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

Thursdays 4:55pm-7:25pm
Room 102 Meyer
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 exercises and projects connected to students’ lives. Social entrepreneurship is social and interactive so our projects will be social and interactive.

Research at NYU found that high-performing organizations’ success depended less on the personality of their founders than on the disciplined application of teachable leadership and entrepreneurship skills. Therefore we will focus on identifying and learning these skills in ourselves and others. Students will create their own social entrepreneurship projects in guided steps, among other projects. Last year’s class saw several students’ projects get funded, reach prototyping stage, lead to their getting hired and to create dialogues with prominent, successful social entrepreneurs.

However successful, the goal of these projects is not just to complete the single project but, by practicing social entrepreneurship yourself on a small scale in a protected environment, to learn its theory, 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 or to small groups.

Because social entrepreneurship is personal and often passionate and reflection helps internalize experiences, you will keep a journal of your experiences of the course. We’ll set aside time at the end of each class to reflect and start writing journal entries while the in-class exercises and recent material are fresh. Students can also expect to teach and learn from each other as part of the learning process.

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 understanding “social entrepreneurship” for our class and giving it meaning, allowing that we may have differing ideas. How does social entrepreneurship differ from entrepreneurship, non-profits, government, and so on?

Unit 2: The History and Important People of Social Entrepreneurship

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 will identify unmet needs, develop solutions, narrow those solutions, 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.

Unit 4: Creating Enduring, Mutually Beneficial Professional Relationships

The more our goals differ from simply buying and selling goods and services, the more our ventures depend on our abilities to create enduring, mutually beneficial relationships between individuals and organizations. Creating effective teams depends on aligning interests, which depends on learning others' interests and sharing yours, which depend on your ability to act with compassion, empathy, and professionalism, and not like you're pitching them.

This unit examines how and why effective individual and organizational relationships start and work.

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 or small groups.

Students will choose subjects of interest them, but will be responsible for making their subject interesting to their audience. 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 (25%): 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 (25%): The assignments with written parts include the two personal statements, financials, and final paper. The personal statements will be about three pages. The final paper will be at least five pages and must connect at least four of the readings to your class experiences.

In-class presentations (25%): Most 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.

Journal (25%): Writing forces you to reflect and think critically about your experience and clarify your thinking. Each student must write at least one journal entry per week of at least 500 words on their experience of the exercises, readings, or some other part of class. The content is up to you, so I will not grade your journal entries for content, except that you put the effort in to get the point of the exercise.
Required Reading


OTHER SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP READING RESOURCES:


Course Schedule

Unit 1: Introduction and What is Social Entrepreneurship?

Week 1: Introduction
September 3

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.

**Guest Speaker:** Grace Pozniak, NYU student who started a venture during this course last year

**In-class exercises**
1. I will describe the course's structure, policies, and deliverables and answer questions.
2. Class introductions and why we chose to take it.
3. Discussion: what is social entrepreneurship?
4. Guest speaker will describe her experience of the course from a student perspective.

**Homework for next week**
1. Write a definition you like for Social Entrepreneurship and prepare to present and defend it to the rest of the class.
2. List six 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?
September 10

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 working definition of the field, considering questions like how social entrepreneurship differs from entrepreneurship, non-profits, government, and so on and how. What distinguishes

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a social entrepreneurship idea, entrepreneur, organization, and market?

**In-class exercises**

1. Share definitions of social entrepreneurship and compare.
2. In small groups, create a working definitions, addressing the questions above.
3. Watch Muhammad Yunus videos and discuss.
4. In small groups, share a paragraph or top issues from your personal essay to learn more about the people you'll work with.

**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 resources you used in your research. I'll give examples.

**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**

September 17

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

**In-class exercises**

1. In small groups, present your social entrepreneur.
2. In small groups pick one of your social entrepreneurs. Figure out old model, why did that model make sense? Was there precedent for new model? Trace the problem and new model back as far as you can. Why didn't anyone come up with it before? What was the original idea the one that took off?

**Homework for next week**

1. List five social entrepreneurs or organizations active before 1915 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 that doesn't overlap with someone in your group. 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

September 24

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.

In-class exercise

1. In small groups, each student will present a few sentences on their five favorite historical social entrepreneurs and the one person or organization they researched for homework.

2. Each group will pick one historical social entrepreneur and figure out all the influences they've had. How many different organizations and people have they affected? How many “offspring” have they inspired?

Homework for next week

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.

I'll give examples for guidance.
**Reading for next week**

Bornstein and Davis, pp 48-61

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**Unit 3: The Practice of Social Entrepreneurship**

**Week 5: Starting by Identifying Problems**

October 1

We 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.

**In-class exercise**

In small groups each student will present their results from last week's homework. You will then meet in pairs to share which of the other's problem-and-solution they liked most and three pieces of advice to improve it. By the end of class, you'll choose one idea and rudimentary solution to continue with.

**Homework for next week**

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

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein, ch. 2 and 3.

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

October 8

You will continue the practice of iteratively improving understandings of problem and quality of solutions, experiencing the effects of putting the unmet needs of the people you are serving first.

