Introduction to Social Impact
UPADM-GP 102
Fall 2019

Instructor Information

- Professor Light
- UPADM-GP 102-001
- Location: 60 Fifth Avenue, Room 110
- Class Times: Mondays/Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45
- Office Hours: Thursdays 10:00-12:00 or by Appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to give students an introduction to the tools of social impact—what it is, how we produce more, what you can do to create it. Having defined social impact as “any action of any duration in any sector by any actor to solve a public problem,” students will explore the major barriers to achieving social impact today, examine different forms of social impact, and develop their own proposals for increasing the amount and effectiveness of efforts to create social impact in the future.
The course is also designed to explore the range of alternatives for social impact—e.g., through traditional political participation (voting), personal volunteering and advocacy, careers in social impact, service on nonprofit boards, and social entrepreneurship and innovation. The course will argue that all citizens have the chance to create social impact during their lives—the question is how to improve the odds that they will both make and sustain their commitment.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes and complete all assignments on time. The class is built around a discussion of the readings and journal entries. Readings must be completed before class.

- 25% first memo on the problem you seek to solve
- 25% second memo on the solution to the problem you seek to solve
- 25% third memo on the threats to your solution and how you will address them
- 25% final exam (24-hour timed take home)

Memos

All written work will be graded both on content and writing. I believe that effective memos must combine persuasive content and accessible writing—good content without good writing is confusion, good communication without content is a waste of energy. All memos must be formatted in memo style (to: from: regarding: date), must start with the pronoun “I,” and must be based on five credible research sources. Webpages may be used for information and statistics, but will NOT be counted as credible research sources. Think tank reports, long-form articles from sources such as The New Yorker, Atlantic, etc. are fine, but not newspaper articles. All citations must be placed in endnotes to increase the speed and accessibility of your memos; all pages must be numbered at the bottom. The memo should be directed to a decision-maker. These are not opinion pieces for the New York Times; be serious throughout in making your case.

Papers will be graded on (1) persuasiveness, (2) clarity of argument, (3) writing quality, (4) sources, and (5) proofing. If your writing quality, sources, and proofing (endnotes, spelling, etc.) are fine, persuasiveness and clarity will account for all 25 points. If not, appropriate deductions will be made: 2 points for writing, 2 points for each missing source, and 1 point each for every major proofing error up to 4. In other words, you might have the most persuasive, clear memo in history, but could lose 8 points if you don’t pay attention to the quality of presentation.

Readings

All readings are available on NYU Classes.
Course Schedule

Week 1a: Norms and Expectations (Wednesday, September 4)

BRING A PHOTO OF YOURSELF ON AN 8 ½ x 11 SHEET OF PAPER WITH YOUR NAME PRINTED IN BOLD CAPS AT THE TOP (DO NOT COPY YOUR NYU ID; PICK A PHOTO THAT WILL HELP ME REMEMBER YOU.

Week 2a: The Case for Engagement (September 9)

DUE AT THE START OF CLASS: WRITE A ONE-SENTENCE MEMO ON THE PROBLEM YOU INTEND TO SOLVE THROUGH YOUR WORK IN THIS CLASS. LEARN MORE ABOUT WRITING A PERSUASIVE MEMO BY READING MY “MEMO ON WRITING MEMOS” ON NYUClasses.

HERE’S HOW IT SHOULD LOOK:

MEMORANDUM

To: Paul Light
From: Yourself
Regarding: The problem I seek to solve
Date: September 10

I seek/hope/want/wish/intend to solve the problem of……..

• Publius, “Federalist, No. 10, The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection,” Yale University, Avalon Project


Week 2b: Paths to Social Impact (September 11)


Week 3a: Comparing Generations (September 16)

• Dalton, “Citizenship Norms and Political Participation in America: The Good News Is...the Bad News is Wrong,” Center for the Study of Democracy, Occasional Paper, 2006,


Week 3b: Thinking about the Future (September 18)

• Light, The Four Pillars of High Performance, 2004, Chapter 1, not available online

Week 4a: Developing a Plan for an Uncertain World (September 23)

BEGIN THINKING ABOUT THE FOUR QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER IN YOUR FIRST MEMO: (1) What problem do you seek to solve? (2) What is the size and recent trend in the social-impact problem? (3) What is the primary cause of the problem? (4) What are the consequences of the problem for society? READ MY MEMO ON MEMO WRITING ON NYUCLASSES BEFORE COMING TO CLASS.


