



MDA 300X – FALL 2021 DORNSIFE TOOLKIT

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

Instructor: Kambiz “Kamy” Akhavan

Class: Wednesdays 10:00am – 11:50am (Seely G. Mudd SGM 226)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9am – 10am (SOS B15) or by appointment

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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, Critica Science, and The Society Library. He is involved in businesses with double bottom lines - do well and do good – including Common Ally, Gell.com, PERKS, 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 large 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 (1)
- 10% elevator pitch (2)
- 10% fundraising strategy plan (3)
- 10% grant proposal (4)
- 10% 10-20 slide pitch deck (5)
- 20% final paper – final polished versions of the five previously submitted assignments

Communication Policy

Office hours are Tuesdays from 9:00am – 10:00am in SOS B15 or by appointment for in-person, phone, or Zoom. Emailed questions or concerns normally get a response within 48 hours.

Topics and Assignments

Lesson One: WHY YOU SHOULD START A NONPROFIT (August 25)

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”

Optional Reading: “[Trust: Understanding My Why](#)” by Deb Richard (book); “[Start with Why](#)” by Simon Sinek (book); “[Why Simon Sinek Is Fundamentally Wrong](#)” by Dominic Monkhouse (article); “[The Nonprofit Sector in Brief](#)” by Natl. Center for Charitable Statistics (article)

Lesson Two: WHY YOU SHOULD NOT START A NONPROFIT (SEPTEMBER 1)

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

“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

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: Aaron Lyles, Founder/CEO, Common Ally; Howard Brodwin, Founder/Managing Director, Common Ally

Lesson Three: MECHANICS OF A STARTUP (September 8)

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: No guest speaker this week

Optional Reading: “[Start a 501c3 Nonprofit That Doesn’t Ruin Your Life](#)” by Audrey Chisholm (book); “[How to Start, Run, and Grow a Successful Nonprofit Organization](#)” by Aaron Sanders (book); “[How to Start a California Nonprofit](#)” by California Association of Nonprofits (article)

Lesson Four: RESARCH – COMPETITION, PARTNERS, & MARKETS (September 15)

Before Class:

Students will create free online accounts at 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 read Chapter One of *Nonprofit Hero: Five Easy Steps to Successful Board Fundraising* by Valerie Jones. *Optional: Do these two activities referenced in Chapter One: giving dos and don'ts and personal mission statement.*

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

Lesson Five: BUILDING THE BOARD (September 22)

Before class:

The students will read 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.

Students will also read Chapter Two of *Nonprofit Hero: Five Easy Steps to Successful Board Fundraising* by Valerie Jones.

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

Lesson Six: STORYTELLING (September 29)

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.

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

Optional Reading: “[Start Me Up: Tips, Tales, and Truths about Starting Up and Starting Over](#)” by Jeannie Edmunds (book); “[Storytelling: The Secret Sauce of Fundraising Success](#)” by Lynn Malzone Ierardi (book)

Lesson Seven: SPECIAL SESSION WITH JOHN KOBARA: NETWORKING AND MENTORING LIFESTYLE (October 6)

Before class:

The students will visit <https://www.16personalities.com/>, take the personality quiz, and record their personality type – Analyst, Diplomat, Sentinel, Explorer – and which traits are most dominant – empathy (E), intuition (I), observation (O), judgment (J), etc. in your personality type. Read the part of chapter three “Do It Your Way” in *Nonprofit Hero* about your specific personality type (OK to ignore the others) and write a few sentences about how you think this Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test influences how you think about YOUR nonprofit.

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. 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: MAKING THE PITCH FOR FUNDING (October 13)

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 2-3 minute verbal pitch for funding support for their nonprofit. Students will come to class prepared to discuss the pros and cons of the pitches they saw. Students will also come to class with a written draft of their pitch. 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. Students will read or make their pitch to the class.

Guest Lecturer: EV Boyle, VP Fast Pitch Board, Business Consultant, Annenberg Professor

Lesson Nine: FUNDRAISING STRATEGY (October 20)

Before Class:

Students will read two articles:

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

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>

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

Optional reading: “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/>

Chapter Four “Fund Your Vision” from Nonprofit Hero by Valerie Jones

Lesson Ten: SOCIAL & ONLINE MARKETING (October 27)

Before class:

Students will start reading *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell at their own pace over the next three weeks. They will write at least one paragraph about what type of leader they are (of the three types) and why.

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 Eleven: MEASURING IMPACT (November 3)

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: Kevin Parikh, Founder/CEO, Avasant Foundation

Lesson Twelve: WRITING A GRANT (NOVEMBER 10)

Before Class:

Students will create a free account at Foundation Center and use it to 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: Arwen Duffy, USC

Lesson Thirteen: SPEED CONSULTING (NOVEMBER 17)

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

“What it takes to be a great leader”

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: Jeff Harris, former CEO Junior State Foundation, Director of Partnerships, Compton Unified School District

Catie Cummins, Founder/COO, WaterDrop LA

Joanna Maniti, Founder, CEO, Cherish Hearts

Aman Patel, Founder, The Grove

No class on Nov. 24. Thanksgiving Holiday. Office hours still available on Tuesday Nov. 23 and by appointment.

Lesson Fourteen: TYING IT ALL TOGETHER (DECEMBER 1)

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

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 Friday December 10 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)