

AEM 3380: Social Entrepreneurs, Innovators, and Problem Solvers

June 26 – July 14, 2017

3 credit hours

Monday-Friday, 9am-12noon in Warren Hall, Room 113

Instructor: Anke Wessels

E-mail: akw7@cornell.edu

Course Description:

This intensive, 3-week course introduces you to social entrepreneurs, innovators, and visionaries—people who are coming up with new methods to resolve pressing social problems. We contrast traditional methods of activism with a new approach that combines the pragmatism of social entrepreneurship with the compassionate, collaborative engagement of Transformative Action. This cutting-edge movement tends to be less ideological, less adversarial, more locally specific and more solutions-oriented than previous collective actions for change. You will learn about social entrepreneurs and innovators through readings and case studies. In addition, you will develop a set of skills, tools and practices intended to support you in being an agent for change, no matter where you go from here. This learning process will involve self-reflection, critical analysis, research, and action.

Given the time constraint of a 3-week intensive course, we will be moving at a fast pace. In the first week, we will use the story of Jacqueline Novogratz, founder of the Acumen Fund, to consider how social entrepreneurs help co-create equity, justice and environmental sustainability. In the second week we will then tackle the questions of why and how to create a just, sustainable, and resilient economy based on principles of equity and inclusivity. We will also spend some time on the important role creativity and imagination play in the process of resolving pressing social problems. Finally, in small groups you will conceive and design a bold social change initiative, informed by the cautionary tale of Wendy Kopp's near failure in establishing *Teach for America*.

This course is not a traditional lecture course. It is highly interactive, experiential, and dynamic. You will also be meeting in groups to practice the basic empathic skills of Transformative Action. While there are no tests, the major written assignments, the readings, the Big Idea Project and the short time period make this a challenging course. That said, when approached with enthusiasm and whole-hearted participation, this course promises to be inspirational, fun, and even transformational.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course you will be able to:

- Describe and explain key characteristics of social entrepreneurship and how this movement compares to traditional entrepreneurship and previous collective actions for social change.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how social entrepreneurship contributes to creating an economy that is socially just, ecologically sound, and resilient.
- Apply strategies for creative thinking, inclusivity, and increased personal/collective empowerment.
- Utilize a set of skills, tools and practices that will support you in being an agent for change.
- Evaluate and create business models for mission driven social ventures.
- Conceive, design, and develop a Big Idea for Social Change.

Required Texts

- Novogratz, Jacqueline, (2009) *The Blue Sweater: Bridging the Gap Between Rich and Poor in an Interconnected World*; Rodale
- Kopp, Wendy (2001) *One Day, All Children...The Unlikely Triumph of Teach for America and What I Learned Along the Way*; Public Affairs NY

Policy regarding disabilities

It is Cornell policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services and their instructors for a confidential discussion of their individual need for academic accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in 420 CCC. Staff can be reached by calling 607.254.4545.

Instructor:

Anke Wessels is a Lecturer in the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management and the executive director of the Center for Transformative Action (CTA), an affiliate of Cornell University. For more than 40 years, CTA has been providing fiscal sponsorship to social entrepreneurs with innovative, non-profit social ventures that address society's most pressing social problems. We also offer hands-on educational opportunities that animate the power of the heart *and* mind to remake the world.

Inspired by the non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, Thich Nhat Hanh, and many others, Transformative Action calls for courage to break the silence that surrounds injustices; patience and compassion for the ultimately liberating work of building an inclusive movement; imagination to stay free from "us vs. them" strategies that only flame our social problems; and inspiration to envision new solutions to common challenges.

In addition to being the executive director of the Center for Transformative Action, Dr. Wessels teaches AEM 3380, Social Entrepreneurs, Innovators, and Problem Solvers. She received her BA in French and Economics, her MS in Agricultural Economics, and her PhD in Geography, specializing in Environmental Politics and Social Movements. She was previously on the faculty at Syracuse University, teaching Environmental Sustainability and Environmental Politics.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE : *Homework and reading assignments are listed on the day they are due. I expect you to have them done **in preparation** for that day's class discussion. Please read the additional material on grading and expectations carefully. There are many moving parts to this course that fit together to create a powerful experience as long as you work on everything as assigned. If you fall behind in one area, it will affect other areas and you will not benefit fully from the design. Please note that I **do not** accept late work. While one of the central goals of this course is to create a non-competitive learning environment, this course is also quite challenging. It will serve you well to stay up-to-date with all your assignments. This is even more important given the intensive nature of a 3-week course.*

Day 1: June 26

Introduction: What is social entrepreneurship anyway?

