Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship

New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
Stern School of Business
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Professor
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Office Hours: Email to schedule

Tuesdays 4:55-7:25
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Course Description

Entrepreneurship is a practice and therefore conducive to experiential learning—that is, learning by doing. Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship is an experiential course, consisting of projects connected to students' lives. Social entrepreneurship is social and interactive so our projects will be social and interactive.

As research at NYU found that high-performing social organizations' success depended less on the personality of their founders than on the disciplined application of teachable leadership and entrepreneurship skills, we will focus on these identifying and learning these skills in ourselves and others. Students will meet and work with active social entrepreneurs or create their own social entrepreneurship projects, in guided steps, among other projects.

The goal of these projects is not just to complete the single project but, by practicing social entrepreneurship yourself on a small scale and connecting with experienced practitioners, to learn its skills and culture to understand and practice it yourself.

The course consists of four units. Most sessions will have in-class exercises and at-home assignments, usually parts of larger projects. Most of the assignments will involve presenting your results to the rest of the class.

Unit 1: Introduction and What Is Social Entrepreneurship?

We will interact with, teach, and learn from each other. Since each student will choose his or her project for individual reasons, we will meet and learn each other's relevant backgrounds, interests, and goals.

After meeting each other we will work on defining “social entrepreneurship” for our class, allowing that we may have differing ideas. How does social entrepreneurship differ from entrepreneurship, non-profits, government, and so on?

Unit 2: The History of Social Entrepreneurship and Important Participants

Widespread use of the terms “social entrepreneur” and “social entrepreneurship” dates back less than a century and has rapidly grown in the past few decades. Several people and organizations have played particularly important roles. We will learn about some of these major contributors, problems they solved, how they worked, and legacies they left.

Unit 3: The Practice of Social Entrepreneurship

This unit will be the main unit of the course, containing the course's major project. Students can choose between two projects based on their interests.

Students interested in practicing social entrepreneurship will identify a need, develop solutions,
narrow them, and refine one by talking to people in the field (following a structure) for implementation. The goal of this project is not just to develop a single solution but to learn and experience the process of going from problem to solution in social entrepreneurship.

Students not interested in practicing social entrepreneurship will have the option of identifying a practicing social entrepreneur and working with them. The goal of this project is not just to meet and work with a social entrepreneur, but to see social entrepreneurship from the inside, to contribute, and to learn the entrepreneurial skills of meeting and connecting with anyone.

**Unit 4: Meaning, Value, Importance, Purpose, Sustainability**

This unit will look at meaning, value, importance, purpose, and other aspects that make social entrepreneurship social. We will also consider and discuss controversies and challenges of the field.

**Guest Speakers**

We will have 2-3 guest speakers who are experienced, practicing members of the social entrepreneurship community.

**Assignments**

I will describe the assignments comprehensively in each session in detail. The descriptions below broadly describe them.

Because social and presentation skills are essential for entrepreneurship and leadership, the deliverables for most assignments will be presentations to the class, usually progress reports.

Students will choose subjects of interest them, but will be responsible for making their subject interesting to the rest of the class. All presentations are limited to five minutes.

We will compile Unit 1 deliverables—lists of social entrepreneurs and organizations and citations of resources consulted—into a class-developed resource for future reference.

The main goal of the assignments is to learn skills in understanding and practicing social entrepreneurship, as well as how to find out more.

**Grading Policy**

*Participation (30%):* Because the class depends on collaboration and students knowing each other, the first two classes and participation in them are mandatory. As exercises are collaborative and most require presenting to the class, each unexcused absence will lower your grade by one increment—that is, an A would drop to an A-. Your participation counts not by volume of comments but quality of discussion.

*Written assignments (35%):* The homework assignments due in weeks 8 (short breakeven analysis and presentation), 9 (basic financial projections), and 11 (comprehensive presentation to key
stakeholder) have written components (and equivalents for entrepreneur-helpers). The assignments and their requirements will be explained in more detail in class.

*In-class presentations (35%):* Most assignments' deliverables are presentations to the class so engaging your classmates will be your main accountability from them. Because presentations are essential to entrepreneurship and you often don't get to choose how long you can present, the assignment part of your grade will depend on the quality of your presentation, your staying within the allotted time, and the quality of the work your presentation demonstrates. Your grade will not depend on outcomes outside of your control, only how well you approached. You can get as high a grade if your project doesn't get far based on your effort and presentation.
**Required Reading**


**OTHER SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP READING RESOURCES:**


Course Schedule

Unit 1: Introduction and What is Social Entrepreneurship?

