

The Philanthropy Initiative - Course Syllabus

Spring 2020 - B Block

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Course Description

This is a course about *giving* and prompts students to broadly define and consider *giving* and *philanthropy* through a multitude of perspectives and experiences. The course is focused on two essential questions:

Why give?

What does it mean to give responsibly?

The Philanthropy Initiative is a unique high school course. Students in the course are expected to grapple with questions about social justice, equity, and ethics as it pertains to giving. An exploration of these topics will prepare students to think critically and ask thoughtful and thorough questions about *why they should give* and *what does giving responsibly mean*.

Students will also explore what it means to be civically engaged through the lens of philanthropy and service learning through various opportunities. Through the 'Philanthropy Speaker Series (PSS),' the class will hear from experienced professionals from nonprofit organizations to better understand the variety of ways corporations, foundations, and individuals approach philanthropy. Furthermore, the PSS will inform and help students develop "best practices" on giving effectively. Students will directly engage in a service learning project by planning the Ocean Avenue Block Party where they will share their talents, strengths, and resources with the community. **Lastly, the culminating project for the class is to select a philanthropic cause to grant \$10,000. Students will lead a thorough and responsible selection process to determine how the funds are granted.** Throughout the course, students will acquire knowledge, skills, and competency to aid their decision-making process.

Course Structure

Students in The Philanthropy Initiative will work as a cohort throughout the semester, rather than a class of individuals. A significant portion of the class will involve hands-on, student-centered learning with the goal of thinking critically and acting responsibly when it comes to giving.

Week-by-Week Syllabus

This class has a lot of moving parts. Thus, the syllabus is open to revision based on speaker schedules, service learning projects, and the needs and interests of students in the class. However, the following schedule will provide a general trajectory of the semester.

Weeks One-Four

Students will be introduced to the basic expectations of the course and begin to explore "giving" from a historical and ethical perspective. Through films, readings, class discussions, and the 'Philanthropy Speaker Series', students will explore the following questions:

Why do people give?

How has giving and philanthropy been approached over time?

What does it mean to be civically engaged? What is the difference between philanthropy and service learning?

Weeks Five-Ten

Students will begin planning the Ocean Avenue Block Party in partnership with the OMI district. **All students are required to attend the Ocean Avenue Block Party.** Students will also have the opportunity to learn about fundraising - its necessity and impact on programs and services offered by nonprofit organizations. During this portion of the course, students will reflect on the overarching question:

What does it mean to you to give your time and talent?

Weeks Eleven-Thirteen

In the second half of this course, students will reflect on their on-going service learning experiences and growing expertise about giving. Students will work collaboratively to research a particular community concern, participate in a comprehensive grant 'Request for Proposal (RFP)' process, make a recommendation to invest the \$10,000 gift, and design a tool to evaluate the outcomes of the investment. Students will consider the following key questions:

What criteria will we use to assess and decide what organization we give the \$10,000 grant to?

What should the process look like for making a decision about what organization receives the grant?

How will we track how the funds are used?

Weeks Fifteen-Twenty

During the last section of the course, students will fully participate in the grantmaking process. Students will give the \$10,000 grant to an organization of their choice and prepare for a community presentation chronicling and reflecting on their course experience.

Course Texts

This class will use a variety of sources from relevant texts, video, featured speakers, and current publications. Students are expected to keep all course materials in a binder and take notes to use as references throughout the semester. A sample list of texts to be used include:

Sample texts:

- *Four Traditions of Philanthropy in Giving Well, Doing Good: Readings for Thoughtful Philanthropist*, edited by Amy Kass
- *Gospel of Wealth*, Andrew Carnegie
- *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson

- *Winners Take All*, Anand Giridharadas

Grading and Course Assessment

Consistent and active participation is a key component of this course. Students will be graded primarily on their engagement with the material, course essential questions, and service learning experiences. A grading breakdown is provided:

Class Participation (30%)

Components of participation will include attendance, timeliness, preparation, verbal engagement, active listening, and following the class norms.

Students are expected to fully-engage in the decision-making process to select and award the grant of \$10,000. This is a significant objective of the course and will require full participation, such as thoughtful preparation, meeting deadlines, and working collaboratively with peers.

Service Learning (25%)

Students will participate in a service project within the OMI district spanning 4-5 weeks.

Class Projects and Activities (25%)

Throughout the course, in-class activities and projects will stand in the place of formal homework. For example, students will identify an area of social injustice and create a podcast to create awareness, address concerns, and impact on society. During this 'Manifest Project', students are responsible for all aspects of research, production, and presentation of their podcast. Other student-centered activities will be assigned to complement course curriculum and content.

Reflection (20%)

Students will be tasked to keep an ongoing blog to reflect on their service experiences, guest speakers, and in-class discussions and activities. Class time will be dedicated to contributing to the blog. Students will contribute to the blog to chronicle their experiences and engage in meaningful dialogue about course topics.

The school's policies on homework, attendance and academic integrity are in effect for this class. Please see the appropriate sections in the student handbook at www.lwhs.org/studenthandbook.

Parting Words About a Co-Taught Class

There are two teachers for this course, Ms. Godinez and Mr. Wesson Suárez. The curriculum is designed to be taught and led collaboratively. Both teachers will conduct all student assessments and evaluations. Students are encouraged to approach either of us with any questions or concerns.