NAL/PAD 656: Capstone Seminar in Nonprofit Leadership and Management Practice (4 credit hours)

SYLLABUS

Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs
Glickman Miller Hall
Location Room ***

Instructors: Stuart C. Mendel; Steven A. Minter.

Office: UR 330B (tel. ext. 6908); UR 341 (tel. ext. 5495)
s.mendel@csuohio.edu; s.minter@csuohio.edu

Office hours: 5 p.m. Mondays and flexible by appointment

Prerequisites: NAL/PAD 550 and either NAL/PAD 651 or NAL/PAD 652, or instructor permission

Introduction

This seminar considers key aspects of leadership and management in the nonprofit sector as they are applied in practice. It aims to integrate significant theory and research results with practical skills and personal introspection by the student. This course is intended as a capstone experience for students pursuing the Masters in Nonprofit Administration and Leadership (MNAL) or the graduate certificate in nonprofit management and/or the MPA nonprofit specialization. Therefore, it is best taken as close to the end of the student’s coursework as possible. It is intended to aid the student in understanding the working environment in the nonprofit sector and to offer lessons on “good management” practice.

The approach of the course is to engage students in discussions and exercises that explore the relationship between theories and practices of nonprofit leadership and management. The relationship between theory and practice in professional education has a long history in which the two are seen as being in tension with each other. Practitioners tend to see theories of leadership and management as irrelevant to the task of diagnosing and solving organizational problems; at the same time, theorists and researchers tend to see practical skills as lacking the rigor and sophistication that characterize “real” knowledge. This course aims to move beyond this impasse by providing a range of opportunities for students to figure out for themselves just how relevant and helpful existing theories are. At the same time, we will explore how practices may already be grounded in implied theories that, if made explicit, can be weighed and consciously...
Much of our time in class will be devoted to discussions and to exercises, especially working through complex case situations. We will treat case situations as opportunities to diagnose problems and to select meaningful ways of addressing them. We will focus especially on top-level leadership and management (and the possible differences between them). This will necessitate consideration of the tension between internal and external factors, since much of the complexity of leadership and management stems from having to balance the two. Therefore, we will not only consider elements such as the management of human, fiscal, and technological resources but also the organization’s political and economic environment. By and large, the focus will be on issues encountered in leading and managing small to mid-size community- and faith-based organizations.

The overall goal of the course is to provide a framework within which members of the class can actually practice leadership and management skills in as realistic and practical a way as is possible within the confines of a class situation. Topical components of the Capstone course have been divided into three themes, which are not mutually exclusive and may comprise elements of each class throughout the semester.

I: Projecting outward: understanding the context in which the organization operates;
II: Projecting inward: creating an effective organization: by recognizing the needs of the organization and putting those pieces in place;

To accomplish these three themes, individual class sessions may have as many as four components consisting of lecture, guest expert, case study scenario and practical application exercises. By the end of the course, students should:

• Understand the nature of leadership and management and the differences between them;
• Understand the factors with which nonprofit leaders and managers have to cope;
• Analyze complex case situations and suggest plausible ways of dealing with them;
• Perceive an improvement in their personal leadership and management skills.

Grading and Evaluation Criteria

Students are expected to complete readings and written assignments on time as noted in the syllabus. There are no exceptions to this rule, and the responsibility to meet course standards falls upon the student alone. As this is a graduate level applied management course, it is the responsibility of the student to ask questions and when
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necessary, to perform additional learning outside class, should it be necessary for them to understand topics covered in during class-time.

Attendance is an important part of course grading. Students will be evaluated and receive grades based upon the demonstrated knowledge gained through in-class discussion, as well as participation and completion of weekly in-class assignments and simulation exercises. It will not be possible to “make-up” missed classes given the experiential learning throughout the course. Hence, prompt and consistent attendance during the semester is essential as well as completion of preparatory readings for each course meeting. Late arrivals or missed classes will result in a lower final grade for students.

