



**MDA 300X – SPRING 2021  
DORNSIFE TOOLKIT**

**“DOING GOOD: HOW TO START AND RUN A  
SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION”**

**Instructor:** Kambiz “Kamy” Akhavan

**Office:** SOS B15

**Office Hours:** Fridays 9am – 10am

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**Course Description**

This course will lead students through the complex process of setting up a nonprofit for long-term success. We will learn about the pros and cons of various nonprofit structures, how to create legally required bylaws, dealing with the IRS and state regulatory agencies, hiring, building your board, marketing, partnerships, measuring impact, and of course fundraising - from events to grants to program-based revenue. The course will be highly interactive (debates, storytelling, discussion), practical, and even fun. It will also feature prominent nonprofit leaders as guests.

**Instructor Bio**

Kambiz "Kamy" Akhavan serves as Executive Director of the USC Center for the Political Future whose mission is to inspire and train future generations of civic leaders in practical politics and civil discourse. Prior to that role, Kamy was CEO of ProCon.org, the nation's leading source of nonpartisan research on controversial topics.

Kamy has decades of experience in creating and delivering educational content on important issues to more than 300 million people, including students at more than 12,000 schools in all 50 states and 100 countries. He has been published and interviewed in textbooks, magazines, television, radio, newspapers, and websites including Reuters, Associated Press, Fox News, ABC, Washington Post, NPR, CNN, and CBS.

Kamy is an accomplished veteran in management, leadership, research, politics, marketing,

media affairs, web development, SEO, and startups. He is a professional speaker on bridging divides, unconscious bias, civic engagement, current events, and how to depolarize workplaces, communities, and the nation.

He serves on multiple nonprofit boards, including The Psychology of Technology Institute, Mikva Challenge, National Conversation Project, and Critica Science. He is involved in businesses with double bottom lines - do well and do good – including Common Ally, Gell.com, and several startups. He is a mentor in UCLA's Alumni Mentor program.

Kamy was born in Iran, grew up in southern Louisiana, and has lived in California for over 25 years. He holds a BA and MA in History from UCLA.

### **Learning Objectives**

This course meets the following learning objectives for the Department of Political Science:

- The development of critical thinking and a refined set of skills in analytical thinking, problem-solving, and persuasiveness
- Competence and knowledge to speak about social issues in small groups and in larger venues
- Familiarity with advocacy work including organizing, fundraising, marketing, and impact measurement

### **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

To receive credit (CR) for the Credit/No Credit undergraduate course, students must earn the equivalent of a C- (70%) or higher.

### **Grading Policy**

- 30% participation (being present, engaging with fellow students, interacting with instructor and guests, completing readings, completing assignments, etc.)
- 10% one pager
- 10% elevator pitch
- 10% fundraising strategy
- 10% grant proposal
- 10% 10-20 slide pitch deck
- 20% final paper – final polished version of the NGO elements

### **Communication Policy**

Office hours are Fridays from 9:00am – 10:00am or by appointment. Emailed questions or concerns will normally receive a response within 48 hours.

# **Topics and Assignments**

## **WEEKLY TOPICS AT A GLANCE**

1. WHY YOU SHOULD START A NONPROFIT (January 20)
2. WHY YOU SHOULD NOT START A NONPROFIT (January 27)
3. MECHANICS OF A STARTUP (February 3)
4. RESEARCH – COMPETITION, PARTNERS, & MARKETS (February 10)
5. BUILDING THE BOARD (February 17)
6. STORYTELLING (February 24)
7. SPECIAL SESSION – NETWORKING & MENTORING LIFESTYLE (March 3)
8. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING (March 10)
9. MAKING THE PITCH FOR FUNDING (March 17)
10. FUNDRAISING STRATEGY (March 24)
11. MEASURING IMPACT (March 31)
- Wellness Day – No class (April 7)*
12. SPECIAL SESSION – SPEED CONSULTING
13. WRITING A GRANT (April 14)
14. TYING IT ALL TOGETHER (April 21)

## **Lesson One: WHY YOU SHOULD START A NONPROFIT (January 20)**

### Before Class:

No pre-class assignment

### Overview:

The class begins with a discussion of the social and economic benefits of the nonprofit industry in general. The status of charity in America, the range of programs within the nonprofit sector, and the challenges facing the industry will be discussed. In class, students will write no more than one page about why they are considering starting a nonprofit organization. The explanation should identify one or more nonprofit organizations, leaders, or programs they admire and why. It can also focus on a problem that is underserved and how their ideal nonprofit organization would address that problem. Students should be prepared to share their stories with the class in 2 minutes or fewer.