Week 1: Introduction

We will begin with an overview of the course, its inquiry-driven project-based methods, the instructor, you, and your classmates. Each student's background and interests will drive their choice of project and what feedback they give to the rest of the class, so the more we know about each other the more we can appreciate, help, and learn from each other.

In-class exercise

We will go around the room, introducing ourselves and our relevant backgrounds, interests, and goals for the course.

Homework for next week

1. Write your definition for Social Entrepreneurship and prepare to present and defend it to the rest of the class.
2. List ten social entrepreneurs or socially entrepreneurial organizations that you find inspirational, influential, or meaningful and why. Include a few sentences describing each, at least one link to learn more, and a few sentences on why you chose them. Cite the sources you used in your research.

Reading for next week

Bornstein and Davis, Introduction and pp 1-26

Week 2: What is Social Entrepreneurship?

We will see an overview of social entrepreneurship from the people and organizations the class chose. We will also compare social entrepreneurship to other types of organizations by creating a class definition of the topic, considering questions like how social entrepreneurship differs from entrepreneurship, non-profits, government, and so on and who decides and how. What distinguishes a social entrepreneurship idea, entrepreneur, organization, and market?

In-class exercises

1. Each student will state their definition of Social Entrepreneurship. Then, as a class, we will create a working definition for the rest of the course, addressing the questions above.
2. Students will present their chosen people and organizations and why they chose them.

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**Homework for next week**

Research and prepare to present on the person or organization you find most meaningful that no one else has chosen. Address questions such as what need or problem drove its creation, who created the solution, whom they served, how they solve the problem, what challenges they overcame, who composed their team, whom they partnered with, what their ongoing influence is, and any other important issues. Cite the resources you used in your research.

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein and Davis, Introduction and pp 26-47.
Bornstein, Ch1 and Ch5

**Unit 2: History of Social Entrepreneurship and Important Figures**

**Week 3: Important Figures**

We will learn about figures important to the class through more comprehensive presentations about people and organizations that matter to us.

**In-class exercise**

Each student will present the person or organization they researched for homework.

**Homework for next week**

1. List five social entrepreneurs or organizations active before 1914 or that inspired one of the organizations presented today that you find inspirational, influential, or meaningful.

2. Research and prepare to present about the person or organization you find most meaningful. Address questions such as what need drove its creation, who created it, what community they served, what challenges they overcame, who composed their team, what other people and organizations they partnered with, their ongoing influence, and any other important issues. Cite the resources you used in your research.

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein, ch 4
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Yunus
Week 4: History
We will learn about historical figures in the history of social entrepreneurship important to the class through comprehensive presentations about people and organizations that matter to us.
This week we will also begin the core practice of social entrepreneurship of identifying unmet needs, the most important step in solving them. Students who prefer not to become social entrepreneurs have the option of identifying an active one to work with.

In-class exercise
Each student will present the person or organization they researched for homework.

Homework for next week
Option 1, for students who want to become social entrepreneurs: Identify and list at least five unmet needs or tasks you might improve and at least a rudimentary product or service to solve it to present in five minutes or less. The needs must be in areas meeting the class definition of social entrepreneurship. Focus more on understanding the problems than on the quality of solutions. Unit 3 will focus on the core entrepreneurial skill of improving solutions and bringing them to the relevant community.
Option 2, for students who don't want to become social entrepreneurs: Identify five active social entrepreneurs whose work you like and want to contribute to that you could find a way to communicate with by any medium. Present for five minutes on these five people and how you would reach them.

Reading for next week
Bornstein and Davis, pp 48-61

Unit 3: The Practice of Social Entrepreneurship

Week 5: Starting by Identifying Problems
Entrepreneurs-to-be will begin the practice of improving our understanding of unmet needs and the iterative process of improving solutions based on feedback from the community we want to serve. We will start developing the community-feedback-iteration skills by improving our solutions based on advice from our classmates.
Entrepreneur-helpers will learn the skill of contacting and creating a connection with someone at the edge or just outside their network. I will present an effective technique to reach them.