In addition to attendance and in-class participation, up to 10 written assignments and a topically assigned group presentation will constitute the course grading. Some of the written projects will require the work of a group, while others will be completed individually. Unless directed otherwise, written assignments will take the form of memoranda from students to course instructors, and serve as briefings for a semester long dossier of materials. Both instructors will submit grades for each assignment, and students must turn in two copies of each assignment. Students may be asked to present materials to the class as part of their written projects. Written assignments assigned for work outside of class will be due on the assigned date indicated in the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted unless approved in advance by one or both of the instructors. Students are expected to complete the weekly assigned readings in advance of the class in which they are posted on the syllabus in order to ensure maximum student participation in the seminar format. You will be given a binder with a number of the articles already copied. They are marked with ***. A minimum of ten percent of the final earned course grade will be earned through class participation and attendance.

Required Texts:
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Class Schedule:

PRIOR TO 1ST CLASS READ:
Drucker, Peter F, Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Part One (pages 3-49); Part Five (pages 195-202) To be discussed in class on January 25

January 25  Course Introduction
Lecture Topics: Class introductions, course administration, goals of course, expectations of students and review of syllabus. Students receive the “memo” template for completing written assignments. 2 page limit on each memoranda assignment. We will work through an in-class example. Class will discuss the concepts of “strategy, strategic planning and strategic thinking” for nonprofit organizations. In addition, we will examine several ways to “frame” issues, recognize and respond to incentives and position an organization as a player. Students will perform a self-assessment profile using a Learning Styles Inventory followed by class discussion.

Readings:
Articles involved with strategy (handout in class)

Written assignment 1:  (Two part written assignment).
Part I will provide a briefing in the form of a memorandum on each student’s professional interests, goals, and a self-description of where they are in their career ladder. A resume or CV shall be attached to the memo.
Part II will be a second memorandum requiring the student to assess their experience and past learning regarding their involvement (as student, volunteer, staff and/or board member)in nonprofits and the third sector. The two memos will provide a benchmark for instructors and students to assess prior learning. These are graded assignments due at the start of class on February 1

In preparation for February 1 class, submit a writing sample to Norm Friedman of Norm Friedman Communications no later than Friday, January 29. E-mail address is nfriedman@prodigy.net. Your sample (Microsoft Word attachment preferred) should be a letter, memo, or e-mail, one to four paragraphs long or it can be one of the memos prepared for above assignment. The sample can be real or contrived, business-related or personal. This is an un graded assignment and merely intended to give our guest lecturer a sense of your writing competency.
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February 1  Communications and transmitting a message inside and outside the organization

Lecture Topics: Norm Friedman of Norm Friedman Communications will lead students in developing and practicing chief objectives in written communication. In a highly interactive format, this class will discuss keys to clarity, brevity, organization, and effective use of e-mail. His freelance articles have appeared in the New York Times, Plain Dealer, and other publications.

Written Assignment 2: Resubmit written assignment 1 – parts I and II making changes influenced by lessons learned during the session with Norm Friedman. This is due on February 8.

February 8  Establishing Context for nonprofit organizations
Lecture Topics: Often referred to in the nonprofit literature as the “environmental scan,” the context in which a particular nonprofit operates can easily be overlooked or misinterpreted. Collecting information and performing effective analysis of the environment in which a nonprofit operates is essential to understanding a nonprofit and its ability to form partnerships and get things done. Source material will consist of selected annual reports to be distributed in class. Students are asked to keep these materials for future classroom lectures and written assignments (particularly February 22).

Readings:
• “Managing Effectively in an Environment of Competing Values” by Edwards, Austin and Altpeter, Chapter 1 in Edwards, Yankey, and Altpeter, Skills for Effective Management of Nonprofit Organizations, pp. 5 - 26.
• Raiser, Tom. ROI for Nonprofits, Preface and Introduction and pp 3-11.

THE CLASS WILL BE DIVIDED INTO TEAMS (COMMITTEES). EACH TEAM WILL PRESENT AND LEAD AN ASSIGNED CASE STUDY IN A SUBSEQUENT CLASS.
Written assignment 3: Two part written assignment (one memorandum with two parts)

Part I: Using literature provided (annual report information distributed during the class), students will submit a memo offering their content assessment of the annual report document (your opinion of the quality, intended message of the document and the quality and value of the information provided based upon classroom instruction and examples.