Guest Lecturer: Deb Richard, former LPGA golfer, nonprofit executive coach, and author of “Trust: Understanding My Why”

## **Lesson Two: WHY YOU SHOULD NOT START A NONPROFIT (January 27)**

### Before Class:

The students will read:

“Alternatives to Starting a Charitable Nonprofit” by Joanne Fritz

<https://www.thebalancesmb.com/alternatives-to-starting-nonprofit-2502285>

“The Benefits and Disadvantages of Forming a Nonprofit Company” by Heather Huston

<https://www.bizfilings.com/toolkit/research-topics/incorporating-your-business/the-benefits-of-forming-a-nonprofit-company>

“What Are the Advantages/Disadvantages of Becoming a Nonprofit Organization?” by Grantspace

<https://grantspace.org/resources/knowledge-base/pros-and-cons/>

“Don’t Do It: Don’t Start a Nonprofit” by Dahna Goldstein

<https://blog.boardsource.org/blog/dont-start-a-nonprofit>

And students will watch:

“The Case for Letting Business Solve Social Problems” by Michael Porter (VIDEO)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/michael\\_porter\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_letting\\_business\\_solve\\_social\\_problems](https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_porter_the_case_for_letting_business_solve_social_problems)

“Why We Shouldn’t Trust Markets to Our Civic Life” by Michael Sandel (VIDEO)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/michael\\_sandel\\_why\\_we\\_shouldn\\_t\\_trust\\_markets\\_with\\_our\\_civic\\_life](https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_why_we_shouldn_t_trust_markets_with_our_civic_life)

and prepare to debate both sides of the issue: is it better to start a nonprofit or a for-profit to achieve the social good you seek?

### Overview:

This class will discuss social benefit corporations (B corps), private philanthropy, government work, and the unique solitary role of inspirer/fundraiser/executor in nonprofit leadership.

Students will debate the merits of starting a 501c3 nonprofit vs. a different type of nonprofit vs. starting a social benefit for-profit vs. making lots of money and donating it without starting any new organization.

Guest Lecturer: Loren Bendele, CEO, Gell.com; Founder, Savings.com

Aaron Lyles & Howard Brodwin, Founders, Common Ally

## **Lesson Three: MECHANICS OF A STARTUP (February 3)**

### Before Class:

Visit Charity Navigator and read the profiles of all the Top 10 Most Frequently Viewed Nonprofits <https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=topten.detail&listid=15>.

Read the Charity Navigator methodology

<https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=5593>

### Overview:

Students will learn IRS requirements for forming a 501c3 nonprofit public charity. Students will learn how to search for available business names, URLs, and related organizations. Students will know the timelines, required forms (including bylaws, Form 990, audited financials), and initial investment needed to start a nonprofit, plus how to make and implement early staffing decisions.

Guest Lecturer: Marley Duchovney, Co-Founder Project Divided  
Derrick Harris, Director of Corporate Relations, USC Dornsife

## **Lesson Four: RESEARCH – COMPETITION, PARTNERS, & MARKETS (February 10)**

### Before Class:

Students will create free online accounts at [guidestar.org](http://guidestar.org) and download the latest 990 form for the University of Southern California and two nonprofits related to one they would like to start.

Students will also start reading *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell (301 pages) at their own pace over the next four weeks so they will be done and complete the related assignment on September 30.

### Overview:

This class will examine the 990 forms required of all nonprofits to understand financial health, reporting regimens, and how to identify revenue sources. This class also examines how partnerships work among nonprofit organizations.

Guest Lecture: Tony Pennay, Chief Learning Officer, Ronald Reagan Library and Museum  
Leslie Graves, Publisher, Ballotpedia

## **Lesson Five: BUILDING THE BOARD (February 17)**

### Before class:

The students will read [http://facilitationprocess.com/documents/10\\_Step\\_Board\\_checklist.pdf](http://facilitationprocess.com/documents/10_Step_Board_checklist.pdf), and, using page 7 as their worksheet, write down 12 board members (6 they personally know and 6 they WISH they could recruit) for their nonprofit. In addition to the criteria on the checklist, they should consider race, ethnicity, gender, political ideology, geography, age, career background, and fame.

