

Syllabus

Nonprofit Financial Management
RPAD 640 – Spring 2020
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy
Department of Public Administration and Policy

Dr. Elizabeth Searing
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Class time: Asynchronous online
Online Office Hours: Mondays 3-4p
In-person Office Hours: By appointment

Office location: Milne Hall 306
Office phone: 518-442-2621

I. Course Learning Objectives

This course integrates academic and practical perspectives on financial resources, planning, reporting, and financial decision-making in nonprofit organizations. These topics and concepts are essential for organizational survival and success. This course provides students with instruction on skills and conceptual information and provides them with opportunities to apply those abilities to practice through both hypothetical and actual cases.

In this course, students will:

- Apply financial planning, decision-making, and working capital techniques to nonprofit organizations;
- Understand the theoretical rationales and practical considerations involved in developing and utilizing particular sources of income and in selecting appropriate combinations or portfolios;
- Create and analyze financial reports in accordance with accepted standards;
- Produce professional quality materials, including commentaries, reports, and presentations;
- Demonstrate sufficient mastery of course material so that nonprofit organizations can effectively advance their particular missions, sustain the infrastructure of their organizations, remain financially healthy, and manage risk and change.

II. Course Materials

Required

- Bowman, Woods. (2011.) *Finance Fundamentals for Nonprofits, with Website: Building Capacity and Sustainability*. Wiley: Hoboken. ISBN 978-1118004517
- Coe, Charles K. (2011.) *Nonprofit Financial Management: A Practical Guide*. Wiley: Hoboken. ISBN 978-1118011324

- There are substantial additional readings that will be available on Blackboard. The readings for each week will be released every Monday at noon and kept available to you the entire semester once posted.
- Each student will have access to GuideStar Premium through the semester. You will need to register with GuideStar with your “albany.edu” e-mail address, but the service is free for our academic use.

Recommended

- Pakroo, Peri. *Starting and Building a Nonprofit*, 7th ed., Berkeley, CA: NOLO, 2017, ISBN 978-1413323573. Since this is only recommended (though strongly so for those with no nonprofit experience or who have not taken PAD 613) 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.
- Finkler, Purtell, Calabrese, and Smith. (2016) *Financial Management for Public, Health, and Not-for-Profit Organizations*, (5th ed.), CQ Press: Thousand Oaks, CA. This is the textbook for PAD 501 and can provide additional details, especially in the areas of accounting and financial reporting.

Selected Journals of Interest

General Nonprofit

- *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*
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*
Journal of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR)
- *Stanford Social Innovation Review*

Nonprofit Finance

- *Journal of Government and Nonprofit Accounting*
- *Public Budgeting and Finance*

III. Classroom Approach

This course is taught in an asynchronous, online format. That means that there will not be any required meetings where you need to show up in person somewhere at a scheduled time for class. However, there will be set times during the week where things need to be submitted to me online and when different media or readings become unlocked and available. Success in this course will rely heavily on your ability to keep track of your own time.

Deliverables will be due at one of two different times during the week: Monday at noon or Friday at midnight. Different types of assignment will be due at different checkpoints, but it

will remain consistent from week to week. There are further details in the grading and assignment section below.

I strongly believe in the value of teams, especially to online learning where it can be difficult to have a natural discussion. Some of the assignments in this course will be individual, and some will be team-based.

The focus of your team will be in the production of a semester-long Service Learning Project for the Altamont Free Library, which is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Altamont, New York. The Altamont Free Library has asked for assistance in exploring and analyzing its revenue portfolio, specifically with relation to its heavy dependence on government funding. At the end of the course, each team will have a completed and professional report for the Library; these may be presented to the Library staff and Board either live or via a webcast, pending their availability. Further details on the project will be available in the second week of class.