Part II: Students will the apply the readings and the “environmental scan” that they obtain through their own research of this organization to position it to succeed. This is a graded assignment due in lieu of class on February 15. Students may e-mail their assignments to both instructors on or before February 15.

February 15 No Class – Presidents Day

February 22 Decision-making

Lecture Topics: Decision-making is both an art and science whose application may be reflected in different ways depending on an organization’s long and short-term circumstances and the vision and personality of its leadership. Beginning with the premise that leadership, decision-making and learning are indispensable to each other, students will work through a template in which to apply case study scenarios to test out ideas related to leadership, strategy and the framing of issues. Students must bring the annual report materials distributed at the February 8 class session.

Readings:

Written assignment 4: Using an organization from the annual report distributed in class February 8, analyze and assess the strategic thinking of the organization. What are your opinions of this organization? What is the audience for this report? If your opinion has changed since your first assignment reviewing this organization, explain how and why. This is a graded assignment due at the start of class on March 1.
March 1 Establishing trust (various readings from Russell Sage series)

Lecture Topics: Part I regarding emotional intelligence. Part II of lecture involves the effective functioning of a democratic society—including social, business, and political interactions—largely depends upon trust. Yet trust remains a fragile and elusive resource in many of the public and private organizations that make up society’s building blocks. Is trust really essential to good governance, or are strong laws more important? What leads people either to trust or to distrust government, and what makes officials decide to be trustworthy? Can too much trust render the public vulnerable to government corruption, and if so, what safeguards are necessary? Explore how a sense of communal identity and shared values make citizens more likely to eschew their own self-interest and favor the government as a source of collective good. Why are regulatory institutions necessary to protect citizens from the worst effects of misplaced trust? What are the lessons for nonprofit decision makers?

Team I will lead presentation and discussion of case study: “Fall from Grace.”

Readings:

- Case study from Cleveland Plain Dealer: “Fall from Grace.”
- “Building Trust in the Workplace”, Amy Lyman, Great Place to Work Institute

Written Assignment 5: Each student will interview a professional leader in the nonprofit sector and write a memorandum about the person and their lessons-learned using the template provided in class prompted by a Cohen and Young reading “Careers for Dreamers and Doers: A Guide to Management Careers in the Nonprofit Sector.” Questions to be answered: What she or he does; how she or he got there; advice to others. This is a graded assignment due in two weeks in lieu of class on March 15. Students may e-mail their assignments to both instructors on or before March 15.
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March 8  Team Building
Lecture: Matching the right individuals to the right work, developing skills and maintaining enthusiasm of workers to the tasks of the organization and mission.

Team II will present and lead discussion of case study of Lencioni’s fable: 5 Dysfunctions of Building a Team.

Readings:
• Lencioni, Patrick. 5 Dysfunctions of Building a Team (Read all chapters and bring book to class for discussion).

Written assignment 6: What were the key /elements/actions found in “5 Dysfunctions” that led to the outcome as told in “The March” (begins on page 182)? This is a graded assignment due at the start of class on March 22.

March 15  No Class  Spring Break

March 22  Governance - issues of the board of directors, establishing policies, hiring and oversight of the chief executive
Lecture Topics: Corporations aren’t alone in focusing on governance; rigorous oversight of management and performance is increasingly important for nonprofits too. What must be done to make nonprofit boards more effective? We will examine differences between governance of local organizations and national organizations with local/regional affiliates.

Readings:
• The Dynamic Nonprofit Board, McKinsey Quarterly, October 19, 2004***
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- Brief Case Studies: To be taken from the Brody Reader

Written assignment 7: Using a case study as a reference prepare a memorandum about the governance of the organization and its strategic plan for sustainability. This will require additional research. This is a graded assignment due at the start of class on March 29.

