

Welcome to ECON 355

The Political Economy of the Nonprofit Sector

Spring 2017

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jason Dunick
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Office Phone: 703-993-1141
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00pm or by appointment (just ask!)

Course Overview

Catalog Description: Applies the basic principles of economics to teach students to think critically about nonprofit institutions. Examines the economics of nonprofit institutions, how incentives influence the evolution of charities, and current issues in nonprofit organizations..

Topics Covered: This class will apply economic thinking to understanding the impact and structure of the nonprofit sector. We will also discuss the historical context of the nonprofit market and the impact of government policy for that sector.

Learning Outcomes: This course is both writing intensive course and an upper-division elective within economics.

As a writing-intensive course, this course strives to further develop a skill in writing

- Students must complete a minimum of 3500 written words in graded assignments
- Student will receive constructive feedback on drafts and have an opportunity for revising at least one major assignment.
- Student will receive instruction that is focused on writing skill for the discipline of economics.

As an **upper-division elective** in the discipline of economics, this course strives to help students:

- Understand and apply relevant economic concepts and theories to frame research questions around the study of nonprofit organizations.
- Analyze economic arguments in both the popular press and academic research on economic development by breaking down arguments and identifying the relevant concepts and theories from economics.

Readings & Textbooks: Reading assignments will be provided after each lecture to allow for flexibility in responding to students' interest. Most readings will be drawn from our main textbook:

Powell, W. W., & Steinberg, R. (2006). *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Available online through the GMU Library)

Additional readings will be posted on the course site at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>

Course Outline:

- I. Overview of the Nonprofit Sector
 - a. History and Terminology
- II. Economic Theory of the Nonprofit Sector
 - a. Theory of the Firm
 - b. Market Distortion/Failure
 - c. Economics of Altruism

*****Midterm*****

- III. Industry Case Studies
 - a. Higher Education
 - b. Health Care
 - c. Charities and Foundations
 - d. Social Entrepreneurship

*****Final Exam*****

Course Assignments with Weights:

- Weekly Journal- "Writing to Learn" 10%
- Nonprofit Profile & Action Plan - "Writing to Persuade" 15%
 - Nonprofit Organization Profile
 - Action Plan and Rationale
 - Peer Response
- Nonprofit Research Paper – "Writing to Teach" 20%
 - Annotated Bibliography
 - Proposal
 - First Draft
 - Final Draft
- Midterm Exam – "Writing to Show Knowledge" 25%
- Final Exam– "Writing to Show Knowledge" 30%

Assignment Schedule:

Date	Assignments
Jan. 31 th – Feb. 28 th	Weekly Journals (Each Tuesday)
March 9th	Midterm Exam
March 13 th -17 th	**NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK**
March 23 rd	Select a nonprofit organization to profile
March 30 th	Nonprofit Profile Due
April 6 th	Annotated Bibliography & Research Proposal Due
April 13 th	Action Plan Draft Due
April 20 th	Research Paper Draft Due
April 27 th	Peer Review Assignment Due
May 4th	Final Draft of the Action Plan & the Research Paper Due
May 16th	Final Exam: 10:30 am – 1:15 pm

Assignment Descriptions:

A detailed description will be available on Blackboard.

Weekly Journal – “Writing to Learn” Assignment

Each week students must submit a journal entry that summarizes the reading assignments in their own words. It is recommended that students complete the readings first and then do the writing exercise after some time has passed. Each entry must be substantial meaning 200 words or more. This assignment is not graded for grammar or writing mechanics—only for content and length.

Nonprofit Profile and Action Plan - “Writing to Persuade” Assignment

In this assignment, each student will **select a nonprofit organization to profile**. The profile will provide background information about the organization and identify a key problem or challenge that the organization faces. For this assignment students will also **write an action plan with a rationale** that address the key problem identified in the profile. Students will write an action plan, including an appeal for that action with a rationale that is supported with research or evidence published trade journals. Finally, there will be a **peer response assignment** where students will react and provide feedback for the action plan before the final draft is due. The total assignment should be at least **1,000 words or 4-6 pages**.

Nonprofit Research Paper – “Writing to Teach”

This assignment will be a traditional research paper in the style of a literature review that illustrates how economists study the nonprofit sector. Students will need to complete an **annotated bibliography and proposal** that defines a well-studied research question. Students will also complete a **draft** for formative feedback before the **final draft** is due. The total assignment should be at least **2,000 words or 8-10 pages**.

Course Policies:

Grading Scale (as a percentage):

A +	100-97	B	87 – 82	C-	72 – 69
A	97 – 93	B-	82 – 79	D	69 – 60
A -	92 – 89	C+	79 – 77	F	59 – 0
B+	89 – 87	C	77 – 72		

Course Expectations: It is expected that all readings will be complete by the start of class and that you come to class ready to participate. *In addition, this class requires significant writing assignments..* If you find yourself struggling with the material at any time, please make an appointment to talk with me as soon as possible. I have strategies that might be helpful.

Class Participation: Attendance and class participation are necessary to have a successful experience in this course. In the event of an excused absence, the paper assignments and exams dates can be rescheduled. If you are unable to attend class for an excusable reason, please contact me *before* the start of class and for a missed exam or paper assignments, please provide proper documentation. **Please note that it is NOT possible to make-up journal assignments—even in the event of an excused absence.**

Electronic Devices: Regarding electronic devices (such as laptops, cell phones, etc.), please be respectful of your peers and your instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism. If disruptions are interrupting other students' learning, you may be asked to leave the classroom.

Communication: Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Honor Code: GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

Important: No person should be denied educational access because of a disability. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Classmate Contact Information

Contact #1: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Contact #2: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____