THE STATE OF SOCIAL IMPACT

Week 4b: Is Polarization the Problem? (September 25)

• Mann and Ornstein, “Finding the Common Good in an Era of Dysfunctional Governance,” Daedalus, 2013

• Pew Research Center, “Little Partisan Agreement on the Pressing Problems Facing the U.S.,” October 15, 2018
• Sahil Chinoy, "What Happened to America's Political Center of Gravity," New York Times, June 26, 2019

Week 5a: Are Millennials and Z’s the Problem? (September 30)

• Henderson, "When It Comes to the Baby Boomers: It is Still All about ‘Me," Smithsonian, October 15, 2014

• Stein, “Millennials: The Me, Me, Me Generation," Time, May 20, 2013,


Week 5b: Is Social Capital the Problem? (October 2)


• Putnam, “Bowling Together,” American Prospect, February 11, 2002


Week 6a: Is Empathy the Problem? (October 7)


• Bloom, "The Baby in the Well," The New Yorker, May 20, 2013

THE FIRST QUADRANT OF SOCIAL IMPACT (VOLUNTARY/THIN)
Week 7a: Voting as Impact (October 9)


- Root and Kennedy, “Increasing Voter Participation in America,” Center for American Progress, July 11, 2018, read 1-11 and skim options for increasing participation from 12-46

NO CLASS OCTOBER 14: FALL RECESS

- Week 8a: Volunteering as Impact (October 16)

FIRST MEMO DUE

BEGIN THINKING ABOUT THE FOUR QUESTIONS YOU MUST ADDRESS IN YOUR SECOND MEMO: (1) What is your proposed solution to the social-impact problem you seek to solve? (2) How will your solution address the causes of the problem as outlined in your first memo? (3) What are the short-term outputs of your solution that will reveal its success? (4) What makes your solution different from other solutions to this problem?


- Batson and Ahmad, “Four Motives for Community Involvement,” Journal of Social Issues, Fall 2002

Week 9a: Giving as Impact (October 21)


- MacLaughlin, “The End of the Beginning of Online Giving,” npENGAGE, March 4, 2019

**THE SECOND QUADRANT OF SOCIAL IMPACT (COERCED/THIN)**

Week 9B: Service Learning as Impact (October 23)


Week 10a: Restoring Civic Health as Impact (October 28)

- Atwell, Bridgeland, and Levine, Civic Deserts: America’s Civic Health Challenge, CIRCLE, October 2017

**THE CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Week 10b: Corporate Social Responsibility as Impact (October 30)


Week 11a: Corporate Social Responsibility in Action (November 4)

THE THIRD QUADRANT OF SOCIAL IMPACT (VOLUNTARY/THICK)

Week 11b: Careers in Impact (November 6)


Week 12a: What Could Go Wrong? (November 11)

SECOND MEMO DUE

BEGIN THINKING ABOUT THE FOUR QUESTIONS YOU MUST ANSWER IN YOUR THIRD AND FINAL MEMO: (1) What are three important assumptions that will affect its impact? (2) What is the most important assumption that is the most vulnerable to a breakdown? (3) What are your signposts of impending breakdown of this important, vulnerable assumption? (4) What will you do to hedge if the assumption begins to fail?

Dewar, Assumption-Based Planning: A Tool for Very Uncertain Times, summary, chapters 1-6 (for Third Memo)

Week 12b: Social Entrepreneurship as an Impact Career (November 13)

• Landström, Åström, and Harirchi, “Innovation and Entrepreneurship Studies: One or Two Fields of Research?” International Entrepreneurship Management Journal, December 2013; a quick review of the two terms and how to use them

Week 13a: Social Entrepreneurship Realities (November 18)


Week 13b: Creating Friction (November 20)


THE FOURTH QUADRANT OF SOCIAL IMPACT (COERCED/THICK)

Week 14a: National Service as Impact (November 25)


Week 14b: Thanksgiving review (November 27)

Week 15a: Genetics and Impact (December 2)

V. DELIVERING ON THE PROMISES YOU MAKE

Week 15b: Scaling Up (December 4)


Week 16a: Investing in Success (December 9)

THIRD MEMO DUE


Week 16b: Endurance (December 11)

Complete the “grit scale”, and remember your score

- Schneider, “Teaching Kids ‘Grit’ Is All the Rage. Here’s What’s Wrong with It,” New Republic, May 6, 2014

TIMED TAKE-HOME EXAM
Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner’s Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.