"There is no passion to be found playing small-- in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." Nelson Mandela

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Howard Thurman

The term "social entrepreneurship" gets used in a wide variety of ways to describe a wide range of business or nonprofit ventures. Today we propose a definition and show how it fits within a continuum of ventures, from the purely for-profit businesses to the purely charity based nonprofit. We will also consider the many reasons why people don't get involved in social change: everything from feeling powerless, to the belief that it will take too much time and energy. In the face of this, what motivates social entrepreneurs? What are their characteristics, and why do they choose the very difficult path of transforming the social structures that create inequities in our societies?

Home Work:

For tomorrow, you will complete the first several questions in the Portfolio assignment. However, you will not be handing your responses to me until the entire Portfolio is due. Instead you will be sharing them with your Transformation Group. You will be assigned to a group tomorrow and will meet with your groups everyday outside of class. The purpose of this group is for you to have several committed listeners who offer encouragement, feedback, and a sounding board to help you deepen your reflections. If, at any time, you are not comfortable sharing a response with others, simply share your reactions to that particular question. For example, "This question was hard because it made me think about things I usually don't talk to anyone about." And then explain why that is the case. Also, please let me know if there are any responses that are too personal to share with me. You can withhold these from your final Portfolio, including instead a reflection about what you learned from writing the response. The fundamental purpose of this assignment is for you to benefit from the reflection process regardless of whether others read what you have written.

Day 2: June 27

Leadership and Power

In contrast to a traditional view of leadership—where one charismatic person is out front - we will consider how leadership emerges from community and through community engagement. We will contrast previous models for bringing about change with a new approach that is less adversarial, more collaborative, and more solutions-oriented. We will also consider the principles of Transformative Action and how these are integral to effective social change.

Transformation Group Assignments and discussion of Portfolio Questions

HW Due today: Portfolio Questions 1-4
Reading for today: The Blue Sweater, Chapters 1-5

Day 3: June 28

Leadership and Community: Transforming ourselves and transforming the world

Today we will continue our discussion of leadership for social change. We will explore what it takes to engage in the co-created leadership essential to finding solutions that accurately address the needs and the desires of those most affected by social problems.

HW due today: Portfolio Questions 5-8
Reading for today: Everyone Leads, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-13 and pp. 27-34) & Chapter 4. *These will be sent to you electronically.*

Day 4: June 29

Starting the process: Defining a problem

Albert Einstein said: "If I had only one hour to save the world, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and 5 minutes finding the solution." Today, you will begin the process of defining the problem you would like to help solve.

HW due today: Portfolio Questions 9-12. Big Idea Roadmap 1-3
Reading for today: The Blue Sweater, Chapters 6-9

Day 5: June 30

Creativity, innovation, and people-centered design

We will look at what opens up our creative and innovative genius. We will engage in many exercises aimed to help us think out of the box and connect ideas in new ways.

HW due today: Portfolio Questions 13-15.
Reading for today: The Blue Sweater, Chapters 10-15

Day 6: July 3

Creating a socially just and ecologically sound economy: Rethinking what's possible.

Who does the economy serve and for what purpose? Can we create value through markets that truly lift all boats? What does it mean to have equity be the driver for economic growth? Today we will consider these questions and more.

HW due today: **The final Portfolio questions are due today.** *Reflection Essay #1 assigned, due July 6*

Day 7: July 5

Business Model Generation

Today we will begin to map your Big Idea by using the Business Model Generation Canvas, a strategic management and entrepreneurial tool. The BMG allows you to "describe, design, challenge, invent, and pivot your business model."

HW due today: Big Idea Roadmap 4-5
Reading for today: One Day, All Children, Chapters 1-4

Day 8: July 6

ABCD

Today we will consider Asset Based Community Development as the foundation for designing solutions to social problems with the leadership and input of those who have the lived experience and expertise.

HW for today: **Reflection Essay #1 due today by 11:59pm.**
Reflection Essay #2 assigned, due July 10

Day 9: July 7

Vision, Mission, Values, & Theory of Change

What is your vision for society—one where the problem you are addressing does not exist? How will your project help bring about that vision? What values will guide your decision making as you build and develop this project? Finally how will you know whether your project is creating the change you wish to see? In today's class you will have time to develop answers to all these questions for your group's Big Idea.

