completing an assignment on time, please make every effort to notify me as early as possible. Late submissions without adequate advance explanation may result in no grade or a reduced grade.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**(a) Clippings from newspapers and other popular media (i.e., magazines and equivalent on the internet).** Each student is required to post two articles on the class discussion board along with a paragraph (~100 words) of your comments/thoughts on the articles, particularly in terms of the topics covered in the course. Each student is also required to comment on four articles with a short paragraph (~100 words). These will be graded as pass-fail; a pass will be given as long as you complete the assignment on time and provide reasonably thoughtful commentary.

Deadline for posting of first article and comments: **Feb. 11**

Deadline for commenting on two articles: **March 3**

Deadline for posting of second article and comments: **March 17**

Deadline for commenting on two articles: **April 14**

**(a) Leading Discussion of Readings and Short Essay.** It is crucial to the quality of class discussions that everyone stays current with the readings. Each student will be assigned the responsibility of leading one class discussion, opening up with a short (5 minute) summary of the

readings. Discussion leaders are expected to come prepared with questions, ideas, and/or activities to structure the conversation. Students will be assigned in advance to lead class discussions.

Also required is a two-page (500 word) critical essay on the readings for the day you are leading the discussion. This essay is due at the beginning of the class you are leading and can be used to guide your presentation. The essay should be a “critical” review of the readings, not just a summary. Your essay should include:

- Summary of main arguments and/or conclusions in the readings
- Summary of crucial data used in the readings to support arguments
- Identification of core debates in the field addressed by the readings (for example, do nonprofits foster democracy or hinder it?)
- Exploration of whether you felt the authors made convincing arguments (why or why not)
  - Was the evidence or logic used convincing?
  - What would have improved the articles/readings?
- Exploration of additional questions or issues that the readings evoked for you.
- Discussion of further research that could address the weaknesses in the readings or questions raised by the readings.

**(b) Short Reports.** There will be 2 short written reports (1,250 words, 5 double-spaced pages each) assigned during the semester. Reports will be in response to specific questions distributed two weeks before the reports are due. Answering the assigned questions will require drawing on past course readings and discussions. Reports should demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the class readings and your own analysis. Rather than simply summarize readings, analyze and interpret them, and use them in support of your arguments.

First assignment distributed: **February 20**

First assignment due: **March 5**

Second assignment distributed: **April 2**

Second assignment due: **April 16**

**(c) Final Project.** There are two options for the term project.

1. Case study of a local nonprofit organization (10 pages). This should involve interviews with at least one staff person and another staff person or client from a nonprofit organization that you are interested in learning more about. You will be responsible for negotiating a relationship with the organization, although I will be able to make suggestions for suitable organizations. The project should use the organization as a case for exploring a key question or issue addressed in class. Course readings should be utilized extensively to analyze the case.
2. Conceptual paper (12 pages). This paper should address a particular conceptual issue or question related to the course. In the paper, you should craft an argument or pose a question and then use evidence from the course readings to

support it. You will be expected to use the course readings extensively. In addition, you should utilize at least 3 scholarly articles/books that are not included in the course readings.

For each option, you will be required to submit a brief (one-page) proposal to be approved before proceeding. The proposal will be due on **March 12** and the final paper will be due on **May 21**. For those who want to get an early start on their final paper, you are encouraged to submit your proposal earlier.

**Students will present a brief summary of their projects to the class at the end of the semester.**

The 2-page and 5-page essays and final project will be assessed based on their completeness (in terms of addressing the areas or questions outlined in the assignment); the clarity, creativity and originality of your arguments; writing quality and style; and breadth and depth of your use of the course material to craft and support your arguments. There are no right or wrong answers, but you should be able to support whatever case you make.

## **METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- 10% for class attendance and participation
- 10% for posting articles and comments on discussion board
- 10% for leading class discussion and 2-page essay
- 40% for 5-page essays (20% each)
- 30% for final project

## **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

All readings will be posted on Blackboard. However, many of the readings are drawn from the following books, which you may want to purchase:

Elizabeth T. Boris and C. Eugene Steuerle (editors). 2006. *Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and Conflict*. The Urban Institute Press: Washington, D.C.  
[BORIS AND STEUERLE]

Robert D. Putnam. 2001. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

Lester M. Salamon (editor). 2002. *The State of Nonprofit America*. Brookings Institution Press and the Aspen Institute.  
[SALAMON, STATE OF NONPROFIT AMERICA]

Steven Rathgeb Smith. 1995. *Nonprofits for Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting*. Harvard University Press.

Richard Steinberg, Walter Powell (editors). 2006. *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Yale University Press.

[STEINBERG AND POWELL]

Robert Wuthnow. 2002. *Loose Connections: Joining Together in America's Fragmented Communities*. Harvard University Press.

## DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE

(Additional readings may be added)

### **Session 1: Introduction and Overview (January 30)**

Topics/Activities

- Introductions to each other
- Overview of syllabus
- Small group discussions

### **Session 2: What is The Nonprofit Sector? (February 6)**

Topics

- Historical overview
- Scope and dimensions of the sector
- Why the nonprofit sector matters

Readings

Powell and Steinberg, "Introduction" (Steinberg and Powell)	1	10
Powell and Steinberg, "A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600-2000" (Peter Dobkin Hall).	32	65
Powell and Steinberg, "Scope and Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector" (Boris and Steuerle).	66	88
de Tocqueville, "On the Use Which the Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life," Vol. II, Part 2, Chapters 5-9.	628	649

### **Session 3: Theories about the Nonprofit Sector, Roles and Structure of the Sector (February 13)**

Topics

- Economic, sociological, organizational and political theories
- Overview of public policy debates
- Overview of civil society debates