Continue reading *The Tipping Point*.

### Overview:

What makes a great board? How do you solicit them? How do they get oriented? How much do they work with you vs. for you? How to establish term limits and replacement procedures? What if a board member is terrible? Do you really need a board? What about an advisory board?

Guest Lecture: Negin Singh, Executive Director at Santa Monica Pier Corporation  
Jeff Harris, former CEO, Junior State of America, former Director of Partnerships, Compton Unified School District

## **Lesson Six: STORYTELLING (February 24)**

### Before class:

Students will have read *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. They will write a one-page summary of *The Tipping Point* and indicate what type of leader they are (of the four types) and why.

### Overview:

The class will review how to attract support for their cause through storytelling and marketing. The class will learn storytelling techniques from nonprofit websites and videos.

### Guest Lecturer:

Jeanne Ringe, Former CNN reporter, Producer of Face the Nation, and start up funding guru  
Mark Anthony Thomas, President at Pittsburgh Regional Alliance

## **Lesson Seven: SPECIAL SESSION WITH JOHN KOBARA: NETWORKING AND MENTORING LIFESTYLE (March 3)**

Assignment to be announced

John Kobara is the former COO of the California Community Foundation (CCF), one of the largest grant making foundations in the world with more than \$1.7 billion in assets. CCF is focused on creating equitable opportunities for LA County's most vulnerable residents as well as assisting high net worth families pursue their philanthropic visions.

John has been involved in education, social justice, and philanthropy for his entire life. He has held leadership positions at a wide variety of regional, national, and international non-profit organizations in the arts, education, and philanthropy. John currently serves on the boards of the MLK Community Hospital Foundation, Japanese American National Museum, SCGA Junior Foundation and Walden University.

John was CAUSE's 2017 Community Champion honoree. He received the Southern California Grantmakers Joint Affinity Group Leadership Award in 2014. John received the 2011 Trailblazer Award from the US Pan Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce. In 2010, he was honored for distinguished public service with the Coro of Southern California Crystal Eagle award. And in 2007, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa gave John the City of Angels award for his service on behalf of children and families. He was a Coro Fellow in LA and earned degrees from UCLA, USC, and Occidental College.

## **Lesson Eight: SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE MARKETING (March 10)**

Before class:

The students will write a one-pager describing their organization with a heavy focus on the obstacle their organization removes (the villain) from the needed solution (their nonprofit's programs). Use storytelling tactics. Emotional appeal (the problem, the need). Logical/reason appeal (how you are making a measurable difference). And higher authority appeal (who's on the team; who thinks you're great). The one-pager will be re-written numerous times throughout the class so make sure your concepts and placeholders are included even if your language or support needs refining. Continue reading *The Tipping Point*.

Overview:

Students will learn about marketing via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and potentially other channels for their specific nonprofits. Students will also learn about website marketing – tips for construction, coding, design, interactivity, etc. that are geared to elicit top search engine rankings. Students will also learn about online advertising.

Guest Lecturer:

Natalie Samarjian, Executive Director, CORO Southern California

Tom Hall, ghost Twitter writer for major corporate executives

## **Lesson Nine: MAKING THE PITCH FOR FUNDING (March 17)**

Before Class:

Students will watch at least six videos from the 2020 Fast Pitch competitions

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNaK3IGQyZI>) and work on making their own 3 minute (or less) verbal pitch for funding support for their nonprofit. Students will come to class with an outline of their presentation. OK to borrow language and structure from your one pager.

Overview:

The class will learn about first impressions, pitching, reading the audience, follow ups, and pre-pitch research.

Guest Lecturer: Elliott Schwarz, Fast Pitch Board Member, Business Consultant

Jenny Krusoe, Founding Executive Director, AltaSea at Port of Los Angeles

Ev Boyle, Partner SVP Los Angeles

## **Lesson Ten: FUNDRAISING STRATEGY (March 24)**

Before Class:

Students will read four articles:

“Ten Nonprofit Funding Models” by Foster, Kim, and Christiansen

[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/ten\\_nonprofit\\_funding\\_models](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/ten_nonprofit_funding_models)

“Top Nine Nonprofit Funding Sources for Any Organization” by GoFundMe

<https://charity.gofundme.com/c/blog/nonprofit-funding-sources>

“How Nonprofits Generate Revenue Streams” by Joanne Fritz

<https://www.thebalancesmb.com/where-do-nonprofits-get-their-revenue-2502011>

“Is Diversification of Revenue Good for Nonprofit Financial Health?”