HW for today: Big Idea Roadmap 6-8

Reading for today: One Day, All Children; Chapters 5-8

Day 10: July 10

Social Impact and Collective Impact

As social entrepreneurship becomes more mainstream, investors in both non-profit ventures and for profit ventures are demanding information on how their resources are being used and for what good. Moreover, the social entrepreneurs need information about the impact they are having in order to pivot and recalibrate their operations to be most effective. Today, we will take a look at how to measure impact, the good and the bad of assessment, and how to communicate it all to funders, stakeholders, and the communities in which we work.

HW for today: **Reflection Essay # 2 is due today by 11:59pm.**

Reflection paper # 3 assigned, due July 12

Reading for today: One Day, All Children, Chapters 9-11

Day 11: July 11

Legal structures and revenue models

The lines between the typical for-profit and nonprofit are beginning to blur. Benefit Corporations (B Corps) and Worker-owned Cooperatives are alternatives to the traditional for-profit corporate structure that allow for-profit ventures to embed social values into their operations. Many nonprofits are developing sustainable revenue streams so that they aren't as dependent on donations and grants. Today we will take a look at these alternative structures and discuss their strengths and limitations.

HW for today: Big Idea Roadmap 9-14

Day 12: July 12

Telling a great story through words and images

Great leaders are storytellers. They are able to engage their communities, and tell a compelling narrative about how the world works. They use language powerfully and communicate in ways that uplift and inspire others. Today we will look at the power of telling a compelling story about your social change effort, and how to use images to convey your values.

HW for today: **Reflection paper # 3 is due today by 11:59pm.**

Day 13: July 13

Finalize the Big Idea Roadmap, BMG and work on your presentations!

HW for today: Big Idea Roadmap 15-17

Day 14: July 14

Student Presentations and Wrap Up

Today, each of your transformation groups will be presenting a pitch of your Big Idea to the entire class. You must all participate in the short presentation. There will be time for feedback and Q & A.

HW for today: **Due today:**

- **Final Big Idea Roadmap and BMGs**
- **Short reflection about your transformation group**
- **Peer Review due today**

Class Requirements

1. Class Participation

The success of this course depends on the active, enthusiastic participation of each student. Students ought to display great initiative, motivation, and a passion for learning. It is essential that students be here every day. It's also imperative that you come to class on time. It is astounding how much more effective you can be in your life and your work if you maintain basic integrity—simply do what you said you would do. **Assessment criteria are found below.**

2. Reflection Essays

You will write 3 brief reflection essays during the course. Their purpose is for you to take stock of what you have learned. **An evaluation rubric will be provided. Due July 6, July 10, and July 12.**

3. The Transformation Groups

Your project group will also be your “transformation group.” In this capacity you will encourage each other to excel on your portfolio answers by sharing them with each other and exploring the questions deeper. You will practice the skills of empathic listening and trust building. These groups are designed to help you achieve dramatic results in both personal and social change in a supportive “win-win” atmosphere. **You will write a one-page reflection on your experience in this group. This reflection in addition to a peer evaluation will be used to assess your participation in the group. Peer review and one-page reflection paper on Transformation Group is due July 14.**

4. Portfolio

The portfolio is a record of your progress in this class. You will be given a series of questions that are meant to be fun, intellectually stimulating, thought provoking, and exciting. You will put your responses together in a creative portfolio design that represents the best of your dreams and visions for yourself and your contribution to the world. Many students have called the portfolio the most meaningful and significant educational assignment they have ever had. I hope that you will agree. (Details are in the Portfolio document provided.) **An evaluation rubric will be provided. Due July 3.**

5. Big Idea and Business Model for Social Change

In this class, you will learn the fundamental principles for solving problems, fostering innovation, and creating social change, and then apply these lessons by developing your own Big Idea for Social Change. You will be working in groups. The Big Idea Roadmap questions as well as the Business Model Generator Canvas will help you develop your idea. **Both the Big Idea Roadmap questions and the BMG canvas are due July 14. An evaluation rubric will be provided.**

GRADING POLICIES

There are no tests in this class. Instead the grade breakdown is as follows:

Attendance and participation:	20 percent
Three Reflection Essays	15 percent
Participation in Transformation Groups (peer reviewed)	15 percent
Final Portfolio	20 percent
Big Idea Roadmap	15 percent
BMG canvas for Big Idea & Presentation	15 percent

Participation grading scale:

Your participation is critical to the success of this course. Not only do you get more from the experience if you engage fully, but you contribute tremendously to the rest of us in the class, enhancing our experience. What constitutes participation? This is a difficult question to answer. Some people, who are fully engaged and listen deeply, may say very little. Others say a lot, but aren't listening well, so their contributions hardly further the conversation.

