



Course Syllabus: Graduate Independent Study in Management
Dillard College of Business Administration
MGMT 6553
Fall Semester 2025, August 25-December 13, 2025

Contact Information

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Office hours: Monday, 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm. Tuesday and Wednesday, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, or by appointment.

Course Description

This independent study will focus on a study of nonprofit management best practices and an overview of the philanthropic and grantmaking process, focusing on motivations, responsibilities, ethics, and expectations.

Course Objective

This is a graduate-level management elective. Students will gain an understanding and appreciation for the nonprofit sector and the meaning and importance of philanthropy and the grantmaking process.

A portion of this course will require that the student participate in presentations by nonprofit content experts outside of class (approximately 18 hours) as well as attend in-class presentations by guest speakers (approximately 5-6 guest speakers) from the local nonprofit community.

The student will also be required to complete at least 10 hours of volunteer service outside of class. Approximately 4 hours can be completed as part of the Together We Make a Difference community-wide service event on October 18.

The student will complete and pass the Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) exam, a nationally recognized nonprofit professional credential. The completion of this exam, along with the volunteer hours, will go towards earning the CNP credential upon completing the MBA degree.

Learning Goals

Specific Learning Goals

Graduates of this course will:

1. Understand the nature of philanthropy, its history, theories, ethics, practice, and impact on society.
2. Research and understand public concerns in our community and beyond, specifically in these critical areas: a) health, wellness, and basic human needs; b) education, leadership, and mentoring; c) human services, social justice, and civil rights; d) culture, arts and the environment; and e) community improvement and development.
3. Understand and participate in the grant-making process: establishing goals, performing due diligence, writing and vetting proposals, debating priorities, and reaching collective decisions.
4. Understand the joy of giving and develop a personal philanthropic ethic that considers how one's time, talent, and treasure might benefit the public good.

General Learning Goals

1. Students will demonstrate competency in speaking and writing for common business scenarios.
2. Students will demonstrate problem-solving and decision-making abilities through critical analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of business information.
3. Students will apply and demonstrate ethical reasoning skills within a business environment.

These general learning goals are among those the Dillard College of Business Administration established. General learning goals represent the skills that graduates will carry into their careers. While assessing student performance in obtaining these general learning goals, Dillard College is evaluating its programs. The assessments will assist us as we improve our curriculum and curriculum delivery.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

I do not require a textbook. All materials will be provided in class or can be checked out from the Center for Nonprofit Management & Leadership and come from academic publications, research, and other materials shared in class or posted in D2L. Some of the content is taken from the book *Giving 2.0: Transforming your giving and our world* by Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen and from the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance (NLA) Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) credentialing requirements.

Service Learning

This class will have a service-learning requirement. MSU defines service-learning as "a teaching method that combines academic coursework with the application of institutional resources to address challenges facing particular communities through collaborative service projects with those communities". This method focuses on critical, reflective thinking to develop students' academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to the community.

You will be required to volunteer with a local nonprofit for at least 20 hours during the course of the semester and complete a reflection paper which captures your insights and applies your learning from the course as well as develop your own philanthropic action plan.

If you communicate or visit the nonprofit organization in person, you must dress appropriately and behave professionally. When you communicate in writing with the organization, you should use appropriate salutations, spelling, capitalization, and grammar. You should be punctual and respectful of their time.

Important Dates

Student registration: Early April 2025 – August 24, 2025

Classes begin: August 25, 2025

Labor Day Holiday: September 1, 2025 (No face-to-face classes)

Change of Schedule and Late Registration: August 25-28, 2025

Census Day (12th Class Day): September 8, 2025

Deadline for December graduates to file for graduation: September 22, 2025

The last day for students to drop with a grade of "W": 4:00 p.m., November 24, 2025. Drops after this deadline will receive grades of "F"

Thanksgiving Holiday break November 26-28. (Face-to-face classes resume Dec 1)

Last regular day of classes: December 5, 2025

Final examinations begin: December 6, 2025 (Must complete CNP credential exam by December 9)

Commencement: December 13, 2025

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. To report D2L problems, visit the [Online Problem Reporting System](#) and be sure you are using d2l.msutexas.edu to access D2L.

All assignments should be submitted through D2L. Please only submit typed **Word documents** unless otherwise specified. If you use Pages (or another word processor), please convert your document first. If you fail to submit your document in the correct format, and I cannot open or read your document, your homework will be considered late, and I will NOT accept the assignment. Submissions by e-mail will not be accepted.

Software Requirements

Students can get free access to the Office 365 web edition. Students should contact the helpdesk at 940-397-4680 or helpdesk@msutexas.edu to get more information about accessing the software. **Please note that the D2L learning**

management system does not handle Pages or other Apple Mac software well. If an assignment requires you to submit a document to D2L, please convert your homework assignments to Word documents or PDF before submitting them to avoid late submissions or no submission penalties.

