

**The Evergreen State College
Master of Public Administration
Nonprofit Theory & Practice
Fall 2020 4 Credits**

Meeting Dates: October 2-4; October 30-November 1
Times: Fridays, 5-9pm; Sat/Sun 9am-5pm
Place: Required remote instruction
Faculty Member: Doreen Swetkis, Ph.D.
Office:
Office Hours: By appointment—Zoom or phone
Phone: 360-867-5320
Email: swetkisd@evergreen.edu

Course Description: Interest in nonprofit sector (or third sector, civil sector, voluntary sector, etc.) organizations has intensified as their importance and distinctiveness receives recognition as a unique area of study and practice. Although nonprofit organizations share some key elements with those in the public and for-profit sectors, this course focuses on the unique characteristics and topics of the nonprofit sector. Examples of issues unique to the sector are the prominent role of and heavy reliance on volunteerism, and the tension between organizational mission and funders' demands. Increased involvement in policy making, enlarged roles in implementing former public agency services, the more cohesive identity of the sector as a significant piece of the economy and administrative state, and the heightened professionalism all converge to make the daily management of nonprofit organizations in the twenty-first century a challenging task.

In this course, students will be given the opportunity to work through many of the issues impacting the development and management of nonprofit organizations. It will provide a context to help students more clearly understand the conditions observed either working in a nonprofit organization today, in the future, or in studying or collaborating with nonprofit organizations. It is my hope that the course will help students consider possible appropriate courses of action in ambiguous and complex situations. Therefore, this course combines substantive readings on issues affecting nonprofit organizations with exercises and activities. Also, students will have the opportunity to interact with a nonprofit organization to gain experience applying these concepts and skills.

Learning Objectives: In this course, students will gain

1. Knowledge about the history and nature of the nonprofit sector and its context;
2. Understanding of the uniqueness of the nonprofit sector in relation to the public and for-profit sectors;
3. Understanding of issues specifically relevant to nonprofit organizations;
4. An improved understanding of essential management skills related to nonprofit organizations including human resources, financial management and fund raising;
5. Improved analytical, writing, research, and presentation skills.

Format of Assignment Submissions: Unless otherwise stated, all papers should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, and follow [APA format and citation style](#). All written work will be of high quality, grammatically correct, clear and without spelling errors. Follow the [Office of the Governor's Guidelines](#) for writing that is clear, concise, and accessible. If you require it, please

contact the Graduate Writing Assistant. Ask your faculty for contact information.

Late assignments: Are not accepted without prior-to-deadline approval.

Holidays for Reasons of Faith or Conscience: Please inform us in writing within the first two weeks of class if you will miss specific class sessions because of holidays of faith or conscience, or for an organized activity conducted as part of a religious denomination, church, or organization. If you let us know within that timeframe, we will offer you reasonable accommodations, and the absence(s) will be excused. For more information, please refer to the Evergreen policy at: <https://www.evergreen.edu/policy/holidays-reasons-faith-and-conscience-students>

Accommodations: Accommodations are provided for any student who desires them through Access Services, the Graduate Writing Assistant, and the Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning Center. To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the office of [Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (867-6348 or 6364). Information about a disability or health condition is regarded as confidential. Please refer to TESC's Students with Disabilities Policy [here](#).

Credit: Students will receive four (4) credits at the completion of the course if all expectations and course requirements have been successfully completed. Plagiarism (i.e., using other people's work as your own without acknowledging the source), missing class, failing to complete one or more assignments, failing to participate in class activities, completing one or more assignments late (without having made arrangements before the due date) may be grounds for denial of full credit.

Evaluation: A written self-evaluation and faculty evaluation are required for credit. All final evaluations are to be submitted via our online evaluation system no later than one week after the last class. An evaluation conference is optional.

Course Equivalencies for Evaluation: 4 credits in Nonprofit Administration

Other Expectations of Students and Faculty: We commit to promoting a cooperative, supportive atmosphere within the community; giving everyone opportunity for self-reflection and expression; using high standards in reading the text and in preparing our papers, lectures, and comments in seminar; handling all disputes in a spirit of goodwill; respecting our differences; discussing any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved.

We abide by the [social contract](#), the [student rights & responsibilities](#) and the [non-discrimination policies and procedures at TESC](#).

All students are expected to support and contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom. Behavior that disrupts the class may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the MPA program.

Guest Policy: Except for guest speakers, people who are not officially registered for the class should not be part of this elective course. If guests want to observe the MPA program, they should contact one of the MPA program staff to schedule a visit to MPA Core.

Permission to Record Lecture, Workshop and Other Similar Discussion: If a student in class would like to obtain an audio or video recording of another participant in class speaking, discussion, lecture or other related communications in class, and this falls beyond the scope of **reasonable accommodations**, then this student would need written permission via email or other acceptable forms of documentation, from all participants in the activity (i.e., guest speakers, faculty, students registered in the class) and would need to give a reasonable time period in advance of the recording (usually 5 business days). Written consent would need to be obtained before the recording begins. Any of the participants have the right to deny this request.

