

Nonprofit Organization Leadership and Governance

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UAP 5534-95095
Thurs. 9:30-12:15
Location: 111AA

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will acquaint you with the foundations and role of leadership and governance of third sector organizations. It builds upon issues treated in other courses in the Program's curriculum, including Non Profit Organization and Management, Non-Governmental Organizations (ngos) and International Development and Collaborative Processes and Civil Society. This seminar aims to help you understand the relationships among leadership, management and governance as organizational imperatives. I also aim to help you identify the ways in which you may exercise your unique talents and capabilities in the furtherance of each of these three claims as you pursue your professional career. In addition, the seminar seeks explicitly to sample the literature on nongovernmental organization leadership and governance so as to compare and contrast it to that concerning nonprofit organization (npo). My goal is to allow those of you interested in ngos to profit from insights in the nonprofit literature and vice versa. I think you will find the challenges confronting these forms of organization strikingly similar despite the mediation of obvious cultural differences. Finally, we explore the many forms of accountability at play for nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations and examine how the leadership and governance roles are related to those claims and must seek daily to address them.

We shall together explore such questions as: How should we lead and govern nonprofit organizations, given the typical complexity of their funding streams and the mission-driven character of their reasons for existence? In particular, we shall explore a number of different conceptions of leadership and governance as they relate to nonprofit organization operating environments including those labeled as adaptive, servant, catalytic, strategic, generative, ethical and aligning. We shall explore at some length the portent of these leadership forms for the roles and effectiveness of governing boards on the one hand and executive leaders on the other hand. My hope is to assist you as you develop your own conception of leadership while providing you a thoroughgoing knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of strategies that have been employed in ngos and npos in the past.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Be able to describe the role of leadership vis-à-vis the evolving character of social, political and economic challenges to nonprofit/ nongovernmental organizations
2. Be able to describe the accountability environments now confronting nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations and be able to describe their relationship(s) to effective leadership and governance
3. Be able to suggest the nature of the links between non-profit organization leaders and trustees, their stakeholder communities and effective nongovernmental governance
4. Be able to identify many of the major governance challenges confronting leaders of nonprofit organizations of varying types and suggest strategies to address them
5. Be able to consider comparatively the central questions of organizational leadership and governance innate to nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations
6. Be able to articulate an individual orientation or ethos to leadership of a nonprofit organization and a rationale for adopting that perspective given their unique talents

COURSE READINGS

Chait, Richard. P. William Ryan, Barbara Taylor. **Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Non Profit Boards**. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2005.

Dym, Barry and Harry Hutson. **Leadership in Non Profit Organizations**. Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage Publications, 2005.

Robert K. Greenleaf. **Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness** (25th Anniversary edition). Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002. Paper or cloth.

Heifetz, Ronald A. **Leadership without Easy Answers**. Cambridge: Harvard (Belknap) University Press, 1994.

Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl **NGO Accountability**. London: Earthscan Publishers, 2006. Paper.

Peter Northouse **Leadership Theory and Practice** 4th ed. Thousand Oaks Ca. Sage Publications, 2006. Paper.

Smillie, Ian and John Hailey. **Managing for Change: Leadership, Strategy and Management in Asian ngos**. London: Earthscan Publishers, 2002.

In addition to these core texts, we shall read a number of articles. Those will be posted as PDF's on the course Blackboard site and are identified below by author.

ASSIGNMENTS

August 23		Introduction to the Course
	Theories of Leadership	
August 30		Northouse, xvii-174
September 6		Northouse, 175-367
	Adaptive Leadership	
September 13		Heifetz, ix-124
September 20		Heifetz, 125-276 Stephenson I
	Leadership as Personal Ethical Commitment and Example	
September 27		Grenleaf, 1-162,
October 4		Greenleaf, 163-330 Stephenson II
	Leadership as Alignment	
October 11		Dym and Hutson, vii-108 Hickson et.al.

October 18		Dym and Hutson, 109-213 Smith Abzug
October 25	NGO Leadership: Cases and Strategies	Smillie, vii-113
November 1		Smilie, 114-173 Stone and Ostrower
November 8	Governance as Leadership	Chait, xv-100 Eisenhardt Harlan
November 15		Chait, 100-182 Holland
Thanksgiving Break		
November 29	Governance, Leadership and Accountability	Jordan, vii-228 Benn and Dunphy Renz

EVALUATIONS

This seminar employs several different forms of evaluation that result in a number of assessments for each participant. There is one (3-5) page analytical analysis, two review essays, a paper providing an analysis of the governance challenges confronting a nonprofit/nongovernmental organization of your choice, two oral presentations, as well as my judgment of your overall seminar participation and preparation.