I can never know what's going on inside of your head. I can only detect the signs of apparent interest -- whether you are making eye contact, whether you seem bored, whether your contributions seem to come from listening to the conversation closely, whether you seem like you would rather be somewhere else, or whether you seem like you are asleep or daydreaming. I will attempt to make a fair assessment of your class contribution based on the following rubric.

A - You are an outstanding, invaluable contributor to class discussions. The class would be considerably poorer without your presence. You listen actively, and you appear to respect the opinions of your fellow students. When you speak, you engage your fellow students, and offer intelligent, thoughtful opinions. Your level of energy and enthusiasm is very high. You are passionate about learning; you show great motivation and interest. You miss fewer than 3 class sessions in the semester. You know the names of all of your fellow students and help empower other people to do their best. You care about your classmates and how they are doing in class.

B - You are an active participant in class discussions. You seem to be showing a great deal of interest. You listen actively, and you appear to respect the opinions of your fellow students. You often contribute many intelligent ideas to the class discussions. You miss only 3-5 class sessions in the semester. You know at least 80 percent of your classmates' names.

C - You have an acceptable level of class participation. You occasionally participate in a class discussion, although not very much. If you are a naturally quiet person, you at least seem to be paying attention and showing interest. You miss 6-7 class sessions in the semester. You know at least 67 percent of your classmates' names.

D - You are physically present in class, but your mind seems to be somewhere else. You do not seem to pay attention (or even to disguise your boredom). You rarely participate in class discussions. Even when called on to answer a question, you have very little to say. Sometimes you seem to be on the verge of sleeping, or melting into your chair. You miss 8-9 class sessions in the semester. You know less than 67 percent of your classmates' names.

F - You miss class often. You do not participate at all. You show no interest whatsoever in the subject matter, the readings, or the opinions of your fellow students. Overall, you put no effort into the class. You miss more than 9 class sessions in the semester. You know less than 50 percent of your classmates' names.

Written assignments - grading scale:

Grading may seem like a subjective enterprise. However, we have discovered a remarkable consensus as to what grade a paper deserves. We use the following guidelines for assigning letter grades to papers. These are derived from the work of Bill Ingram, a professor at the University of Michigan. In addition to these guidelines, I have provided rubrics for each type of writing assignment.

A - This grade is reserved for outstanding work. It dazzles everyone who reads it. In fact, it has the "wow factor" -- i.e., if you showed it to 5 people, including a stranger who doesn't know you, all of them would enthusiastically shower it with genuine praise. If it is a personal project (e.g., the portfolio), it will reveal much about your unique character. If it is a persuasive paper (the big idea proposal), it will win people over, skillfully overcome any objections, and help them gain new insights. Overall, your work meets the highest standards of professionalism. It is hard to imagine that you could produce better work than this.

B - This paper is good. It goes beyond merely fulfilling the assignment; indeed, it shows evidence of significant thought and planning. It contains no major distracting errors, and is well developed with good supporting material and transitions. I am pleasantly surprised as I read it. Still I believe that you have a greater potential than this. With more work, you could push yourself to produce something that meets the standards of an A paper above.

C - This paper is acceptable. It fulfills all the requirements of the assignment, though in a routine way. It shows evidence of engagement with the topic and makes what I consider an adequate response to it. It contains few distracting errors. I can follow and understand the argument without difficulty, but also without much pleasure; the writing is not vigorous nor are the ideas fresh. It's an okay paper; it meets the requirements of the assignment and I am satisfied as I read it.

D - This is a weak paper that relates to the assignment but shows no evidence of real engagement with the topic. It is marred by enough errors to distract me seriously as I read it. It seems unprofessional and not carefully proofread. It also suffers from vague, ambiguous writing that makes it difficult for me to understand the content or the direction of the argument. I am disappointed as I read it.

F - This paper is a disaster. It shows no thought. It is so poorly constructed and so carelessly written that I cannot follow the sequence of ideas. Additionally, it is marred by so many errors in mechanics and usage that the message is difficult to decipher. I am dismayed as I read it. **Note:** A paper can also receive a failing grade if it does not respond to the subject of the assignment. That is one way to show "no thought."

There is no curve in this class. Anyone who does extraordinary work will receive an A. My hope is that you all do!