

Syllabus: Law and Social Innovation: Creative Problem Solving

Spring 2016

Professor Ray Brescia

445-3247

Room W120, 1928 Building

rbres@albanylaw.edu

Office: GLC Offices, Room 317, 3rd Floor, 2000 Building Office Hours: By Appointment

This course will explore the role of lawyer as problem solver. In it, students will have the opportunity to assess the strategies and tools lawyers, advocates, policy, information technologists, and data analysts use to promote social innovation and solve some of the world's most pressing problems. Students will put the skills they have developed to use in contexts where those skills are most desperately needed. They will also hone additional skills: e.g., the ability to work effectively in groups, run a productive meeting, collaborate on document drafting and production, think creatively to construct elegant solutions to complex problems, "pitch" ideas, and conduct a group presentation.

This semester, this array of skills will be put to use to address a range of problems facing municipalities as a result of abandoned properties and blight. This work will ultimately culminate in a joint oral presentation as well as a written report.

Required Texts:

Daniel H. Pink: *A WHOLE NEW MIND: WHY RIGHT-BRAINERS WILL RULE THE FUTURE* (2006).

Week 1: January 25, 2016. Introduction.

This introductory class will outline the goals of the course and explore legal problem solving and social innovation as concepts.

Readings:

James A. Phillips, Jr., *et al.*, *Rediscovering Social Innovation*, STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW (Fall 2008), *available at*:
http://www.ssireview.org/images/articles/2008FA_feature_phills_deiglmeier_miller.pdf.

Week 2. February 2, 2016. Meet Our Partners

This class will give the class an opportunity to meet with representatives of the government of the City of Albany and City of Schenectady to review the project we will undertake this semester.

Readings:

To Be Announced.

Group Project: Ask questions of city officials and talk about organization of groups.

Week 3: February 8, 2016. Background: Housing Policy and Urban Planning History.

This class will review the history of urban planning and housing policy in the United States. This background will provide a firm footing for the work we will do throughout the semester.

Readings:

Jane Jacobs, *THE DEATH AND LIFE OF THE GREAT AMERICAN CITIES*, 3-25 (1961)(TWEN).

John Landis & Kirk McClure, *Rethinking Federal Housing Policy*, *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION* (June 2010)(TWEN).

Week 4. February 16, 2016. The Skills of Creative Problem Solving I: Cultivating and Executing Creativity and Working in Teams.

This class will explore some of the nuts and bolts of creativity, including how to harness individual creativity, conduct effective interviews, run effective meetings, and work collaboratively.

Readings:

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *CREATIVITY: FLOW AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DISCOVERY AND INVENTION*, 107-126 (1996)(TWEN).

David Abrams, *Creating Collaborative Documents*, *HARVARD PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHOP TECHNICAL NOTE* (2011)(TWEN).

Joseph William Singer, *How to Be a Good Team Member*, *HARVARD PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHOP TECHNICAL NOTE* (2010)(TWEN).

Marlene K. Rebori, *How to Organize and Run Effective Meetings*, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Fact Sheet 97-29, available at:
<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cd/other/fs9729.pdf>

Group Project: Discuss development of ground rules for group functioning.

Week 5. February 22, 2016. Smart Information Technology.

This class will explore the theme of the use of information technology to address social problems in intuitive, creative, and effective ways.

Readings:

To Be Announced.

Deadline for Group Project Outlines: February 26, 2016.

Week 6: February 29, 2016: Advocacy in the “Conceptual Age”

This class will review Dan Pink’s “A Whole New Mind” and discuss ways that what Pink calls the “high touch/high concept” aptitudes can be incorporated into our work.

Dan Pink, A WHOLE NEW MIND.

Week 7: March 7, 2016. The Skills of Creative Problem Solving II: Design Thinking for Social Change.

This class will explore the ways that “design thinking” can inform effective legal advocacy.

Group Project: Students will discuss the ways that they could incorporate design thinking approaches into the group project.

Reading:

Tim Brown & Jocelyn Wyatt, *Design Thinking for Social Innovation*, STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW (Winter 2010), available at:

http://www.ideo.com/images/uploads/thoughts/2010_SSIR_DesignThinking.pdf

Week 8. March 21, 2016: The Skills of Creative Problem Solving III: Policy Advocacy to Advance Social Change.

In this class we will conduct a case study of a policy advocacy campaign to understand its components and assess its relative success.

Group Project: Students will report back on their preliminary research findings and workshop some of their ideas for how they will structure their written work product.

Readings:

URBAN JUSTICE CENTER, DEBT WEIGHT: THE CONSUMER CREDIT CRISIS IN NEW YORK CITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE WORKING POOR (2007)(TWEN).

First Draft of Research Papers Due March 25, 2016.

Week 9. March 28, 2016: Review of First Draft of Research Papers and Begin Preparation of Presentations.

In this class we will review the draft Research Report. Students are expected to have read the entire research project draft and come prepared with constructive comments and suggestions for revisions.

Week 10: April 4, 2016. The Skills of Creative Problem Solving IV: Oral Advocacy and Effective Presentations, Class A.

In this class, we will begin to prepare for the students to make their research presentations to Mayors Sheehan and McCarthy.

Group Project: Students will begin to organize their group presentation.

Readings:

JEFF RADEL, PREPARING AN ORAL PRESENTATION: SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC SETTINGS (online tutorial), available at: http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Preparing_talks/TalkStrt.html

Gretchen Rubin, *Six Simple Strategies for Pitching Your Ideas. And to Make Them Irresistible*, THE HAPPINESS PROJECT (January 2, 2013), available at: http://www.happiness-project.com/happiness_project/2013/01/6-simple-strategies-to-pitch-your-ideas-and-to-make-them-irresistible/

Week 11: April 11, 2016. The Skills of Creative Problem Solving IV: Oral Advocacy and Effective Presentations, Class B.

In this class, students will offer preliminary findings to representatives of the cities of Albany and Schenectady. In this exercise, students will complete a run-through of their presentation in its current form. Critique of the presentation will follow.

Second Draft of Research Paper Due April 15, 2016, and distributed to entire class.

Week 12: April 18, 2016. Review of Second Draft of Research Paper and Final Presentation Prep.

In this class we will review the second draft of the Research Report. Students are expected to have read each section of the research project and come to class prepared with constructive comments and suggestions for revisions. Students will also begin final preparations for the Week 13 Group Presentation.

Final Papers Due: April 20, 2016.

Week 13. April 25, 2016 Creative Problem Solving in Action: Group Presentation.

Group presentation to community partners. Students will give their final, public presentation to Mayors Sheehan and McCarthy and their staff.

Week 14. May 2, 2016. Creative Problem Solving in Action II: Group Presentation.

Group presentation to New York Conference of Mayors, Saratoga Springs, NY (awaiting confirmation).