Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations - Despard, Spring 2010

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
School of Social Work

COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 884
COURSE TITLE: Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations
SEMESTER AND YEAR: Spring 2010
CREDITS: Three credit hours
INSTRUCTOR: Mat Despard, MSW
TTK 402-E; 919-962-6467
despard@email.unc.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 12noon – 2pm and by appointment
COURSE WEBSITE: is available through http://blackboard.unc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will help prepare students for various leadership roles in nonprofit organizations, emphasizing critical thinking and communication skills applied to a range of organizational challenges.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
1. Explain the unique role that nonprofit organizations play in meeting community needs and promoting positive social change.
2. Distinguish governance, leadership and management needs and behaviors within nonprofit organizations.
3. Evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses as a potential nonprofit manager and identify strategies for improving core skills.
4. Critically examine and assess nonprofit organizations’ business models, including mission, vision, theories of change and sustainability.
5. Describe key organizational competencies of nonprofit organizations and how leadership and management skills may be used to effectively strengthen organizational performance.
6. Identify and analyze ethical dilemmas that confront nonprofit leaders and frameworks for ethical leadership in nonprofit organizations.
7. Develop effective communication and conflict management strategies to strengthen individual and group performance.
8. Develop strategies for recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse paid and volunteer workforce.
9. Identify effective measures for strengthening the role of the nonprofit board.

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION: Students will learn about a range of challenges to nonprofit organizations concerning key capacity areas such as board development, human resources, organizational learning and sustainability and how their role as leaders can help facilitate effective responses. Leadership is expressed in many different ways, certainly not limited to an exercise of position-based authority. This course will emphasize particular leadership styles that are seen as more applicable to nonprofit organizations. Leadership is also viewed as being highly contextual; it is
affected and shaped by gender, race/ethnicity, culture, community needs and circumstances, the organization’s mission and life stage and other factors. Leadership is also construed as a shared enterprise – what Jim Collins refers to as “legislative leadership” – among key staff and volunteers, not the sole domain of the CEO. Nonprofit leadership can broadly be understood to include three key skill areas: 1) strategic assessment, analysis and decision-making; 2) communication and engagement in interpersonal processes, including conflict; and 3) support and mobilization of staff, volunteers and other constituents.

**REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:**

**RELATED READINGS:**
Required readings, which are listed in the class schedule and reading assignments section below, will come from the required text and from other sources such as academic journals. These additional readings can be accessed in the following ways:

1) At the URL stated in the reading list;
   OR
   OR
3) Via Blackboard ([http://blackboard.unc.edu/](http://blackboard.unc.edu/)) “BB” (login and find SOWO 884, choose “Assignments” and “Course Readings” folder);

**TEACHING METHODS:**
Lecture and powerpointing will be used sparingly in this course – typically only to provide a topic introduction and conceptual framework. Problem-based learning exercises, case studies, role plays and simulations will be emphasized. These methods are used to accomplish two important goals, to: 1) sharpen your critical thinking about leadership challenges confronting nonprofits and 2) increase your ability to effectively communicate with other people concerning these challenges.

Students are expected to participate actively in role plays and simulations; this is how relevant skills can be developed in a classroom setting. Learning can only truly occur in a space where all participants feel respected and safe. We will work to create such an environment.

*Simulation*
A fictional organization, “Durham Opportunity” (DO) and its fictional Executive Director will provide a simulated learning context. The Executive Director will present different challenges he is facing as Executive Director and ask students to come up with solutions. This is how we will move from the abstract to the concrete. This means that at certain times, the Instructor or
a student may play the role as the Executive Director and either relate to the students as consultants helping him work through a problem OR as staff members and volunteers of DO.

**CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**
Students will be evaluated based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Topic Introduction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Varying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational development project – abstract</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2/1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief reaction paper #1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/8/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework – Nonprofit business model assessment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2/15/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief reaction paper #2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/15/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational development project</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4/26/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Self-Analysis (extra credit - optional)</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>4/26 or 5/3/10</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* This is a form of contract grading wherein students who wish to earn an H increase their chances of doing so by completing this assignment. While the total number of points for all other requirements is 95, students will still earn a grade of P if they earn at least 76 points (80% of the 95 total possible points).

**CLASS PARTICIPATION (10 PTS.)**
It is expected that students will be active members of the class. Therefore, the following grading rubric will be used for class participation.

- **10 pts:** No classes missed and active participation.
- **9 pts:** One class missed, active participation.
- **8 pts:** One class missed, inconsistent participation.
- **7 pts:** Two classes missed, active participation.
- **6 pts:** Two classes missed, inconsistent participation.
- **Under 6 pts:** Three or more classes missed, disengagement from class.