Readings

Boris and Steuerle, "Introduction—Nonprofit Organizations in a Democracy: Varied Roles and Responsibilities" (Boris)	1	35
Powell and Steinberg, "Economic Theories of Nonprofit Organizations" (Richard Steinberg).	117	139
Powell and Steinberg, "The Constitution of Citizens: Political Theories of Nonprofit Organizations (Elisabeth S. Clemens).	207	220

#### **Session 4: The Legal Framework for Nonprofit Organizations (February 20)**

##### Topics

Nonprofits' tax-exempt status  
Monitoring nonprofits' performance  
Governance and accountability

##### Readings

Powell and Steinberg, "The Legal Framework for Nonprofit Organizations" (Evelyn Brody)	243	266
Powell and Steinberg, "The Federal Tax Treatment of Charitable Organizations" (Simon, Dale, Chisholm)	267	306
Salamon, State of Nonprofit America, "Accountability and Public Trust" (Evelyn Brody)	471	498

#### **Session 5: Challenges for Nonprofit Organizations and Implications for the Sector with regard to Mission, Values, Direction (February 27)**

##### Topics

Competition among nonprofits  
Raising money: pros and cons of different sources and methods  
Becoming more corporate

##### Readings

Salamon, State of Nonprofit America, "Commercialization, Social Ventures and For-Profit Competition" (Young)	423	446
Boris and Steuerle, "Ownership Forms, Conversions, and Public Policy" (Goddeeris and Weisbrod)	235	265
Smith and Lipsky, Nonprofits for Hire, "Dilemmas of Management in Nonprofit Organizations"	147	167

#### **Session 6: Nonprofit Organizations and the Government (March 5)**

##### Topics

Relationship between the nonprofit sector and government: conflict, collaboration, dependence  
Contracting out/privatization  
Increased role of nonprofits in delivery of social services and resulting strengthening and weakening of the welfare state

##### Readings

Boris and Steuerle, "Complementary, Supplementary, or Adversarial? A Theoretical and Historical Examination of Nonprofit–Government Relations in the United States" (Young)	37	79
Smith and Lipsky, Nonprofits for Hire, Part III: Implications for the Welfare State	171	232

#### **Session 7: Nonprofits' Engaging in Public Policy Advocacy and Implications for the Democratic Process (March 12)**

##### Topics

Enhancing the democratic process  
Hindering the democratic process

Readings	Nonprofits and local level policy-making in their service sectors		
	Powell and Steinberg, "Nonprofit Organizations and Political Advocacy" (Jenkins)	307	332
	Boris and Steuerle, "Advocacy and the Challenges It Presents for Nonprofits" (Reid)	343	371
	Minkoff, "The Emergence of Hybrid Organizational Forms: Combining Identity-Based Service Provision and Political Action," Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 2002, 31(3)	377	401
	Marwell, "Privatizing the Welfare State: Nonprofit Community-Based Organizations as Political Actors," American Sociological Review, 2004, 69(2)	265	291

**Session 8: TBD (March 19) [NOTE: There is no class on March 26]**

**Session 9: TBD (April 2)**

Possible Topics for Sessions 9 and 10 (to be selected together as a class)

- International perspective: nonprofits in other countries
- The recent increased involvement of religious institutions in social services and public policy implications
- Nonprofit organizations' role in specific sectors:
  - o Health
  - o Arts and culture
  - o Housing and community development
  - o Higher education
- Nonprofit accountability and effectiveness; oversight of nonprofits' performance.
- Building nonprofit capacity

**Session 10: Nonprofits, Community-Building, Social Capital and Civic**

**Engagement: Part I (April 9)**

Topics

Definitions of "civic engagement" and "social capital"  
 Ways in which nonprofits, social capital and civic engagement are related  
 Evidence of declining participation in civil society organizations

Readings

Schneider, "Connections and Disconnections Between Civic Engagement and Social Capital in Community-Based Nonprofits," Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 2007, 36(4).	572	597
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 1	15	28
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 9	148	180
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 10	183	188
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 15	277	284
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 16	287	295
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 21	336	349
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 22	350	363
Putnam, Bowling Alone, Chapter 24	402	414

**Session 11: Nonprofits, Community-Building, Social Capital and Civic Engagement: Part II (April 16)**

Topics

Responses to Putnam  
Alternative perspectives on declining participation in civil society

Readings

Lenkowsky, "Still Bowling Alone?" Commentary, October 2000	57	60
Edwards, Foley, Diani, "Are All Associations Alike? Member Diversity, Associational Type, and ... Social Capital" (Stolle and Rochon)	143	156
Wuthnow, Loose Connections, Introduction and Chapter 1	1	30
Wuthnow, Loose Connections, Chapter 3	58	82
Wuthnow, Loose Connections, Chapter 9	203	224

**Session 12: Nonprofits, Community-Building, Social Capital and Civic Engagement: Part III (April 30) [NOTE: There is no class on April 23]**

Topics

Current work of nonprofits in community-building, fostering social capital and supporting civic engagement  
Nonprofits hindering or failing to foster civic engagement

Readings

McLean, Schultz, Steger, Social Capital: Critical Perspectives on Community and Bowling Alone, "Social Rights or Social Capital? The Labor Movement and the Language of Capital" (Forman)	238	259
Edwards, Foley, Diani, "Producing Social Capital: National Social Movements and Civil Society" (Minkoff)	183	193
Warren, Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy, Introduction and Chapter 1	3	39
Selections from "Better Together" (TBD)		

**Session 13: Presentation of Term Projects (May 7)**

**Session 14: Presentation of Term Projects (May 14)**