



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

UPADM-GP 265

Fundamentals of Social Entrepreneurship

Fall 2021

Course Description

This course starts with the premise that individuals can have a meaningful impact on social issues through the vehicle of social entrepreneurship and that they can help shape and change the world. The course is applicable to multiple aspects of social enterprise including - for profit companies and start-ups, non-profit or self funding organizations and people who want to act more entrepreneurially from within larger NGO's, non-profits or socially oriented businesses. This course is for those who seek to learn and use an entrepreneurial approach to ameliorate major, global, social challenges and to think about changing the world in the process. No prior business experience is needed, just an open mind to learning new things and new ways to look at the world. In the end it's not required that people pursue a path of social entrepreneurship but more so that they have a new lens with which to see the world and how to solve problems in the world.

There are multiple definitions of social entrepreneurship and it is not the aim of this class to define a single path or to cover every single iteration. Instead the aim is to help students with a passion for social impact, start to think about and understand an entrepreneurial mindset, and how to apply it. It is important to understand that there are no hard skills of entrepreneurship, merely a mindset of how to think about creating businesses, and this class focuses on the mindset. There is no startup handbook or ten step program that comes out of the class because every startup journey is personal and different. What matters more is what you learn about you and how you start to learn about the world around you.

There is debate about whether entrepreneurs are born or they are made. Either way, it is likely that their success was not learned by sitting in a classroom or listening to lectures.

Entrepreneurs succeed because they have a mindset for experimentation, and they have a passion and vision to change the world. Also they are pretty good story tellers. Students taking this class will best learn when they embrace the class and the methods of learning in the class with an entrepreneurial mindset. In other words, I am biased towards the way that I learned to be both a social and a start up entrepreneur. I tried a lot of things. I asked a lot of questions. I read articles, books and watched videos and listened to podcasts. I asked for advice. I took

meetings. I failed. I looked at my metrics. I hired people smarter than me. I took ideas from one vertical and applied them to another. And every day I tried to learn something new, made new experiments, cared nothing for the way it was supposed to be, tried to do too much, and thought, there must be a better way. To inculcate that through the class is the ultimate goal.

Students will be given multiple opportunities to develop and use their entrepreneurial mindset through

- Co-creating and shaping the curriculum, providing feedback ongoing about our learning
- Researching and finding articles, videos, podcasts and people to talk to that are not in the curriculum but support their learning and their final projects
- Learning and presenting in multiple modalities (video, presentations, papers)
- Questioning speakers, building business models, discussing and cooperating with classmates
- Assessing their own strengths and weaknesses and development over the course of the semester

Assignments

- You must do the required reading
- In addition to reading I will assign videos and podcasts which you are required to watch or listen to
- I will ask you to do research to support the reading and share this research with the class
- Participation in class and presentations
- Everyone will work on an idea for a social enterprise and use that as the structure for applying what is discussed each week
- Help make our class the best class it can be, on a weekly basis

Grading

Participation and Attendance (20%):

Participation shows that you are engaged and have done the homework. It also reflects regular attendance in class. If you feel uncomfortable participating you have the option of emailing me additional thoughts after class. Given the virtual nature of the class this will be a work in progress. If it becomes too hard to participate over Zoom or in person, we will weigh this differently. Unexcused absences count against your grade (details below).

Weekly assignments + Midterm Project (40%):

As a start-up, every month you report to your board of directors and keep them updated on your progress, your metrics and key developments. Likewise each week you must update me via email before the next class. An update email* or slack message gives me a brief overview of what you've been learning, questions you might have, other resources, feedback on the class and progress on your idea. In other words, every week you send me an email which consists of three parts: 1) A brief overview of what you learned (this is not a book report so no need to reflect back what's in the reading). 2) Your thoughts, reactions, feelings. 3) Questions you had

(you can just list these). If you do not submit a summary email each class before the class starts, you will lose points from your final grade.

(40%): Your final product

- 1) You will create a social venture as a group project in this class. You will build a plan and present it ongoing and at the end to your peers for feedback. It will not be perfect. It may never launch. But it's the process of structuring and doing this that will lay the groundwork for your next venture and the one after that.
- 2) You will write a 3 - 5 page letter to yourself about what you learned and advice on how to be a successful social entrepreneur.

Course Rules and Requirements:

1. Absences: Attendance will be taken for each class. As active participation is an important element of your grade, so is attendance. Any more than three absences will result in a zero for the attendance (and participation) portion of your grade. Please notify me by email prior to any class in which you will be absent or late. There will be no make-ups due to excused or unexcused absence or lateness.

2. Group Work: One of the course deliverables and many of the in-class discussions will involve group work. You are expected to work cooperatively in such groups and to be an individual contributor to the group process. Group dynamics will be observed and will also contribute to the class participation portion of your grade.

3. Preparation: As stated in the syllabus, this course involves reading the assigned materials and completing the assignments. Therefore, coming prepared to class is absolutely required. Students may be asked questions whether or not they offer to participate so please make sure you are prepared.

4. Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Participation in cheating, forgery and plagiarism are subject to disciplinary action.

5. Wagner School Policies: The course will be subject to all Wagner School policies

About the Instructor

Dan Porter has been a social entrepreneur and a start up entrepreneur for over 25 years. He was on the founding team of Teach For America and served as its first President. He was on the board of Venture for America in its early incarnation. As a startup entrepreneur he launched the first online ticketing company, TicketWeb, which was sold to Ticketmaster for \$40 million. He was the CEO of OMGPOP and designed the mobile game Draw Something which was downloaded over 250 million times, and he sold the company to a large publicly traded company for \$200 million. As an investor he ran digital investments for Richard Branson and the

Virgin Group in North America and launched a \$50mm venture fund while running digital at the global talent agency William Morris Endeavor. He is currently the CEO of Overtime, a digital sports network with over 50 million followers and billions of monthly video views, and he is a graduate of Princeton University and NYU.

Required Reading

[The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses](#)

Eric Ries

[How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas, Updated Edition](#)

David Bornstein

[Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs](#)

Muhammad Yunus

Below you will find an outline of what we plan to discuss, on a weekly basis. The exact topic in each class is subject to change before the semester begins and as the semester goes along depending on how much we are able to cover and what questions arise in the process of our learning. Changes will be reflected on this document.

Class 1: Can you learn how to be an entrepreneur?

Class 2: How do organizations think about solving the world's problems?

Class 3: What goes wrong when trying to save the world?

Class 4: How to start, by thinking really small

Class 5: How to develop products

Class 6: How entrepreneurs use a market driven approach Part 1

Class 7: How entrepreneurs use a market driven approach Part 2

Class 8: How to think about what to measure

Class 9: What is strategy and positioning?

Class 10: Target population and All the Parts of the Project

Class 11: How do we get money for our idea?

Class 12: What they say about you when you're not in the room

Class 13: Final Presentations

Class 14 Final Presentations