Only in highly extenuating circumstances (medical or family emergency) may an absence be considered excused. Being on time for class is very important and is a sign of respect for the learning environment. Being late and/or leaving early may result in the loss of class participation points.

**CLASS TOPIC INTRODUCTION (10 PTS.)**
In groups of two or three, students will be assigned a set of focus questions or a case scenario of a nonprofit facing a challenge. During the following class (one week later), each group will present their recommendations and facilitate class discussion related to the readings for that week. Points will be awarded based on the thoughtfulness of the recommendations, integration with and understanding of the relevant readings and ability to stimulate and facilitate class discussion. Students should prepare a brief, written summary of their findings.

**HOMEWORK – NONPROFIT BUSINESS MODEL ASSESSMENT (15 PTS)**
This assignment is intended to help students critically examine how nonprofit organizations pursue their missions by identifying and assessing intended outcomes and key programmatic strategies. Students will select a nonprofit and answer a set of questions. Completing this exercise will not require direct contact with an organization. Students will share their findings and turn in their written work in class on February 15, 2010.

**Brief Reaction Papers (2 Total; 10 pts Each)**

Students will answer focus questions in brief (2-4 page, double spaced) papers. Focus questions for each paper will be posted on Blackboard in the Assignments folder. Students will complete a total of two papers corresponding to the first two units of study:

1. The context of nonprofit leadership (due February 8, 2010)
2. Nonprofit effectiveness and sustainability (due March 15, 2010)

These papers will be graded based on the following rubric:

**10 pts:** Student does an *exceptional* job of integrating course readings and presenting well reasoned and articulate responses that are well grounded in the realities of leading a nonprofit organization.

**9 pts:** Student demonstrates a solid grasp of course readings and presents constructive responses appropriate for leading a nonprofit organization.

**8 pts:** Student demonstrates evidence of having done the course readings, yet some conceptual understanding is lacking. Some flaws in reasoning are present in the responses regarding nonprofit leadership.

Half points may be awarded at the instructor’s discretion.

**Organizational Development Project (40 pts Total)**

**Objective:** To identify and analyze key challenges confronting nonprofit organizations and articulate effective organizational and leadership strategies and skills for responding to them.

**Due Dates:** Students must select from Options A-D below and present an abstract (not graded) by February 1, 2010 that identifies the selected option, plan of action and anticipated final product. Presentations will take place on April 19 & 26, 2010. Papers are due on April 26, 2010.

**Assignment Options:**

Students must choose from one of the following options to complete this assignment. For options that may be completed as a group project, no more than three students may comprise a group, the breadth and scope of the assignment will vary by number of group members and students will be required to account for their individual effort and be evaluated by their fellow group members.
Option A: Organizational Assessment (Individual or Group Project)

Requirements: Students will select a nonprofit organization with which to conduct an organizational capacity assessment. An assessment tool from the Marguerite Casey Foundation (available on Blackboard) will be used by students to help the organization assess its capacity in various areas such as board development and program evaluation. If students wish to use an alternative assessment tool, they can present it for approval to the instructor. The idea is not for the group of students to evaluate the nonprofit as an outside group, but to use the assessment tool to help the nonprofit answer key questions about its capacity to achieve its mission. A group presentation on April 19 or 26, 2010 will be in the form of a mock presentation to the Board of the organization. Detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

Option B: Organizational Development Project (Individual or Group Project)

Requirements: Students will work with a nonprofit organization that wants help in addressing one or more capacity areas described in the Marguerite Casey Foundation organizational assessment tool. A list of available nonprofits/requested projects is available on Blackboard or students may choose a nonprofit on their own. Students interested in this option will bid on projects, indicating their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices in their abstracts due 2/01/2010. Unlike Option A, which focused on assessing and understanding, this option involves helping the organization develop ideas, strategies and tactics about one or more key performance areas. Examples include:

- SWOT analysis
- A resource development and marketing plan
- A capital campaign plan
- A board recruitment, development and retention plan (including job descriptions and other important documents)

The final product will consist of the completed written work to be turned in to the nonprofit organization and a supplementary paper to be turned in to the instructor that discusses the leadership roles and skills within the organization that are needed to accomplish the development effort. It is essential that information and recommendations given to the nonprofit be substantiated with nonprofit literature (see Blackboard for helpful sources).

