

SYLLABUS COURSE MGMT E-4032

Becoming an Agent of Change

January 2016

Monday – Thursday 10.00 am -1.00 pm

CRN: 24483

Location: To be determined (see course website for update)

Limited enrollment (#30) / 4 credits

Instructor: Sanderijn Cels Ph.D. (HKS)

Contents

Course Description	p. 3
The Role of Theory & Practice	p. 3
Participants	p. 4
Instructors	p. 4
Set-Up of the Course	p. 4
Papers & Grading	p. 10
General Requirements	p. 12
Reading assignments	p. 12
Teaching Methods	p. 13
Personal Change Challenge	p. 14

Course Description

This course examines the strategic challenges of making social change. With leadership and management as underlying themes, we explore change in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The basic question we ask is how one can effectively envision, promote, and deliver social change.

To that end, we work with practical analytical frameworks and apply these to the “change challenges” of each participant of this course (see page 14). We also discuss a wide range of cases, in order to learn from the successes and failures of agents of change. Why and how did they take action? How certain were they about the feasibility and utility of their actions? What was the nature of the resistance they faced?

These and many other questions will help us understand what it is that change makers do, and what we can do ourselves. Rather than focusing on Fortune 500 CEOs and leaders of momentous social change movements, such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela, this course focuses on the strategic challenges that have faced people to whom we may relate more easily — ordinary people who have nonetheless made an extraordinary impact on their organization, neighborhood, or society.

The Role of Theory & Practice

The emphasis of the course is on developing analytical and practical skills for instigating change in one's own context. For this we work with cases of actual change agents and apply lessons drawn from these cases to our own particular contexts. What can we learn from a Japanese gynecologist who carefully reinvented prenatal care in a risk-averse environment? Or from a US nonprofit organization seeking to revitalize support for the homeless?

We also consider a variety of theories from the fields of leadership, strategic management, innovation, organizational learning, and social change. The purpose of reading and discussing theory is to take a few steps back and think more critically and strategically about the challenges of making change. The analytical frameworks offered by theorists also provide languages in which we can speak about essential elements of the work.

Participants

The course will serve anyone with an open mind and with an interest in making change – from team leaders to managers, and from social entrepreneurs to community organizers. Ideally, students have at least 1 year of working experience in an organization. The latter, however, is not a formal requirement. The course is also designed for people with different backgrounds, cultures, and political convictions.

Instructor

Sanderijn Cels Ph.D. is a practice-oriented academic, and an Associate fellow of the Carr Center of Human Rights Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. She also teaches at Harvard Summer School. She specializes in public policy, social innovation, and strategic communication. She is currently working on a book about the ways in which leaders respond to sensitive issues, and how their responses are perceived by the broader public. Before coming to the US in 2008, Cels chaired a high-level government think tank in the Netherlands and worked as an advisor to several ministries of the national government. Cels has been affiliated with the Consensus Building Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School. She has published 100+ articles, 20+ teaching cases and 7 books, including *Agents of Change: Strategy and Tactics for Social Innovation* (Brookings Institution Press, 2012, co-authored).

Email: sanderijn_cels@hks.harvard.edu

Set-Up of the Course

Preparation

Pre-assignment (not graded): December 25

Personal change challenge due on this date. (Format provided in this syllabus on page 14-16.) You will receive feedback by the instructor no later than the first day of the course.

Part 1. Understanding the Challenge

Class 1: Monday, January 4

Making a Plan & Identifying the Pitfalls

We dedicate the first 4 classes to the very beginning of the change process in order to acquaint you with the art and science of making a successful start. The first part of this class introduces the subject and the set-up of the course. In the second part, we will start with a case discussion about an aspiring leader who starts working in the Dutch government, and who is eager to make change. Within a year, he is fired. The discussion is informed by a famous article by John Kotter about common mistakes in the process of making change.

Readings:

- Case: Cels, S. et al. (2013) *False Start: Behind the Scenes of the Dutch Innovation Platform* (unpublished) Available at the course website.
- John Kotter (2007), *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail* Harvard Business Review Available online: <https://hbr.org/2007/01/leading-change-why-transformation-efforts-fail>
Note that you can read max. 5 articles on the HBR website for free.

Class 2: Tuesday, January 5

Learning the Landscape & Designing a Roadmap

In this class, we explore the overall strategic challenge that confronts any aspiring change maker—the challenge of aligning value, capacity, and support. First, we analyze a classic Harvard Kennedy School case about a small-town librarian who is confronted with a seemingly simple challenge in her working environment, and introduce a conceptual framework. This framework (a) provides us with a common vocabulary for the rest of the course, and (b) helps you, as change agents, to identify the challenges ahead. The framework is part of public value theory – a flagship theory that has been developed and taught at Harvard Kennedy School by prof. Mark Moore. In the second part of the class, you will apply the framework to your own "change challenge."