In-class exercise
Each student will present their results from last week's homework. Entrepreneurs-to-be will then
meet each other one-on-one in turn to share which of the other’s problem-and-solution they liked most and at least one recommendation to improve it. By the end of class, each Entrepreneur-to-be must choose one idea and solution to continue with.

Entrepreneur-helpers will work on applying the technique to reach people to the people they selected and to create a project with them meeting minimal standards for the assignment.

**Homework for next week**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will present their problem-and-solution to at least ten friends or family members and ask for advice to improve it. They will create a five-minute presentation on the improved understanding of the problem and solution resulting from the advice.

Entrepreneur-helpers will finish crafting their messages and act on them (sending the emails, calling, meeting, etc) within twenty-four hours of class. They will prepare presentations of the results of sending these messages.

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein, ch. 2 and 3.

**Week 6: Learning from the Community You Serve and iterating.**

**Guest speaker:** John Emerson, designer and social entrepreneur. ([http://www.backspace.com/is/in/the/house/address.html](http://www.backspace.com/is/in/the/house/address.html))

Entrepreneurs-to-be will continue the practice of iteratively improving understandings of problem and quality of solutions.

Entrepreneur-helpers will begin their work with active social entrepreneurs. We will trouble-shoot cases where students received no responses.

**In-class exercise**

Each student will present the results of their homework.

For entrepreneur-helpers, we will focus on viewing the responses from a project management perspective to make sure they get a project they can valuably contribute to for a month or two.

**Homework for next week**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will create a list of at least ten people valuable to their project, contact them, describe the project so far, get their feedback, improve the project based on the feedback, and prepare a presentation of the improved project.

Entrepreneur-helpers will work on their project with their social entrepreneur and prepare to present on their progress.

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**Week 7: Understanding Our Solutions and Projects: Models that Work**

Entrepreneurs create organizations that sustain themselves. This week we will do basic analysis to understand sustainability and demonstrate it through a breakeven analysis, also a useful tool to refine the organizational model. Social entrepreneurs generally further create organizations that change a system, which you can express in a model for change.

Entrepreneurs-to-be will analyze their projects from a financial perspective through a basic breakeven analysis and their social impact through a model for change.

Entrepreneur-helpers will report on continuing their work with active social entrepreneurs. We will troubleshoot any students' projects that need it.

**In-class exercise**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will present their homework results. Entrepreneur-helpers will present their progress on their projects with their social entrepreneurs.

**Homework for next week**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will perform a breakeven analysis, narrowing down the operational model as necessary. They will prepare presentations on the operational model of their project, demonstrating sustainability based on all stakeholders' interests and how they interact.

Entrepreneur-helpers will work on their project with their social entrepreneur and prepare to present on their progress.

**Week 8: Finances and Operations**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will refine their financial understanding of their projects. We will cover how to identify relevant revenues, costs, and assumptions, and how to put them together to project two years of operations financially.

Entrepreneur-helpers will report on continuing their work with active social entrepreneurs. We will troubleshoot any students' projects that need it.

**In-class exercise**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will present their operational models including key stakeholders and their interests, how the project is sustainable, and how long it will take and what scale they need to break even.

Entrepreneur-helpers will present their progress on their projects with their social entrepreneurs.
**Homework for next week**
Entrepreneurs-to-be will create two-year financial projections for their projects, clearly stating assumptions. They will also think of and list five experts or dream contacts they could reach. Entrepreneur-helpers will work on their project with their social entrepreneur and prepare to present on their progress.

**Week 9: Preparing to Talk to Very Important People**

**Guest Speaker:** Carly Leinheiser, Attorney in Social Entrepreneurship and NYU-Law graduate

Now that they have a comprehensive understanding of their project, entrepreneurs-to-be will prepare to contact their experts or dream contacts with help from the entrepreneur-helpers, based on their experience contacting their social entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneur-helpers will report on continuing their work with active social entrepreneurs. We will trouble-shoot students' projects that need it.

**In-class exercise**
Our guest speaker, Carly Leinheiser, will speak on different types of legal structures of social entrepreneurship, their strengths and weaknesses, and how to form them.