1. **Analytical/Interpretive Analysis.** This 3-5 page single-spaced assignment requires that you analyze specific issues or arguments that have arisen in your readings. It demands that you clearly address the issues raised in the question that I shall provide, while demonstrating your mastery of the authors' arguments. Please keep that famous old aphorism in mind as you prepare this effort " 'Writing shorter' may be smarter, I don't know, but it surely is harder." Attributed to Stephen Olin.
2. **Review Essays. A.** Choose a text on ngo governance, read it, read reviews concerning it in major journals (e.g. *Voluntas*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Public Administration Review*, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*) and prepare your own review essay of 2,000 words that considers the work you have read. You should place it in context in the broader literature, suggest how it is linked to course readings and otherwise demonstrate that you have thought carefully about the author develops its arguments, about how your work links to other works you have read for the course, and to broader streams of inquiry. Please ensure that you make your judgments plain and that you suggest why you came to them. Please plan to share these with your colleagues. I would like to post them on Blackboard. **B.** Choose three scholarly articles on governance and critique these. Your analysis should consider their aspirations, the assumptions on which they were constructed, the reasonableness of their central claims, the adequacy of their methodology and how they relate to course readings. Plan on an essay of about 3000 words. Keep in mind that this should be one argument so you will need to develop and comment on common themes and concerns as revealed by the several articles you consider.

3. **Governance Profile.** This 9-10 page single-spaced paper requires that you develop an analysis of how well a nonprofit/nongovernmental organization of your choosing is doing and whether there is any relationship between that status and how the entity is being governed. You should plan to familiarize yourself with the organization's vision and mission, its recent annual reports and financial statements and try to gain perspective on how well it is accomplishing its mission. Explore too, with principals (governing board members, executive director, stakeholders) in brief telephone or in-person interviews, what leadership and governance strategies they have employed and why. Your paper should suggest clearly how the organization is faring, how its leaders perceive they are proceeding and why as well as what they perceive to be the central issues confronting them and whether, or if, there is a discernible linkage between organizational governance and perceived mission accomplishment in your view. Unless you have objections, I would like to post these on Blackboard when they are complete so your colleagues may have the benefit of reviewing what you learned.

4. **Oral Presentations.** These two presentations are really exercises in analytical thinking. For each of these, I ask that you prepare five to ten minutes of thoughts about ideas that you perceive to be critical in the readings for the days you select. What are these? Why are they important? How do they relate to organizational leadership and governance? How do the concepts or themes that you choose to highlight link to broader course themes and leadership imperatives? These should be thoughtfully prepared and crisply shared so that the seminar may use them as springboards for discussion. Please let me (Ms. Schnitzer) know your first and second preferences for dates (two dates for each presentation) by August 27. We can begin presentations with the September 13 class meeting. I will limit the number of presentations per session. As you prepare your reflections, you may assume that I have chosen your readings carefully and that there are common themes and concerns that may be at play across them.

5. **Class Preparation and Participation.** I want to encourage each of you to think critically about the materials to which you will be exposed. As graduate students and developing professionals or scholars, I expect that you will seek to understand how these materials relate to your experience and interests—for good and ill—and to share your perceptions and insights with me and with your colleagues. I know that our seminar will be richer for it.

Assignment Weights

Interpretive Analysis	15%
Oral Presentations	10% (5% each)
Review Essays	30% (15% each)
Governance Case Profile	30%
Preparation and Participation	15%

Schedule of Assignments

Interpretive Analysis Due	September 27
Review Essays Due	October 18, November 15
Governance Profile Due	November 29
Oral Presentations	As you Schedule

GRADING

I shall assign A-F letter grades (including +'s and -'s) on all of your work. Your evaluation will be based on my best judgment of the quality of your thinking and the care and development of your exposition of that thinking. I will provide comments and marginalia on your work. Apart from what you learn about nonprofit organization leadership and governance, I am most interested in your continuing to develop capacity to reason thoughtfully and independently and to be able to convey that thinking in clear prose. Like it or not, leaders simply cannot succeed without these capabilities.

PARTICIPATION

I value your participation in class and encourage you strongly to engage as actively as you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask questions and otherwise to keep me apprised of how you are relating to assigned readings. It can only help our discussions and deepen your possibilities for learning and mine for learning with you and assisting you in that process effectively. We will discuss our readings in a relatively free fashion and I may post the occasional additional article on Blackboard for discussion as seems appropriate as well. We learn most and best from one another but that requires that we share, explore differences with patience and civility and otherwise dignify all engaged with us. When we practice treating one another this way, we open the way to profound possibilities for learning amongst ourselves.

GRADUATE STANDING

This seminar is designed for graduate credit and may be used in doctoral or master's plans of study in any of SPIA's programs. Fourth year undergraduates may take the class with permission but should expect to meet the same requirements as their graduate colleagues.

OTHER POLICIES

1. If you have a disability of which you think I should be aware, please discuss it with me as soon as possible so that we can develop an appropriate course of action concerning it.
2. I am typically most readily contacted via email but feel free to call me as you wish as well. I will get back to you as soon as I can. In addition, I will be pleased to meet with each of you as necessary and to assist you in any way that I can. You may make appointments with me directly or by contacting Traci Roberts (robertst@vt.edu) in the VTIPG office.
3. If you know that you will be late in turning in an assignment, please contact me in advance to share your reasons or circumstances so that we can work together to establish a completion date for you. Any other strategy is at least unprofessional and quite possibly unethical.
4. I shall expect you to prepare all course materials and to behave in a manner that accords with University Honor system requirements as published in the current University catalogue. In turn, you may expect that I shall treat you with the dignity and respect that such a system implies. Perhaps enough said.