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/is-diversification-of-revenue-good-for-nonprofit-financial-health/>

Students will use what they learn as the basis for creating their own 1-2 page document on how



they plan to raise money for their own nonprofit. Identify each type of revenue source you learn about and explain why and how you plan to pursue it or why you won't pursue it.

Overview:

Students will learn about program revenue, foundation support, crowd sourcing, high net worth donors, online donations, sponsorships, and other forms of making money for their nonprofits.

Guest Lecturer: Julie Lacouture, Nonprofit Fundraising Consultant  
Taylor McPartland, CEO of ScaleLA, Chairman of ScaleLA Foundation

## **Lesson Eleven: MEASURING IMPACT (March 31)**

Before Class:

Students will examine the websites of five nonprofits related to the one they wish to create and share in one page which metrics those organizations use to brag about their impact.

Using those examples, students will create 10-20 simple slides showing their organization's mission, origin story, profile of you, board members, fundraising strategy, and more. Students should use storytelling techniques... and be brief!

Overview:

Students will learn about how to measure the efficacy of their programs using social media metrics, online traffic, survey data, third party assessments, testimonials, and other methods.

Guest Lecturer: Kristin Hansen, Founder, Civic Health Project, Stanford Business School Professor  
Kevin Parikh, Founder/CEO, Avasant Foundation

***No class on April 7. It is an official Wellness Day at USC. Office hours still available on Friday and by appointment.***

## **Lesson Twelve: Special Session: Speed Consulting (April 14)**

Before Class:

Students will watch two videos to better understand the importance of fundraising and networking in nonprofit work.

“3 ways to be a more effective fundraiser”

[https://www.ted.com/talks/kara\\_logan\\_berlin\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_more\\_effective\\_fundraiser/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/kara_logan_berlin_3_ways_to_be_a_more_effective_fundraiser/transcript)

“What it takes to be a great leader”

[https://www.ted.com/talks/roselinde\\_torres\\_what\\_it\\_takes\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_great\\_leader/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/roselinde_torres_what_it_takes_to_be_a_great_leader/transcript)

Overview:

Students will present their nonprofit business ideas in fast pitch breakout rooms with nonprofit professionals, including some recent USC graduates. Make your pitch and solicit advice on any element of your business that are struggling with. The idea is that you’ll gain perspectives and information to help improve your written documents for the final AND make some meaningful connections with people who can help your nonprofit grow.

Guests: TBD

## **Lesson Thirteen: WRITING A GRANT (April 21)**

Before Class:

Students will identify five foundations to whom they would like to submit an application for funding. Students will then read the latest 990 form and website for each of those foundations.

Students will also read:

“Top 5 Tips for Successful Grant Proposals” by Herbert and Neubauer

<https://grantspace.org/resources/blog/top-5-tips-for-successful-grant-proposals/>

“Writing a Successful Grant Proposal” by Davis

<https://mcf.org/sites/default/files/files/pages/writingagrantproposal.pdf>

Overview:

Students will learn about foundation research – which ones to solicit? How much to ask? LOIs vs. grant requests vs. no solicitation. Students will learn about grant writing techniques.

Guest Lecturer: Wendy Wachtell, Executive Director, Joseph Drown Foundation  
Shawn Escoffery, Executive Director, Roy & Patricia Disney Family Foundation

## **Lesson Fourteen: TYING IT ALL TOGETHER (April 28)**

### Before Class:

Students will update their elevator pitches with pointers accumulated to date.

Students will watch:

“Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are” by Amy Cuddy

[https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_may\\_shape\\_who\\_you\\_are?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are?language=en)

### Overview:

Students will present their elevator pitches in class to a panel of judges, including their fellow students. 3 minutes max. per presentation. 5 minutes max. for constructive feedback.

Guest Lecturer: Laura Lauder, Founder, Jewish Teen Funders Network; philanthropist  
Elmer Roldan, Executive Director, Communities in Schools Los Angeles (former LAUSD Civic Engagement executive)

### **FINAL (due by Thursday May 6 at midnight)**

Students will present their final versions of the one pager (PDF format; 1 page), elevator pitch (recorded video; 3 minutes max), grant proposal (PDF; 5-15 pages), fundraising strategy (PDF; 1-2 pages), and pitch deck (Google Slides; 10-20 slides)