Students must use Grammarly software or similar spelling/grammar software for all assignments. If you do not have a subscription to Grammarly, the Dillard College of Business Administration (DCOBA) provides FREE paid-version subscriptions for its students. Please let me know if you need access to Grammarly so I can assist you.

Grading

Course Grade – Course grade is determined by the number of points accumulated by the student over the semester. Each assignment is worth an allocated number of points.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

	Points
Speaker summaries 5 at 20 pts each	100
Attending content expert presentations (at least 18 hours)	200
Volunteer hours (at least 20 per semester)	200
CNP credential exam	100
Reflection paper and IPAP	100
Research paper	300
TOTAL POINTS	1000

Table 2: Points required for final letter grade in course

Letter Grade	Points
A	900 or higher
B	800-899
C	700-799
D	600-699
F	599 or below

Speaker summaries– 100 points total

Students will be expected to take notes and provide speaker summaries when guest speakers present. You will receive a zero if you are absent when a speaker presents. Each speaker summary is worth 20 points. See the due dates on the syllabus and posted in D2L.

Content expert presentations– 200 points total

You will be provided with six opportunities to attend nonprofit content experts on various topics. You are required to attend at least 18 hours of content. If you attend a speaker event, you must arrive on time and stay the entire time to earn the full amount of credit. There will be a monitor/facilitator at the event to document your attendance. See syllabus for dates and speaker topics.

Volunteer hours– 200 points total

You will be required to complete at least 20 hours of volunteer work with a local nonprofit. Ideally, these hours should be completed with the same nonprofit. The only exception is if you participate in the community-wide service event, Together We Make a Difference on October 18. This event is typically 3-4 hours and I will allow these hours to be completed with another nonprofit other than your selected nonprofit. In order to volunteer you may be required to complete additional background checks, training or other requirements as required by MSU or the organization. It is up to you to ensure you allow plenty of time to complete these requirements before volunteering.

CNP credential exam – 100 points total

The CNP credential exam is administered by an outside party and will need to be proctored by the Center for Nonprofit Management & Leadership. The cost of the credential is \$100, which will be paid by the Center for Nonprofit Management & Leadership as long as you complete all the criteria and earn the credential. If you do not complete all the requirements to earn the credential during the 24-month period, you will be asked to reimburse the Center for the cost of the credential. You must register for the credential and take the exam before the last day of class (December 5) and provide a screenshot or documentation of your exam score. This score will be your points for this category.

Reflection Paper – 100 points

After completing your volunteer hours, you will be asked to complete a reflection paper on your volunteer experience and assess how your nonprofit follows best practices presented this semester. Your reflection paper should also include how you expect to engage with nonprofits in the future, or your individual philanthropic action plan (IPAP). You can draw from course content, outside research, class speakers, content experts, and Nonprofit Leadership Alliance recommendations. Specific paper and formatting guidelines will be posted in D2L. Check syllabus and D2L for due dates.

Research Paper – 300 points

The student will select a topic to research that is relevant to the nonprofit sector. This topic can be about a particular segment of the nonprofit sector (healthcare, the arts, human services, advocacy, higher education, etc.) or about a particular category of management, such as finances, fundraising, board governance, evaluation, etc. **I highly suggest that you meet with me by mid-semester (approximately mid-October) to approve your paper topic so you have**

plenty of time to research and refine your topic. This also allows me to better guide you in your research. The later you wait in the semester to select your topic, the less time I will have to help you!

Your paper should reflect graduate-level writing skills and use proper APA formatting (7th edition). You should use academic journal articles as a prototype for your writing style. You are not required to collect data or analyze the data, but you are required to discuss how you MIGHT approach collecting or analyzing the data. For example, would you survey organizations or individuals? Would you conduct focus groups to gather data? Would you collect data longitudinally or cross-sectionally? Or might you use secondary data, such as census data? A general explanation of how you MIGHT propose to collect and analyze the data should be discussed in a methodological section of your paper. Specific paper and formatting guidelines will be posted in D2L. Check syllabus and D2L for due dates.

Instructor Class Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty (cheating, collusion, and plagiarism) is taken seriously and will be investigated. **Please understand that integrity is very important to me. Instances of academic dishonesty will be handled quickly and severely.** Cutting and pasting text from the internet without citing the source, including AI-generating tools, constitutes plagiarism. Cheating (using old assignments and/or exams, original thoughts/words from another source) on a written assignment is considered academic dishonesty. Copying or using other people's work, including AI tools, is considered academic dishonesty in this course. I use plagiarism software and AI detection software to identify instances of using uncited and unattributed sources. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct (see University Policies). Any assignment found to have resulted from cheating, collusion, and/or plagiarism will be given a grade of zero, at a minimum. Repeated offenses may result in failing the course.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Use of AI Tools

While AI-based tools can aid in research and learning, it is crucial to understand the limits and appropriate use of such tools. Students are encouraged to leverage AI tools for tasks like data analysis, language translation, and correcting spelling and grammar (such as Grammarly). Learning to use AI **responsibly and ethically** is an important skill in today's business community. However, using AI tools to generate content submitted as your original work and not citing or attributing AI as a source is a breach of academic integrity and constitutes plagiarism in this course.