Option C: Literature Review – Organizational Best Practices (Individual Project)

Requirements: Students choosing this option will conduct an in depth literature review related to one or more capacity areas described in the Marguerite Casey Foundation organizational assessment tool and apply (theoretically, not in actual practice) what they learned from the review and from the course to a nonprofit organization of their choosing and what they see as the leadership roles and skills within the organization that are needed to adopt the recognized best practice(s).
Option D: Nonprofit Startup (Group Project)

Requirements: Students with an existing interest in launching a nonprofit corporation can exercise this option to accomplish several important tasks required in starting a nonprofit:

- Creation of mission and vision statements, core values and beliefs and case statement
- Filing Articles of Incorporation with a state corporation commission
- Creation of organizational bylaws
- Board constitution
- IRS Form 1023
- Nonprofit business plan outline

The most important part of this assignment is the business plan outline. Generally speaking, the instructor actively discourages the formation of new nonprofit corporations for a variety of reasons. Without a solid idea of how a new nonprofit would be financed, it shouldn’t be formed. The final product will consist of the documents listed above and a supplementary paper that discusses the leadership roles and skills within the organization that are needed for a successful launch. The instructor will entertain alternative ideas to this option, including proposed mergers between existing nonprofits.

Leadership Analysis (extra credit - optional)

Objective: To apply and adapt leadership knowledge and skills discussed in the course to one’s own identified leadership style and to align this analysis to a specific nonprofit organization.

Due Date: April 26 or May 3, 2010

Requirements: This assignment is an option for students who wish to increase the likelihood of earning an H for the course and want to integrate course material on a more personal, career-oriented level. It is intended to be a reflection paper wherein students apply what they have learned in class (knowledge, skills, leadership self-awareness) to a plan or vision for how they might offer leadership in an organization or community. The final paper should be 8 to 10 double spaced pages in length and should incorporate scholarly sources. It will be comprised of three sections:

1. Personal Leadership Style: What do you judge to be your areas of strength and weakness regarding leadership competencies and characteristics discussed in the course? What do you want to improve or strengthen? How would you characterize your own leadership style?

2. Synthesis: Based on what you have learned in this course as comprising the skills needed to lead a nonprofit organization by effectively responding to the various challenges they face, what skills/challenges do you feel you are best able to apply/confront in nonprofit work? Based on this assessment, what role within an
organization do you feel is ideal? (e.g. Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer, Program Director, Client Services Director, Director of Development, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, etc. – Note: You will not lose points for not selecting ED!)

3. **Alignment:** Based on your personal leadership style and the skills/challenges you feel you are best able to apply/confront, describe the type of nonprofit organization (size, mission, scope, location, life stage, target population, etc.) with which you feel you are optimally aligned. You can name and describe a specific organization or just describe the characteristics of an unspecified one (though this should bear resemblance to real world organizations!). **To fulfill this part of the assignment, you must consult with one individual to give you feedback to help you identify this alignment.** This can be a former supervisor, colleague, peer, faculty member (not the instructor), or other person (excluding family members). You must explain why you sought this individual’s counsel by describing the perspective you feel that they offer that helps you assess your strengths, weaknesses and alignment. **The following reading is highly recommended to complete this section on alignment:**


**GRADING SYSTEM:**
All grades are based on the following scale:
- 94 and above H
- 80-93 P
- 70-79 L
- 69 and below F

**POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**
Assignments are considered late if it is handed in any later than the start of class on the day it is due. The grade for late papers will be reduced 5% per day, including weekends. Similarly, a paper due at 6pm on Monday handed in at 7pm will be considered 1 day late.

A grade of **Incomplete** is given only in exceptional and rare circumstances that warrant it, e.g. family crisis, serious illness. It is the student’s responsibility to request and explain the reasons for an Incomplete. The instructor has no responsibility to give an Incomplete without such a request.

**POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**
It is the responsibility of every student to obey and to support the enforcement of the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing in actions involving the academic processes of this class. Students will properly attribute sources used in preparing written work and will sign a pledge on all graded coursework certifying that no unauthorized assistance has been received or given in the completion of the work. **All written assignments should contain a signed pledge**
from you stating that, “I have not given or received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work.” Credit will not be awarded for unpledged work.

Please refer to the APA Style Guide, The SSW Manual, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

**POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
Students with disabilities that affect their participation in the course and who wish to have special accommodations should contact the University’s Disabilities Services (http://disabilityservices.unc.edu) and provide documentation of their disability. Disabilities Services will notify the instructor that the student has a documented disability and may require accommodations. Students should discuss the specific accommodations they require (e.g. changes in instructional format, examination format) directly with the instructor.

**USE OF LAPTOPS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES:**
Use of electronic devices for non-class related activities (e.g. checking email, surfing, IMing, blogging, playing games) is prohibited. Use of laptops is permitted as a tool for small group activities and in-class assignments or as an approved accommodation for students with disabilities (see above).

**EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS/APA Formatting:**
Students are expected to use good academic English; grades will be lowered for poor grammar, syntax, or spelling. Those who have difficulty writing are STRONGLY encouraged to use online resources of the campus Writing Center (http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/) and/or seek assistance from Diane Wyant or Susan White in the School of Social Work.

