



University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2018 WINNER



MEGAN TOMPKINS-STANGE
Assistant Professor
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy
mtompkin@umich.edu

This innovation was made possible by the sponsorship and support of Poverty Solutions Director Luke Shaefer and Strategic Projects Manager Kate Naranjo, MPP '17.

Sponsors:

Office of the Provost

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)

University Libraries

Bringing Philanthropy to Life Through Critical Pedagogy

Innovation Description

Students engage in hands-on grantmaking in PUBPOL 495 "Philanthropic Foundations in the Public Arena." This experiential learning initiative allows students from all backgrounds to critically reflect on the role money plays in social change as they analyze the historically controversial relationship between institutional philanthropy and public policy. Multiple, and often conflicting, disciplinary perspectives simultaneously challenge students and train them in constructive dialogue and deliberation in order to reconcile conflicting values. Working in teams, the students collectively determine their mission, the areas they seek to address, the grant recipients, the size and nature of gifts to be made, and how grants will be evaluated before awarding them to Detroit organizations that focus on poverty.

Giving away real dollars brings real weight to students' examination of their individual and group values. All students in the course – regardless of their own socioeconomic backgrounds – are put in a position of relative privilege and power and are asked to interrogate this power. Funding for the course's grantmaking has been provided by the Once Upon a Time Foundation. In the absence of funds, simulations would offer similar benefits for student learning across disciplines because the activity offers hands-on practice in allocating scarce resources and making value judgments among a variety of alternatives. In the process, the exercise promises to build students' deliberative dialogue skills for discussing multiple sides of complex and controversial topics.

Student Comments

"Our class was responsible for setting up the rules and guidelines for giving out the grant. None of us had ever had that much autonomy in a class before."

"I had to practice empathy during every class and consciously listen to my classmates. This made empathy less of an ideal and more of a practice. Throughout the course, we were always asked to consider someone's perspective."

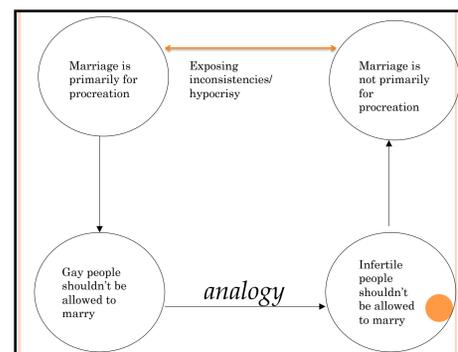
"I started off believing one thing and came out not only having changed my views multiple times, but also continuing to question those particular views. It provided an educational environment where problematizing one perspective as a means to see another fosters an open educational space."

"I am proud to have been a student in this course because I learned to champion my own values without diminishing those of my peers and friends."

"We worked through our disagreements, examining our own values and how they fit into the puzzle that was our class community."

"In each position I have held since graduating, knowing how to empathize and listen actively to others has not only made me better at my job but has made my connections with other people more meaningful."

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Students practice making values-based arguments, testing a general principle in an actual case, identifying analogous cases, and asking whether the principle holds in that context.

WHAT SHOULD PHILANTHROPY DO?

- Instrumental philanthropy
 - Give to organizations that provide critical services of value to society
 - Need-based
 - Aligns more with a utilitarian approach
- Expressive philanthropy
 - Give to organizations that allow people to express their values
 - Cultivate emotional ties with causes
 - Aligns more with a deontological approach

Working through competing moral frameworks encourages more careful articulation and clarification of values and fosters respect for others' perspectives.

WHAT ARE THE "RIGHT" CAUSES TO GIVE TO?

- "How many children died because of Batkid?"
- Singer – if equivalent amount was donated to international causes that are more focused on critical needs, many more children's lives would be saved
- Is "saving a child's life more important than fulfilling a 5-year-old's wish to be Batkid?"

In an environment of compassion among peers, students engage in constructive debate and challenge deeply held norms and assumptions with civility.