Generative AI tools can be helpful tools in the academic setting as well as in the professional setting. However, they are NOT a substitute, nor should they be used as a replacement for your own original thoughts and academic work. The

use of generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas
- Fine-tuning your research questions
- Finding information on your topic
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts, and
- Checking grammar and style

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you, to answer essay or short-answer questions on quizzes or tests, or content you post on D2L or Zoom chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned to you.
- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing an entire sentence, paragraph, or paper to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (e.g., that it does not violate intellectual property laws or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be appropriately documented and cited, as would any use of someone else's work or thoughts, to stay compliant with university policies on academic dishonesty. Any assignment that used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways will be given a grade of zero. Repeated offenses may result in failing the course. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Department Chair, the Dean of Dillard College of Business, and the Dean of Students. If you as a student need guidance on how to cite and reference AI sources, I have provided the following resource:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Attendance and Class Participation

Regular and active participation is an essential aspect of this course. Attendance is extremely important for this class to be successful and for students to achieve the learning goals. You will have 10 points deducted from your participation & engagement points for each absence. If you attend via Zoom, you will have 5 points deducted because this limits your class engagement. Three or more absences will result in being dropped from the course.

Course Communication

I will provide all course content, updates, readings, handouts, and other communication using D2L. Students may also check their grades via D2L. I will provide feedback on homework assignments via D2L. If you have any questions or need help, the best way to reach me is via e-mail. I will communicate with the class through D2L, student MSU e-mail and by making announcements in class.

Note: Ensure your e-mail settings are set up so you receive communications via D2L. It is your responsibility to manage your settings.

Course Syllabus

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change. Syllabus changes will be communicated via D2L, e-mail, and announced in class if applicable.

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

E-mail Communication Guidelines

I expect upper-division students (which you are!) to be able to communicate professionally. Occasionally, you may have to communicate with me. When communicating with me via e-mail, always include your first and last name and the course name in the subject line. Be sure to have a proper salutation in your e-mail to me. You can address me as Ms. White, Instructor White, or Professor White. Do not address me by my first name or leave out the salutation, as that is not considered professional or appropriate. Your e-mail should have proper spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Your e-mail should also have a "signature," including your first name, last name, and M#. If your e-mail does not follow these guidelines, I may not answer your e-mail. All of these guidelines reflect business-appropriate and professional e-mail communication standards. Many of you use your phones to send emails, so you may have to adjust your typical responses to reflect a more professional tone.

Grading and Feedback

All the course activities will generally be graded one week or less after the set due date. You can check your grades by going to Gradebook. If you are not able to see your grade or my feedback, please let me know so that I can correct the situation. If there is any discrepancy in the grade, you must contact me immediately.

Inclement Weather/Closing of Campus

If the campus is closed due to inclement weather, and class falls on the day that the campus is closed, then we will not have class in person. I may communicate with you via email or through D2L about an alternate assignment or with special instructions. Please check your email and D2L for updates regarding class closure and alternate assignments.

Late Work - Makeup Work/Tests

No late submissions will be accepted or graded. All course activities must be submitted before or on set due dates and times. If the student is unable to abide by the due dates and times, it is her/his responsibility to contact the instructor immediately. It is the instructor who decides if the situation warrants special consideration or any extensions, not the student. If the instructor makes any concessions for late submission, valid documentation is needed for the acceptance of late assignments. If the student does not provide the documentation, they will receive a score of zero for all late submissions.

Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline, as there are many places to access this class and D2L. Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the Internet. Being out of town or traveling (e.g. such as university sponsored athletics) is also not an excuse for missing deadlines, as activities are made available for a full-week before they are due.

Note: The due dates and times for the activities will adhere to the Central Time Zone.

Midterm Progress Report

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, the instructor for this class will provide a Midterm Progress Report through each student's WebWorld account or Navigate account. Only at-risk students will receive the Midterm Progress Report. Midterm grades will not be reported on the students' transcript; nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. They give students an idea of where they stand at the midpoint of the semester. Students earning below a C at the midway point should schedule a meeting with the course instructor.