The School of Social Work faculty has adopted APA style as the preferred format for papers and publications. All written assignments for this course should be submitted in APA format. The web sites listed below provide additional information, though students are encouraged to purchase the following text:


APA Style:
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html) (general information about documentation using APA style)

General Writing Resources:
- http://www.bartleby.com/141/ (electronic version of Strunk's *The Elements of Style* which was originally published in 1918)
- http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/resources.html (The Writing Center, links to on-line reference material and many other useful sites for authors)
# READINGS AND COURSE OUTLINE

## UNIT 1: THE CONTEXT OF NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>January 11</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Objectives** | | • Understand expectations for and about the course  
• Identify key characteristics and dynamics of the nonprofit sector  
• Explore basic assumptions about leadership and effectiveness in nonprofit organizations |
| **Readings:** | None. |

* *** NO CLASS ON JANUARY 18, 2010 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday ***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>January 25</th>
<th>Governance &amp; Management of Nonprofit Organizations</th>
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</table>
| **Objectives** | | • Describe the role of the board of directors and board-staff relationships  
• Distinguish between governance and management functions  
• Identify and describe significant leadership challenges for nonprofit organizations |
| **Multimedia** | DO Podcast #1 (in class) |
| **Readings:** | TEXT: Chapter 1: Leadership (pp. 1-6)  
Chapter 2: Mission, Vision & Values (pp. 7-10)  
Chapter 6: Governance (pp. 43-56) |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>February 1</th>
<th>Developing &amp; Working with Boards of Directors</th>
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</table>
| **Objectives** | | • Discuss the benefits and challenges of recruiting and retaining a diverse and well-qualified board of directors  
• Explain key areas of board performance and how to promote it |
Chapter 8: Role Confusion. (BB)


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**Class 4**  
**February 8**

**Objectives**
- Describe various accountability and ethical standards for nonprofits
- Compare and contrast different ways in which nonprofits maintain accountability with various stakeholders & uphold ethical standards, including through its online presence
- Examine the relevance of diversity to accountability

**Readings:**


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**UNIT 2:** NONPROFIT EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY

**Class 5**  
**February 15**

**Objectives**
- Critically examine nonprofits’ theories of change – assumptions about how they create social value
- Understand how nonprofits can measure their outcomes
- Relate nonprofit outcomes to broader, community and social impact
### Class 6  
**February 22**  
**Nonprofits as Learning Organizations**

**Objectives**
- Identify characteristics of learning organizations and how nonprofits can engage in self evaluation
- Describe ways in which nonprofits can think innovatively to fulfill missions

**Readings:**

### Class 7  
**March 1**  
**Strategic Management & Growth in Nonprofits**

**Objectives**
- Apply organizational life cycle perspectives to understand challenges confronting nonprofit organizations
- Distinguish between strategic planning and management
- Identify elements of effective strategic management and capacity building in high performing nonprofits

**Readings:**
- **TEXT:** Chapter 5: Strategic Planning & Thinking (pp. 35-42)

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*** NO CLASS ON MARCH 8, 2010 – SPRING BREAK ***
### Class 8  
March 15  
Nonprofit Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe the essential characteristics of the nonprofit model and how it poses unique challenges for nonprofits to sustain their missions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Compare and contrast traditional subsidy-based resource development strategies with entrepreneurial, earned income and social enterprise strategies</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multimedia</th>
<th>TEXT: Chapter 7: Fund Development (pp. 57-72)</th>
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### UNIT 3: THE INTERPERSONAL SIDE OF NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP

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### Class 9  
March 22  
Human Resource Strategy for Nonprofits: Recruiting & Hiring for Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify major components of nonprofit human resource systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explain how to recruit and retain a well qualified and diverse staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understand recruiting for diversity within the context of a broader commitment to multiculturalism and anti-oppression</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multimedia</th>
<th>TEXT: Chapter 10: Human Resources (pp. 97-104)</th>
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### Class 10  
March 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Supporting Employees &amp; Volunteers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Explain how volunteers can be meaningfully integrated into nonprofit organizations</td>
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<td>● Describe use of various leadership styles and strategies for supporting and retaining employees</td>
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<tr>
<th>Readings:</th>
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### Class 11  
April 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Communication &amp; Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations, Part 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Articulate effective communication and decision making strategies with staff and volunteers</td>
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<td>● Explore the relationship between power and leadership</td>
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<tr>
<th>Readings:</th>
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<tr>
<td>TEXT: Chapter 13: Managing Change (pp. 125-132)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 12</th>
<th>Communication &amp; Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations, Part 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Describe effective strategies for facilitating organizational transitions through participatory decision-making and conflict management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Understand dynamics surrounding change, conflict and emotional responses</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 13</th>
<th>Presentations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>None.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 14</th>
<th>Presentations / Course Review</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Review and summarize progress in achieving course learning objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop expectations concerning a career in nonprofit leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Multimedia</strong></td>
<td>DO Podcast #5 (in class) No readings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>