Draft Syllabus

PUAD 659
NONPROFIT LAW, GOVERNANCE, AND ETHICS

Summer 2019 Online

Instructor: Dr. Stefan Toepler, Associate Professor
ARL-FH 671; stoepler@gmu.edu
Office hours: Mondays, 4-6pm or by appointment

I. Course Description

Nonprofit organizations operate in an ever more complex environment that requires those governing and leading the organization to fully appreciate and act on the legal responsibilities, moral and ethical obligations and governance principles that nonprofits are subject to. This course is designed to familiarize students with key features of the American legal system, as they apply to nonprofit organizations, as well as ethical and accountability standards and good governance practices that nonprofit directors and executives should be aware of.

II. Course Format and Requirements

Format and Participation: The course will be a virtual seminar and thus requires active student participation in online discussions and projects and familiarity with the assigned readings for each week. Demonstrated familiarity with the readings as well as active participation in the discussion fora/blogs will be reflected in student evaluations.

Students will be randomly assigned to smaller working groups, which will carry the bulk of the course discussions over the course of the semester. I will periodically monitor the group discussions, but not generally intervene. Each week, each group will report out on its discussion of the week’s readings and topic in a shared forum so that all students have the opportunity to review, learn from, and add to the findings of the other groups.

For the purposes of this course, each week will start on Mondays and last until the subsequent Sunday. There is no specific time where everyone needs to be logged in, but students are expected to visit the Blackboard course site several times a week.

Group Discussions starting Mondays: On Mondays, I will usually start off the week’s topic with questions, comments or assignments. Within their groups, students are expected to address (where appropriate) my posting, but, importantly, contribute their own questions about reading materials, notes and comments; students are also expected to react to (and try to answer) the
comments and queries of other students in the group. Given the nature of the subject, chances are that in most weeks even the briefest web search would generate recent news items or examples of what organizations do that have some bearing on the topics we will discuss. Please bear the following in mind:

- The frequency of individual contributions to group discussions contributes significantly to your overall individual participation grades. Please use the discussion board in your group for the group discussion and do not take your discussions off Blackboard (eg by emailing each other). What I cannot see on Blackboard, I cannot count towards your participation!
- Weekly readings typically cover a fair number of issues. Groups should raise and discuss issues that seem important, but are hard to understand; in addition, it is also ok to select a particular issue or concept each week for more in-depth group discussion.

General Group Reports on Sundays: The individual group discussions will not be accessible to students from other groups. Each group will therefore prepare a weekly report on its own discussions and post it on the general discussion board (in response to my own posting). The weekly deadline for posting these is Sunday evenings, 9pm to allow everyone to review and comment on the group reports on Monday. The report/post should cover the following four areas:

1. The group’s answers to questions or assignments from my initial posting (if any);
2. The group’s main takeaways from the readings for the week;
3. Questions that came up during group discussions regarding issues from the readings and/or regarding news items/external materials in relation to the readings; and
4. The group’s attempt to answer those questions itself.

Case Discussions: Cases from Miriam Wood’s book—as assigned in the readings list—are required readings for all students. In weeks where cases are assigned, groups will also discuss the managerial and governance issues raised in these cases. I will typically post a few questions about each case (which can differ from the discussion questions given at the end of the cases). Include your group’s thoughts on the cases in your group reports.

Roles within the groups: In each week, each student is expected to actively contribute to the group discussions. In addition, group members will rotate specific tasks from week to week. These are:

- Wrapping task (summarize group discussions and prepare the group report); and
- Starter task (develop initial postings for the week to break the ice and get the group discussions going)

All groups are required to work out a fair schedule for these tasks for the semester. There is a task assignment table in the appendix, which you can use to organize this. Blackboard is not great for jointly editing documents; usually, a group member volunteers to put a task schedule up in Google docs for everyone to sign up for specific weeks. This should happen right away in the first week!