**In-class exercises**

1. Review in class and then in small groups what worked and trouble-shoot what didn't.
2. Each student will present the results of their homework to your working group and give feedback and advice.
3. List at least ten people in or closer to your field than you that you can reach.
Homework for next week

With the list of ten people valuable to your project, contact them, describe the project, get advice, improve the project based on the advice, and prepare a presentation of the improved project.

Reading for next week

Grameen Bank: Taking Capitalism to the Poor, Mainsah, E. et al., Chazen Journal of International Business, Columbia Business School, 2004

Week 7: Operational models

October 15

Entrepreneurs create organizations that sustain themselves. This week we will consider what groups our organizations will affect and start modeling how our planned organizations will interact with them. This week we will transition from talking about general plans to specific implementations.

In-class exercises

1. As a class and then in groups, share what worked, trouble-shoot what didn't.
2. Present your homework results to your working group, meet in pairs to give and get three pieces of advice.
3. List all relevant parties that your organization will interact with.

Homework for next week

You will create a simple visual modeling how the parties you listed interact with each other and that you can present to the class.

I will give examples for guidance.

Week 8: Operational stability

October 22

You will refine your understanding of your project and its sustainability by considering its finances. We will cover how to identify relevant revenues, costs, and assumptions, and how to put them together to project two years of financial operations.

In-class exercises

1. You will present your operational model to the class.
2. In small groups, discuss if your projects seem sustainable and how you know.
3. Bootcamp in value of an income statement, especially in viability, sustainability, capital...
needs, and understanding details of your operations.

4. Create left-hand column for your income statement.

**Homework for next week**

You will create a two-year projected income statement for your project, clearly stating assumptions and present it to at least two people.

**Week 9: Reflect on our experience**

October 29

**Guest speaker:** TBD

Now that you have a comprehensive understanding of your project and before the next stage of presenting your project to experts, we will review our models and financials for opportunities, holes, problems, etc and to deepen our understandings.

We will also punctuate our increased experience in our field, connections with relevant people, and understanding of our project with a second personal essay.

**In-class exercises**

1. As a class, share what worked on homework and trouble-shoot what didn't.
2. In working groups present your financial projections and assumptions.

**Homework for next week**

Write a second personal essay, reporting and reflecting on your change since the first one—taking into account especially your new experience focusing on and solving problems, your connections with people in the field, and your understanding of your project.

**Week 10: Speaking with and engaging top-level people**

November 5

Having spoken with three dozen or so people, including ten community members, and iterated your solutions dozens of times, you have now reached an advanced stage of understanding the practice of social entrepreneurship, your problem, the community affected by it, and your solutions.

**In-class exercises**

1. In pairs, read a paragraph from your second personal essay, hear another's, and discuss.
2. List at least ten top-level people in your field you can possibly reach to communicate with.
3. In small groups, list contacts and add to list.

4. Prepare sample introduction emails. I'll give examples and templates.

**Homework for next week**

Contact and talk to at least ten top-level people in your field and get advice like you did the ten people closer to you. We will also discuss how to use similar conversations to get internships. Prepare polished, professional presentation to present to your group next week. Practice twice.

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

November 12

Most of you will have a project nearly ready to launch with a community of people who contributed to it, have a vested interest in its success, and know others in the community. We will wrap up Unit 3 by presenting our project to our working groups.

**In-class exercises**

1. In class, share what worked, trouble-shoot what didn't.

2. In groups, present your thirty-more-times improved project. This presentation should be

**Homework for next week**

Serving community versus pitching solution exercise.

**Reading for next week**

Bornstein, ch. 8 and 10

**Unit 4: Creating Enduring, Mutually Beneficial Organizational Relationships**

After Unit 3 there will be no homework assignments for your project, though the material will be relevant for those who want to continue anyway, and I will be available to help on them.

Unit 4 will focus on a major part of the “social” part of social entrepreneurship: creating enduring, mutually beneficial organizational relationships. Many traditional entrepreneurs focus on their product or service and pitch it, often putting their audiences on the defensive. This unit will focus on creating relationships.

**Week 12: Starting relationships**

November 19
How to start relationships with people and organizations you want to create ongoing operational relationships with. We will consider and discuss the perspective of your potential operational partners when first meeting.

**In-class exercise**

In class review of homework.

**Homework for next week**

Start working on your final reflection paper, which you can turn in any time before the last class. Optional: if you have meetings this week with new people, use the structure we cover.

**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: Learning their needs and suggesting solutions**

People invested in their solutions often come off as pushing them, even social entrepreneurs. We will continue to work on how to keep the focus on the problem you want to solve and the community you want to serve. As we'll see, doing so tends to engage others.

**In-class exercises**

1. Compassion and empathy exercises

**Week 14: Formalizing working relationships**

Many working relationships require contracts to clarify mutual understandings. You also generally have to resolve conflicts and objections to reach that point. Today's class will cover handling objections and coming to agreement to prepare for written agreements.

**In-class exercise**

Class discussion on applying Unit 4's material

**Week 15: Review**

Informal class discussion reviewing the course.
Instructor bio: 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.

An adjunct Professor at NYU, 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 NYU-Stern School of Business, Columbia Business School, Harvard, Princeton, MIT, 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 26 countries in six continents, including years in Paris, Ahmedabad (India), and Shanghai. He lives in New York City's Greenwich Village and blogs daily at [www.joshuaspodek.com](http://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