March 29 Adapting to change, being a learning organization.
Lecture Topics: Organizations that are resilient, flexible and have the ability to adapt to changing circumstances tend to not only survive and thrive but also attract resources and talented individuals. The methods employed by these organizations can be subtle and based in “good practices” that are learned over time. This class will explore organizational characteristics that support “learning” behaviors and promote “adaptability” in nonprofit organizations. We will examine the concepts of “intended impact” and “theory of change.”

Team III will present and lead discussion of case study: “Harlem Children’s Zone”

Readings:
- Case Study: “Larkin Street Youth Services”, The Bridgespan Group***.
- Case Study: “Harlem Children’s Zone”, The Bridgespan Group***

Written assignment 7: To be determined based upon class discussion. This is a graded assignment due at the beginning of class on April 5.

April 5 Care and feeding of committees - definition and effective use of committees.
Special Presentation: Scott Simon, Vice President and Leasing Director, North Pointe
Realty Inc. Mr. Simon has ___ years of experience in the nonprofit sector as staff, lay leader and board member for numerous organizations that include….

Readings:
- Managing Magnificent Meetings, AGB Reports, January/February 2005.***

Written assignment: None

April 12 Characteristics of effective staffing

Team IV will present and lead discussion on the “The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive”

Readings:
- Lencioni, Patrick. The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive. (Read all chapters and bring book to class for discussion).

Written Assignment 8: Use the interview information you performed from assignment 5 (assigned March 1 and turned in March 15) to compare the insights you gained from the Drucker reading above “Managing Oneself.” What do you make of all this information and how can it be helpful to you? This is a graded assignment due at the start of class on April 19.

April 19 Succession in nonprofits - board, staff and volunteers and Managing Fiscal Stress
Lecture Topics: A challenge facing nonprofit organizations involves the ready availability
of people with the knowledge, skills and seasoning to step into leadership positions. The class will also examine key issues related to governance of and accountability of nonprofit organizations.

Readings:

- "The Sarbanes-Oxley Act and Implications for Nonprofit Organizations," Independent Sector.***
- "Managing Fiscal Stress," by Lane, Frederick S., Chapter 5 of *Wise Decision-Making In Uncertain Times*, Dennis Young, Editor, National Center on Nonprofit Enterprise, pp. 75-90.***
- "The Economics of Nonprofit Organizations", Hughes, Patricia, Nonprofit Management & Leadership, Summer 2006
- In-class handouts
- Case Study to be presented in class.

**Written assignment 9**: Working in groups of 2 examine and construct a memo that assesses case study organization charts handed out in class to gain insights into the hierarchies of management, logical successors and the implications for each. A graded assignment due at the beginning of class on April 26.

**April 26  Managing public policy and advocacy**

Lecture Topics: In addition to providing contract services to supplement and compliment the work of government in American society, nonprofits have a vital responsibility to advocate for individuals to and with government. This takes place at the local, state and federal levels and can be quite helpful to government as a mechanism of evaluation. It can take the form of collegial meetings and briefings, or can be more confrontational, strident and vocal. On the other hand, feeding information back to public and private decision makers may be awkward for an organization with a major funding line arising from government. As a result, systems for feeding back information can be direct and indirect, open to scrutiny or performed in private. In any case, care and strategy are important to nonprofits in pursuing the work of advocacy. **Guest speaker this week will be:**

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Written assignment 10: A graded assignment using the organizations selected in class. Students will assess the advocacy capacity of their organization by describing what they do that meets our definition of advocacy. Examples of organizations to consider may include: Center for Community Solutions, Center for Health Affairs, Children’s Defense Fund (Ohio), Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, Cleveland Neighborhood Development Center, May Dugan Center. This is a graded assignment due at the start of class on May 3.

May 3 The Evolving Landscape for Nonprofits and moving from “Good to Great.” Lecture of to be determined...

Readings:

Text excerpts from: Jim Collins, “Good to Great and the Social Services” (November 2005)

Ralser, Tom, “ROI for Nonprofits: The New Key to Sustainability”, Chapters 2-5, pps 19 – 65***.

May 10 Exam Week – no lecture scheduled...