A few pointers concerning participation grading:
Participation will be evaluated both in terms of quantity and quality of your general contributions to all types of discussions (readings, cases).

In determining your participation grade, I will look at your postings across the whole semester as compared to your fellow students.

Quality counts more than (mere) quantity. Higher quality contributions are typically those that go beyond personal opinion to reflect readings and other relevant literature and material in a meaningful way.

Case Discussion Papers: As the main writing assignment in this course, each student will individually prepare a written case discussion paper for each of two pre-assigned cases from Miriam Wood’s Nonprofit Boards and Leadership: Cases on Governance, Change and Board-Staff Dynamics. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996). The cases are:

- Chapter 10: “Using Community Networks to Diversify the Board.” (Due June 24)
- Chapter 8: “Confronting Crisis: When Should the Board Step In?” (Due August 5)

The papers will comprise a brief, one-paragraph case synopsis and then answer the discussion questions noted in the individual cases. Specific references to readings and the literature are required. The papers will be between 8 and 10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 pt. font). The paper must be uploaded on the course website in the assignments section. Late submissions will result in point deductions.

Mid-term: There is a mid-term scheduled for Session 7 that will cover the readings and discussions of the first part of the course.

All assignments and papers must be submitted through Blackboard. Please check assignment deadlines in Blackboard.

III. Evaluation and Grading

Grading Scale:  
A+ = 98-100; A = 94-97; A- = 90-93  
B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82  
C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 0-59

Evaluation:  
Case Discussion Paper (25% each) 50%  
Class Participation 25%  
Mid-term 25%
IV. Course Schedule Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>STARTING ...</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>May 20</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>No session--Memorial Day: Enjoy the beach!</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jun 3</td>
<td>Legal Structure/Board Duties</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jun 10</td>
<td>Tax Exemption</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Jun 17</td>
<td>Business Ventures and UBIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jun 24</td>
<td>Fundraising regulation and board responsibilities</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Jul 1</td>
<td>Mid-term</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Jul 8</td>
<td>Governance and Government</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Jul 15</td>
<td>Policy and Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jul 22</td>
<td>Board and Staff Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jul 29</td>
<td>Work Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Aug 5</td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
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Note: The schedule of weekly topics (and associated reading assignments) remains subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Adequate notice of any changes will be given in class.

V. Readings

Required Books:


- Books for online courses are available from the GMU bookstore in Fairfax and the Bookstore Fairfax website, not Arlington!

Weekly Readings:

All listed materials are required readings, unless otherwise noted. Additional material may be assigned.
Introduction
- Bruce Hopkins: Debunking some Myths and Misconceptions

Structure and Board Duties
- Hopkins, Chapter 1, 3
- Zimmerman, Chapter 14-15; skim 4-11
- Wood, Chapter 11

Tax Exemption
- Hopkins, Chapter 4, 5 & 7
- Wood, Chapter 1
- Recommended: Hopkins, Chapter 6

Business Ventures, UBIT
- Hopkins, Chapter 13 & 23
- Recommended: Hopkins, Chapter 17

Fundraising Regulation and Board Responsibilities
- Hopkins, Chapter 11 & 19
- Wood, Chapter 10
- Recommended: Hopkins, Chapter 12

Governance and Government
- Hopkins, Chapter 14-15
- Wood, Chapter 9

Policy and Planning
- Light, Chapter 2-6
- Wood, Chapter 13

Board and Staff Relations
- Light, Chapter 7-9
- Wood, Chapter 5

Work Structure
- Light, Chapter 10-11
- Wood, Chapter 6, 7

Monitoring
- Light, Chapter 12
- Wood, Chapter 8
VI. George Mason Academic Policies

a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/].
b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/].
c. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
d. The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].
e. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].
f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
g. The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

Appendix: Weekly task assignments

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<th>Starters (2-3)</th>
<th>Wrapper (1-2)</th>
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<td>May 20</td>
<td>No report this week</td>
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<td>2</td>
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