Inclement Weather: In the event of bad weather or emergencies students should check with television, web pages, and radio stations for announcements of campus closures. Students can also call the main campus line 867-6000 to get the latest news regarding a campus closure or delay. Since many students in the program travel from relatively distant locations, faculty may decide to cancel class even if campus is open. If we do this we will send an all-class email by 3:00 pm. If you've not already done so, sign up to receive alerts about campus closing or other emergencies [here](#).

Communicating with Each Other: Evergreen email and Canvas are our primary means of communication. You are responsible for checking Evergreen email and our course Canvas site regularly.

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus.

Required Texts

1. Walter W. Powell and Patricia Bromley. 2020. *The Nonprofit Sector and Research Handbook*, **3rd Edition ONLY**. Stanford University Press. ISBN-10: 1503608042; ISBN13: 9781503608047
2. Michael Worth: *Nonprofit Management: Principles and Practice*. 3rd edition or newer (5th edition is expensive, so 3rd or 4th editions are fine). ISBN-13: 978-1483375991 ISBN-10: 9781483375991

Assignments

Assignment #1: Personal Reflection Paper

Purpose: Professional reflective writing is a standard practice that can help the practitioner uncover patterns, unpack experiences, and link theory to practice.

Instructions: 1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced, no APA formatting required.

In preparation for the course, reflect on why you are interested in working in, or already working in, the nonprofit sector. Specifically, please address the following questions in your paper:

- What attracts you to or keeps you working in the nonprofit sector?
- What knowledge, skills or abilities would you most like to grow or build on in this course?
- Whose (nonprofit) job would you like to have someday and why? What skills and abilities do they possess?
- What steps (besides this course) do you feel might aid you in preparing for future nonprofit leadership roles? Please incorporate reference to one or more of the assigned readings in this paper.

Key Skills: creative writing, self-analysis and understanding

Assignment #2: Nonprofits in the News

Purpose: Understanding emerging issues in the nonprofit sector is fundamental to be effective agents of change in the sector. This assignment allows students to learn from each other about a bevy of current issues in the nonprofit sector.

Instructions: 1-page talking points for presentation, no APA formatting required.

Find a current news story (i.e., no more than one month old) related to nonprofit administration and be prepared to give a one-minute presentation (no audio-visual) that summarizes the story and explains its relevance to the course content. Submit a link to the story in your assignment submission and link to our readings if possible.

Key Skills: small group presentation, concise writing

Assignment #3: 990 Analysis

Purpose: Understanding how to assess the financial health of a nonprofit organization is fundamental to organizational sustainability, as well as organizational development.

Instructions: 2-3 pages, typed, double-spaced, APA formatting.

Pick a nonprofit (not one used in Assignment #5) and analyze the latest available 3-years of IRS 990 filings. You are expected to analyze the 990 forms as if you were a board member of the organization in an attempt to assess the financial health of the organization (use tables/charts) and highlight any potential problems facing the organization.

Here are a few links that might help you:

- How to decipher a 990: <https://candid.org/research-and-verify-nonprofits/990-finder/demystifying-the-990-pf>
- Guidestar (<http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx>) (register for free access)

Key skills: budget and financial management, research, data analysis

Assignment #4: Community Analysis:

Purpose: Ideally, a nonprofit organization arises to meet some community need. Therefore, understanding the needs of the community is fundamental to help ensure the organization is going to be a benefit to and supported by the community.

Instructions: 4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, APA formatting.

Conduct a community analysis on Pacific County, WA to see how sustainable it would be to open a free legal clinic in the County.

- Describe the county's social demographics, legal practice environment, and its nonprofit sector as a whole.
- Identify the County's potential organizational competitors and collaborators.
- Identify potential partners and stakeholders at the local, regional, state, federal, and/or tribal levels.
- Make a recommendation: Does Pacific County need a free legal clinic? Why or why not? What gap(s) will it fill? What are potential hurdles? What are some sustainability issues?

Key Skills: data gathering and analysis, critical thinking, analytical writing

Assignment #5: Analysis of Three Organizations:

Purpose: Working in the nonprofit sector can be seen as having a calling to or passion for service. Therefore, investigating organizations that speak to the student's passion in the sector will help the student gain an understanding of what is happening in the sector regarding their particular area of interest, and links theory to practice.

Instructions: 5-7 pages, typed, double-spaced, APA formatting.

Research three (3) nonprofits (one local, one regional, one national) that fit with "who you are" based on your reflection paper submitted the first weekend of class, and that aligns with your professional, personal, and/or political interests. Visit their websites and learn more about them. List their names, missions and describe in your own words what distinguishes them in their fields. Relate what you learn from your research to **several topics and readings** discussed in the course. You should be able to complete this assignment through online research. If contacting a decision maker in the organization(s), follow the protocol discussed in class.

Key skills: data gathering and analysis, critical thinking and synthesis, analytical writing

Course Schedule

The course schedule will be posted as Canvas modules. This is a weekend-intensive class, so Assignments #1 & #2, as well as a robust set of readings, are due the first weekend of class. Assignments #3 & #4, and readings, are due the second intensive weekend; Assignment #5 is due November 16, 2020.