

Course Syllabus
Nonprofit Organizations: Theory and Practice
Fall 2025
Dr. Elizabeth Searing

Course Information

Title: Nonprofit Organizations: Theory and Practice
Number: PA 7375-001
Term: Fall 2025
Meetings: JO 4.112, Wednesdays from 7pm - 9:45pm

Professor Contact Information

Office Location: GR 3.818
Email Address: Elizabeth.Searing@utdallas.edu
Office Hours: In person: Wednesdays, 4p to 6p
Online or in person: By appointment

Course Modality and Expectations

Instructional Mode	The course will be taught using a traditional, in-person format.
Course Platform	This course will be delivered using three mechanisms: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In-person lecture, discussion, and office hours;2. Resources posted on eLearning (including assignments, readings, and required learning materials);3. Microsoft Teams or Zoom for meetings between the students and the professor, if necessary
Expectations	Diligence, engagement, and respect for the opinions of others are essential. The bulk of each class session will be devoted to a critical analysis and discussion of the assigned readings. Doing the assigned readings and coming to class prepared for the discussion is the most important task of a student. Further details are in the grading and assignment section below.

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

There are no formal course pre-requisites or co-requisites.

Course Description

This class

- explores the leading theories of nonprofit organizations;
 - examines the unique elements of nonprofit organizations and the academic and practical challenges produced by these distinctive elements;
 - examines how theory is applied to the practice of management in nonprofit organizations.
 - explores the different types of empirical research underway in the nonprofit field.
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Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- **Objective:** Students will demonstrate competency in research design and analysis by conceiving and executing research projects that apply appropriate research design and analytic methods to address important public and nonprofit policy and management questions.
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Class Materials and Technology

Class Materials

The Instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Required Textbooks and Materials

The required textbook is *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook, 3rd edition*, by Powell and Bromley, Stanford University Press (2020).

Textbooks and some other bookstore materials can be ordered online or purchased at the [UT Dallas Bookstore](#).

Additional required readings will be made available through eLearning.

Suggested Course Materials (not required)

Peri Pakroo. *Starting and Building a Nonprofit*, 10th ed., Berkeley, CA: NOLO, 2024, ISBN 978-1413331516. Since this is only recommended (though strongly so for those with no nonprofit experience) and will not be used in class, feel free to use whichever edition you want. The most recent will have the most up-to-date information.

Selected Journals of Interest (not required)

- *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (the journal of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA))
 - *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*
 - *Nonprofit Quarterly* (industry journal and daily newswire)
 - *Voluntas* (the journal of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR))
 - *Stanford Social Innovation Review*
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Technical Requirements

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage.

Course Access and Navigation

This course can be accessed using your UT Dallas NetID account on the [eLearning](#) website.

Please see the course access and navigation section of the [Getting Started with eLearning](#) webpage for more information.

To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The [eLearning Support Center](#) includes a toll-free telephone number for immediate assistance (1-866-588-3192), email request service, and an online chat service.

Communication

This course utilizes online tools for interaction and communication. Some external communication tools such as regular email and a web conferencing tool may also be used during the semester. For more details, please visit the [Student eLearning Tutorials](#) webpage for video demonstrations on eLearning tools.

Student emails and discussion board messages will be answered within 3 working days under normal circumstances.

Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online [eLearning Help Desk](#). The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

Class Participation

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class, including both engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures (and/or labs). Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Recordings

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction,

students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law.

Use of AI (Based on Matthew Bruckner at Howard University School of Law)

Technology can be very useful; however, it can also lead to poor understanding of a subject and academic dishonesty. I do not encourage the use of GenAI, but as a pragmatist I understand that it can be useful (and that I cannot stop you.)

In particular, I want to warn you about the limits of GenAI tools like ChatGPT. Don't trust anything it tells you. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check it with a different source. **You will be responsible for any errors, hallucinations, or omissions provided by the tool.**

Technology and AI are tools that you need to acknowledge using. Often that means a citation explaining what tool you used and how you used it that follows immediately after its use. Using these tools without proper citation constitutes plagiarism.

- If you copy verbatim from an AI tool, you must provide a citation and quotation marks, which will indicate that the words used were not your own. [APA citation guide here](#).
- If you paraphrase an output from an AI tool, you must provide a citation (but not necessarily quotation marks), indicating that the idea, format, and syntax were not originally your own.
- Other times, it may be appropriate to include a paragraph at the end of any assignment where you used a tool in which you explain what you used the tool for and what prompts you used to get the results. This applies not only to AI, but also to Grammarly, translation software, and other means of assistance.
- Failure to do so is in violation of the academic honesty policies because the information derived from these tools is based on previously published materials and is not the product of your own, unaided mind.

Detailed Course Plan

<i>Week # Wednesday Date</i>	<i>All assignments due online by the beginning of class</i>		
	<i>Discussion Topics</i>	<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Practicum Topic</i>
Week 1 <i>Aug 27</i>	The Nonprofit Sector & Nonprofit Management	Turn in surveys as soon as possible.	Practicum: What and Why
Week 2 <i>Sept 3</i>	Why Does the Nonprofit Sector Exist?		Anatomy of a Scholarly Paper
Week 3 <i>Sep 10</i>	Comparative Civil Society	IRR #1 Due	How to Write a Literature Review
Week 4 <i>Sep 17</i>	Leadership & Governance		Developing & Operationalizing Research Questions
Week 5 <i>Sep 24</i>	The Publication Process (with Dr. Sabharwal)	IRR #2 Due	Journals: Reading, Writing, and Running
Week 6 <i>Oct 1</i>	Advocacy & Networks		The "Front End" Paper
Week 7 <i>Oct 8</i>	Program Evaluation & Measuring Impact	Annotated Literature Review Due	Reviewing Journal Articles
Week 8 <i>Oct 15</i>	HR		Methods: How to Choose
Week 9 <i>Oct 22</i>	Philanthropy & Resource Development	IRR #3 Due	Giving Presentations