**Homework for next week**
Entrepreneurs-to-be will contact at least two dream contacts, present their project, get feedback to improve the project, and prepare to present on the experience.
Entrepreneur-helpers will work on their project with their social entrepreneur and prepare to present on their progress.

**Week 10: Talking to Very Important People for Our Projects**

Having spoken with over thirty people, including two experts and ten community members, and iterated their solutions at least four times, entrepreneurs-to-be have now reached an advanced stage of understanding their problem, the community affected by it, and their solutions.

**In-class exercise**
Entrepreneurs-to-be will present on the results of speaking with their dream contacts and resulting improvements to their plans.
Entrepreneur-helpers will report on continuing their work with active social entrepreneurs. We will trouble-shoot any students' projects that need it.
**Homework for next week**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will decide on a key stakeholder to whom they would need to present their project to influence—donor, legislator, hiring candidate, etc—and create a presentation for them.

Entrepreneur-helpers will wrap up their project with their social entrepreneur and prepare final presentations, including an overview, major challenges, results, what they learned related to the project, what they learned about social entrepreneurship in general, and next steps, if any.

**Week 11: Bringing it Together: Polished, professional presentations.**

**In-class exercise**

Entrepreneurs-to-be will tell the class for whom they created their presentations and their goal in the presentation. The class will play the role of that presentee. The presenter will present to and try to influence us.

Entrepreneur-helpers will give final presentations on their project with the experienced practicing social entrepreneur.

**Homework for next week**

Think about what differentiates social entrepreneurship from related activities—regular entrepreneurship, social non-entrepreneurship, government, individual action, etc—and prepare to discuss and defend your views.

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein, ch. 8 and 10

**Unit 4: Meaning, Value, Importance, Purpose, Sustainability**

**Week 12: What Makes Social Entrepreneurship Social?**

**In-class exercise**

We will have an in-class discussion on meaning, values, importance, and purpose as they relate to social entrepreneurship. Be prepared to grapple with issues like

- If you call yourself social or suggest you are doing good, what are you saying about those doing something different? Are you suggesting they are doing bad or acting anti-socially? What if they disagree? Who decides what is good or helpful?

- What happens when your values differ from someone else who also feels they are doing good? For example, how might an environmentalist think about nuclear power? Or electric vehicles versus bicycles?
I will likely take devil's advocate positions to challenge your views.

*Reading for next week*

Bornstein and Davis, pp 61-74

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_Laptop_per_Child


http://www.fastcompany.com/3024175/the-heart-of-hale-county

**Week 13: Limitations of Social Entrepreneurship, critical analysis, and learning from other people's mistakes**

*In-class exercise*

We will discuss

- Problems that projects that seemed promising and enjoyed success couldn't overcome
- How some groups analyze the success of social ventures and hold them accountable.

*Unit 1 continued: Introduction and What is Social Entrepreneurship?*

**Week 14: Reviewing What We've Learned**

We will review our understanding of social entrepreneurship based on our experience practicing it, debating it, and seeing others experiences.

*In-class exercise*

Review our experiences over the semester. Revisit our definition of social entrepreneurship and redefine it if necessary based on our experiences, projects, and discussions.

**Week 15: Tapping into Real-World Social Entrepreneurial Community**

(Will likely happen mid-semester, depending on external event schedule)

At least one session will consist of a field trip to a trade show, networking event, job fair, or other meeting of social entrepreneurship professionals, where we will meet and talk to active professionals, practicing and using entrepreneurial skills to meaningfully connect with them.

*In-class exercise*

We will prepare for the event by practicing useful entrepreneurial skills: preparing for such an event, how to make meaningful connections, and how to enter with productive beliefs.
Joshua Spodek, PhD MBA

Joshua Spodek earned such praise as “Best and Brightest” (Esquire Magazine's Genius Issue), “Astrophysicist turned new media whiz” (NBC), and “Rocket Scientist” (Forbes Magazine and ABC News) with success in such diverse fields as science, invention, entrepreneurship, art, leadership, coaching, and education.

A Professor at NYU-Poly's Technology Management Department, he holds five Ivy-League degrees, including a PhD in Astrophysics and an MBA, both from Columbia University, where he studied under a Nobel Laureate. He helped build an X-ray observational satellite orbiting the Earth as part of a multi-billion-dollar decade-plus mission led by the European Space Agency with NASA. He left academia to co-found a venture, Submedia, to bring to market his invention—a technology to show motion-pictures to subway riders moving between stations—starting the field of commercial in-tunnel motion-pictures. Submedia has grown worldwide to install dozens of displays in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Australia. He holds six patents. He co-founded and helped lead several education ventures, including partnering with New York City Public Schools. He has taught art at Parsons the New School for Design and NYU-Tisch's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP).