Response Policy

I always try to respond within 24 hours to an email or phone message left during regular business hours, which I consider Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. As I strive to maintain healthy life-work boundaries, if you contact me after 5 pm on Friday, do not expect a reply until Monday. For scheduled University Holidays, I try not to look at email on those scheduled holidays but I will respond on the next scheduled workday. If I am out of the office for a planned absence, I try to have an out-of-office reply on my email or post my planned absence on D2L. A planned absence may affect my normal response time.

Turnitin or Similar Detection Tools

This course may utilize plagiarism or AI detection tools to evaluate assignments. If you are found to have more than 25% of similarity or AI detection, and/or you fail to disclose the use of AI or cite any sources properly, you may be at risk of academic dishonesty and plagiarism, which will be dealt with as explained above.

University Policies

Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity involves upholding ethical standards in all academic activities. This encompasses originality in work, proper attribution of sources, and honesty in assessments and assignments. Concerning university-wide academic integrity, students are referred to the [Student Honor Creed](#) in the undergraduate catalog and in the MSU Student Handbook. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed for alleged incidents of Academic Dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to

whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct
[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity.

Campus Carry

For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Student Handbook

The Midwestern State University Student Handbook is a source of valuable information regarding student responsibilities, obligations, and privileges while attending the university. This handbook is available online from the Midwestern State University website at <https://msutexas.edu/site-policies> and within the myMSUTexas portal. Copies are available at the Clark Student Center Information Desk and Residence Hall offices. Failure to read this handbook does not excuse students from the requirements and regulations described within

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Course Schedule:

Week	Content Experts; Class Speakers; Volunteer Opportunities	Assignment due
Week 1 - Aug 25-31	Read the syllabus carefully Gulati-Partee, "A Primer on Nonprofit Organizations" Council of Nonprofits, "Myths About Nonprofits"	
Week 2 - Sep 1-7 MONDAY, SEP 2 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	Together We Make a Difference community service event, Saturday, Oct 18. Sign-up ahead is required! Can count toward your volunteer hours.	Consider which nonprofit you want to volunteer with – find out what they require to volunteer and start the process!
Week 3 - Sep 8- 14	Defining Need & Measuring Impact, Dr. Colton Strawser, 9-12 pm, Sep 10 Nonprofit Strategy & Strategic Planning, Suzanne Smith, MBA, 9-4 pm, Sep 12	Attend a content expert event!
Week 4 - Sep 15-21	In-class speaker: Attendance mandatory!	Wednesday – Guest Speaker TBD Friday: Speaker summary due by 11:59 pm
Week 5 - Sep 22-28	In-class speaker: Attendance mandatory!	Wednesday – Guest Speaker, TBD Friday, Speaker summary due by 11:59 pm
Week 6 - Sep 29-Oct 5	In-class speaker: Attendance mandatory!	Wednesday – Guest Speaker, Dr. Shelley Sweatt, CEO & President, The Priddy Foundation Friday, Speaker summary due by 11:59 pm
Week 7 - Oct 6-12	In-class speaker: Attendance mandatory! Fundraising: It's Not About the Money!, Carole Rylander, CFRE, Oct 10, 9-4pm	Wednesday- Guest Speaker Mr. Jake Truette, President Wichita Falls Area Community Foundation Attend a content expert event! Friday - Speaker Summary due by 11:59 pm
Week 8 - Oct 13-19		Wednesday- Guest Speaker TBD MID-TERM: Research paper topic should be finalized SOON!

Week	Content Experts; Class Speakers; Volunteer Opportunities	Assignment due
Week 9 - Oct 20-26		Work on a research paper Volunteer hours Register for CNP credential and complete "Getting Started" and "Module 1" in the CNP Study Guide.
Week 10 – Oct 27-Nov 2		Work on a research paper Volunteer hours Complete "Module 3" of CNP Study Guide
Week 11 - Nov 3-9	Subscription Giving, Dave Raley, time TBD, 3 hours, November 5 Nonprofit Human Resources & Volunteer Management, Speaker TBD, 9-4 pm, November 7	Attend a content expert event! Complete "Module 4" of CNP Study Guide
Week 12 - Nov 10-16		Work on research paper Volunteer hours Complete "Module 5" of CNP Study Guide
Week 13 - Nov 17-23		Volunteer hours completed. Volunteer log is due November 21. Complete "Module 6" of CNP Study Guide
Week 14 - Nov 24-30 THANKSGIVING BREAK NO CLASS WEDNESDAY,		Reflection paper due November 27. Complete "Modules 7 & 8" of the CNP Study Guide. Do NOT take the exam yet! The exam should be proctored!
Week 15 - DEC 1-7	Financial Management, Kathy Kabell, CPA, December 5, 9-4 pm	Attend a content expert event! Research Paper due December 5! Schedule proctoring for CNP exam (contact Dr. White)
FINAL EXAM Dec 9		Must complete the CNP exam no later than December 9!