IV. Grading and Assignments:

A. Individual Performance

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Individual Reading Responses | 30% |
| Individual Participation | 5% |

B. Team Performance

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Team Weekly Activities | 30% |
| Team Project Checkpoint #1 | 7.5% |
| Team Project Checkpoint #2 | 7.5% |
| Final Report | 15% |

C. Team Peer Review

5%

100%

- 1. Individual Reading Responses (30%).** These 2-3 page papers are responses to prompts that allow you to show your mastery of the concepts from the readings assigned each week. Each prompt's response will be roughly (but not more than) one page, single spaced, reasonable font, and standard margins; there will be between 1-3 prompts, depending on the week. The responses will be due each Monday by noon (submitted via Blackboard), at which point the discussion for that week plus the readings and prompts for the next week will be unlocked and available.
- 2. Individual Participation (5%).** Throughout the semester, there will be 6 total tasks buried in the materials for each week. These will be found in the slides, videos, online readings, or other activities that are visible online. In order to receive full

- credit, at least 5 of these tasks should be completed. This is designed to make sure you are reading/listening to/watching the weekly materials for the class.
- 3. Team Weekly Activities (30%):** Each week, there will be some kind of activity designed to apply the lessons learned in the readings and other materials to real-life scenarios. Sometimes this will be contributions to a discussion thread, other times it will be a team activity involving a case study or role-playing; most of the time, it will involve both. A discussion board specifically dedicated to your team will be available for you to carry out planning and discussions, and I will occasionally chime in on the conversation. The final version of whatever the week's activity is will be due by Friday at midnight.
 - 4. Team Checkpoint #1: Status Quo Description (7.5%):** Please submit a team effort describing how your assigned portion of the final report currently exists in the Altamont Free Library context. This checkpoint will ensure that you know the status quo, which will allow you to think more clearly on how to use your management perspective to improve the situation. This should be 3-4 pages and should result in a list of ten questions that we will direct to the Library.
 - 5. Team Checkpoint #2: Description of Comparable Organizations (7.5%):** This should be an identification and description of other organizations that have successfully addressed the financial management issues which face the Altamont Free Library. This could also include potential competitors, potential collaborators, and unsuccessful approaches to the financial management issues taken by other organizations.
 - 6. Team Final Project (15%).** This report will integrate and expand on the materials learned in class, resulting a final product that will be delivered (and potentially presented) to the Altamont Free Library (AFL). The final report for AFL will be approximately 20 double-spaced pages, though this is subject to change based on the preferences of the client. The report's analyses or arguments should be supported with substantial secondary sources from the reading. Additional details will be released during the third week of class.
 - 7. Peer Evaluation (5%).** Each team member will evaluate the helpfulness of the other members of their team at both the midterm point (for guidance) and the end of the term (for a grade). You will have a set number of points to distribute amongst the rest of your group to assess their contributions, plus will have the opportunity to give written verbal feedback. There will be a "practice" evaluation mid-semester, then a final evaluation at the end of the semester that will be used to assign points.

- 8. 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% |
| A- | 90% |
| B+ | 87% |
| B | 83% |
| B- | 80% |
| C+ | 77% |
| C | 73% |
| C- | 70% |
| D+ | 67% |
| D | 63% |
| D- | 60% |
| E | 59% and below |

- 9. Late and Make-up Policy:** Since discussion materials are unlocked at noon on Mondays, I am unable to accept late submissions for the Individual Reading Responses 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 beginning of the class where it was due, 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, coordinate with your team, and/or turn in assignments early.

V. Other Policies

Academic Dishonesty: Any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please refer to University at Albany's Academic Code at:

http://www.albany.edu/content_images/AcademicIntegrity.pdf for the definition of academic dishonesty. Ignorance of these policies will not excuse dishonest conduct. Violations of these standards will result in one or more of the following penalties: reduction in the grade for the assignment, failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or expulsion. In all cases, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean of Rockefeller College.

Accommodations for Disabilities: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) contact the Disability Resource Center; and
- (2) provide the instructor with the appropriate and official university documentation indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

For more information about services available to University at Albany students with disabilities, contact:

Disability Resource Center, University at Albany, State University of New York

BA 120, 1400 Washington Avenue

Albany, NY 12222

(518) 442-5490 (voice)

Director: cmalloch@albany.edu

<http://www.albany.edu/disability/>

Incomplete Grade Policy: From the Graduate Bulletin: "Incomplete: A tentative grade given only when the student has nearly completed the course but due to circumstances beyond the student's control the work is not completed on schedule. The date for the completion of the work is specified by the instructor. The date stipulated will not be later than one month before the end of the session following that in which the Incomplete is received. The grade I is automatically changed to E or U unless work is completed as agreed between the student and the instructor."

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.