Fascinated and surprised at how well business schools taught leadership, which he had previously thought unteachable, he studied it, soon becoming a leadership and executive coach for Columbia Business School's Program on Social Intelligence (and to private coaching clients). He leads seminars in Leadership, Creativity, Sales, Strategy, and Motivation at institutions including Columbia Business School, Harvard, NYU-Stern School of Business, INSEAD Singapore, the New York Academy of Science, and in private corporations. As one of few people in the world to have visited North Korea twice, he has lectured on North Korean strategy at Columbia University and in South Korea and China. He wrote a book on North Korean strategy reviewed as “a very thought-provoking read that may totally change how you interpret the country.”

His coaching clients include start-up founders as well as employees of McKinsey, Bain, BCG, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, A.T. Kearney, UBS, Bear Stearns, JP Morgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Deutsche Bank, Citigroup, American Express, Lazard Freres, Blackrock, the Cowen Group, ValueAct, Investec, DE Shaw, Stifel Nicolaus, the International Monetary Fund, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, Google, Yahoo, Yelp, Sony, IBM, Oracle, Honda, Carnegie Hall, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, Lionsgate, the William Morris Agency, the Creative Artists Agency, Time Magazine, CBS, Universal McCann, Proctor & Gamble, ExxonMobil, Lockheed-Martin, FIFA World Cup Organizing Committee, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, and others.

His clients include graduates of Columbia, Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Cornell, Princeton, Duke, Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, Indian Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, Northwestern, Tufts, Vassar, Amherst, NYU, the U.S. Naval Academy, and others.

He has been quoted and profiled by ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, Fox, UPN, NY1, CNN, CNN-International,
As an artist he has shown large public art installations in New York City's Bryant Park and Union Square and Amsterdam's Dam Square. He has had solo shows in New York City, group shows across the country, and has shown in museums, Art Basel Miami Beach, MTV, and more. His work has won an Obie Award for Design Excellence and reached the semifinals in the Adobe Design Achievement Awards.

He finished five marathons and counting (3:51 best), competed at the World and National level of Ultimate Frisbee (with teams ranked #5 at College Nationals, #8 at Club Nationals, and #11 at Worlds), including captaining his college team as well as playing at the first Ultimate Tournament in Pyongyang, North Korea. For fun he swam across the Hudson River and has jumped out of airplanes. He has visited 21 countries, including years in Paris, Ahmedabad (India), and Shanghai. He lives in New York City's Greenwich Village and blogs daily at www.joshuaspodek.com.
Social Entrepreneurship Web Resources

Fellowships
Ashoka Foundation: www.ashoka.org
Echoing Green: www.echoinggreen.org
Schwab Foundation: www.schwabfound.org
Skoll Foundation: www.skollfoundation.org
Starting Bloc: www.startingbloc.org
Dell Social Innovation Competition: http://www.dellsocialinnovationcompetition.com

Career
Idealist, Jobs to Change the World: http://www.idealist.org

Networks
Omidyar Network: http://www.omidyar.com
Net Impact: www.netimpact.org

Training
Skillshare, a community marketplace for classes: http://www.skillshare.com

Crowdsourcing and Funding
Kickstarter: http://www.kickstarter.com
IOBY: http://ioby.org

News
Social Edge: http://www.socialedge.org
Change. Org: http://socialentrepreneurship.change.org
Next Billion: www.nextbillion.net
Alltop: www.alltop.com
Corporate Responsibility Newswire: http://www.csrwire.com
Good Magazine: http://www.good.is

Social Investors/Venture Philanthropy
Acumen Fund: www.acumenfund.org
Tides Foundation: www.tidesfoundation.org
REDF: http://www.redf.org
UNLTD: www.unltd.org.uk

Organizations
Center for Social Innovation: http://socialinnovation.ca
Charity Navigator, to evaluate charities: www.charitynavigator.org
Free The Children: www.metowe.org
BRAC: http://www.brac.net