Week 10 <i>Oct 29</i>	Financial Management & Budgeting (Shared Class w Dr. Searing leading)		N/A
Week 11 <i>Nov 5</i>	Nonprofit Ethics (Shared Class w Dr. Russell leading)		N/A
Week 12 <i>Nov 12</i>	Public Relations & Technology	IRR #4 Due	ARNOVA Conference Presentation Practice
Week 13 <i>Nov 19</i>	Pecha Kucha Workshop & Practice		
<i>Nov 26</i>			<i>THANKSGIVING</i>
Week 14 <i>Dec 3</i>		Pecha Kucha Presentations	
<i>Wednesday, Dec. 10th by 7p</i>		Front End Paper Due	

Assignments & Grading Policy

Assignment Type Overview:

A. Class Participation	
Discussion Leader	100 pts
In-Class Readings Discussion	200 pts
B. Writing	
Individual Reading Responses (4 x 50 pts)	200 pts
Annotated Literature Review	150 pts
Front End Paper	250 pts
C. Pecha Kucha Presentation	<u>100 pts</u>
	 1000 pts

Assignment Types Detail:

1. Discussion Leader.

The discussion leader is the facilitator of the in-class discussions on the assigned topic for the week. There will be one or two leaders per week. Your goal is to focus the class on the discussion of key concepts, models, and issues covered in the course readings for that week. **DO NOT PREPARE SLIDES** – this is a discussion! The discussion leaders each week are responsible for:

- a. Beginning the 45 minute-long discussion period by briefly overviewing the readings for the week to highlight themes that bring them together. I do not recommend spending more than 10 minutes on the main or common themes, and do not simply summarize the article – that is already in the abstract;
- b. Preparing between 5-7 discussion questions on the assigned readings and distributing them to the class by the end of Tuesday (so that other students can think about responses prior to the Wednesday night class period). The questions should help the class understand and critique the readings, expose strengths and weaknesses of a theory or an empirical model, point out consistent and convincing as well as inconsistent or contradictory evidence, offer new interpretations, assess the ultimate usefulness of the proposed theoretical or empirical framework, and/or link the readings to a broader context of nonprofit studies;

- c. Facilitating the discussion of the readings, including the discussion of the questions provided by the Leader(s).
- 2. In-Class Readings Discussion.** As a doctoral seminar, the course rewards thoughtful participation in class discussions. The topics we cover are rich and can certainly be discussed for more than one class period. It is important for the students to prepare for class discussions by reading all assigned materials in advance, to engage in class discussions responsibly, and to contribute to a productive in-class learning environment through their comments, questions, and answers.
- 3. Individual Reading Responses.** These 3-4 page assignments are responses to prompts that allow you to show your mastery of the concepts from the assigned readings. Each response will be double-spaced spaced, reasonable font, and standard margins; there will be between 1-3 prompts, depending on the assignment.
- 4. Annotated Literature Review.** Using a template provided by the professor, this assignment involves reading and pulling important information out of articles to complete a thorough, but manageable review of a topic area. The review should contain 25 articles, and it ideally will serve as the foundation for the literature review section of the Front End Paper.
- 5. Front End Paper.** The culminating project for the semester is a research paper written all the way up to the Findings section. In other words, this paper should contain an abstract, introduction, research question and motivation, literature review (including both theoretical and empirical works), methodological approach, and data source. For qualitative works, the protocol that the student plans to use to answer their research question needs to be included, along with the plans to survey/interview. For quantitative works, the data should be acquired, cleaned, and descriptive statistics provided. NOTE: the analysis itself is optional for this project since the goal is to produce a publishable paper, which may not be possible at your current methodological level or with the time available during the semester. I would much rather you create a strong foundation to then deploy the project rather than rush through and end up with something of lesser quality.
- 6. Pecha Kucha Presentation.** You will present your Front End Paper to the class using the Pecha Kucha format. Pecha Kucha is 20 slides in total, with each slide lasting only 20 seconds. Though it feels unnatural, this is the best way to train yourself to be mindful of your slide content, your manner of speaking, etc. More details on how to set up the slides presentation will be available during the semester.

7. **Final Grade:** Final grades will be based on the point distribution described above. Final letter grades will be assigned as followed:

Grade	Total Percentage Achieved
A	93% or more
A-	90%-92%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	73%-76%
C-	70%-72%
F	Less than 70%

Course & Instructor Policies

Late and Make-up Policy: Since readings are discussed during class, I am unable to accept late submissions for the Individual Reading Responses (due at the beginning of class) since they are designed to gather your own reactions to the readings.

For other written assignments, if it is turned in within 24 hours of the due date and time, the assignment is eligible for 90% of the original point total. A written assignment submitted between 24-48 hours after it was due is eligible for 80% of the original point total. No written assignments will be accepted more than 48 hours after they are due except for a documented emergency situation. A documented emergency situation is hospitalization (with accompanying paperwork), the death of an immediate family member, or situations of similar magnitude. All emergencies must have documentation, and the treatment of each is totally within the professor's discretion. If you know that you will have difficulty turning in an assignment at a certain time (travel, work obligations, etc.), you should plan ahead and/or turn in assignments early.

Course Evaluations: Your honest assessment of this course is an important source of feedback for both me and the department. We will have course evaluations both mid-semester and at the conclusion. These are an important part of curriculum development, so please take the time to fill out the evaluations thoughtfully.

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Academic Support Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students. Please go to [Academic Support Resources](#) webpage for these policies.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class. Please go to [UT Dallas Syllabus Policies](#) webpage for these policies.

The descriptions, readings, and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.