Readings:

- Case: *The Town Librarian and the Latchkey Children*. HKS case (unpublished). Available at the course website.
- William Drayton (2006), *Everyone a Changemaker; Social Entrepreneurship's Ultimate Goal*, *Innovations*, 1 (1) Available online:
https://www.ashoka.org/files/innovations8.5x11FINAL_0.pdf

Class 3: Wednesday, January 6

Learning to Lead

Guest instructor: Jorrit de Jong Ph.D., Lecturer in Public Policy and Management, Ash Center, Harvard Kennedy School

In the third class we take up the topic of technical and adaptive leadership. This time we tap into adaptive leadership theory, as developed by Marty Linsky and Ronald Heifetz (Harvard Kennedy School). Building upon the framework that was introduced in the previous class, we discuss the leadership required to deal with the challenges ahead. For this, we will work with a case about a leader in a department of social services who sought to exercise leadership in a turbulent situation. In the last part of the session, you will be invited to reflect on your own capacity for leading change.

Readings:

- Case: *Harry Spence and the Department of Social Services*. HKS Case (unpublished). Available at the course website.
- Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow & Marty Linsky (2009), *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Harvard Business Press. Chapters 1-3.

Class 4: Thursday, January 7

Defining the Problem & Managing Meaning

This session focuses on understanding and defining the problem at hand. Together we generate multiple definitions of the problems that you face in your own “change challenges”, and we consider the strategic implications of defining problems in various different ways. We take up a case and discuss the ways in which Martha Kegel, director of an NGO, defined the problem of homelessness in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Readings:

- Case: *Housing the Homeless: Implementing the Vulnerability Index in New Orleans*. HKS case (unpublished). Available at the course website.
- Bardwell, L.V. *Problem-framing: A perspective on environmental problem solving* (1991). Available at the course website.

Friday, January 8

- Paper 1 due on this date

Part 2. Generating Solutions

This week: 15 minute private consultations

One-on-one meetings with prof. Sanderijn Cels to discuss your change challenge & final paper.

Class 6 + 7: Monday January 11 & Tuesday, January 12

Designing your Theory of Change: Explicating and Debating Assumptions

Underlying every change effort is a rationale – or “theory of change” – that includes causal relationships. In simple wording, as change agents we assume that “if we do A, B will happen/follow.” During two classes we work on the visual design of a logic theory of change for each individual change challenge. You present the rationale that underlies your change project in a small group, you receive critical feedback from fellow students and, finally, you improve the design. The visualization of your theory of change is to be included in your final presentation in class next week. (For this, you can use Powerpoint, Prezi or other formats that are technologically feasible.)

Readings Class 6:

- Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas (no date). *Developing a Logic Model*. Community Toolbox. Chapter 2. Available online: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main>
- Author unknown (2008). *Mission statements that creep*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter, p. 64. Available at the course website.

Homework Class 7:

- Finalizing the visualization of your theory of change

Part 3. Moving to Action

Class 7: Wednesday, January 13

Moving Forward & Securing Support (1)

In this part of the course—comprising two classes—we focus on one feature of the change process: securing continuous support from stakeholders. We discuss a case about a gynecologist in Japan who crafted a value proposition that attracted critical stakeholders in different phases of an innovation process. In the last part of today's session, we also discuss the moral, political and intellectual issues of making change.

Readings:

- Case: *The Hara Factor: Introducing Medical Informatics in Japan* HKS case (unpublished)
Available at the course website.
- Bob Behn (1988), *Managing by Groping Along*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 7(4)
Available at the course website.

Class 8: Thursday, January 14

Moving Forward & Securing Support (2): "Tricky Transfers"

Guest instructor: Jorrit de Jong Ph.D., Lecturer in Public Policy and Management, Ash Center, Harvard Kennedy School

Moving forward often requires pacing the change process to keep all stakeholders on board. This time, we play a simulation game called "Tricky Transfers" that will demonstrate how implementing an innovation can trigger a wide range of responses—not all of which are helpful to aspiring change makers. In the plenary post-game analysis, prof. Jorrit de Jong will address the obstacles and opportunities that emerged during the game.

Readings:

- Materials for the simulation exercise are distributed in class.
- Gregory J. Dees, Beth Battle Anderson, Jane Wei-Skillern (2004). *Scaling Social Impact: Strategies for Spreading Social Innovations*. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 1 (4)
Available online: http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/scaling_social_impact

Weekend, January 16, 17

- Preparing for individual presentations & final paper

Part 4. Becoming an Agent of Change

Monday, January 18

No class today in honor of Martin Luther King Day (Extension School closed)

Class 9: Tuesday, January 19

Diagnosing Your Immunity to Change & Presenting Your Case

In the final part of the course, we focus on you, the agent of change. In this first class, we diagnose your "immunity to change" and do exercises that can help you assess your own commitment to making change, and make you aware of competing commitments. We start this class with individual student presentations, followed by a brief Q&A.

Readings:

- Robert Kegan & Lisa Lahey (2001), *The Real Reason People Won't Change*, Harvard Business Review. Available online: <https://hbr.org/2001/11/the-real-reason-people-wont-change>
Note that you can read max. 5 articles on the HBR website for free.
- Materials of your fellow students who present today.

Class 10: Wednesday, January 20

Discovering Your True North & Presenting Your Case

Building upon the work of Harvard Business School instructor Bill George on "authentic leadership," we start composing a "story of self". We also learn more about Marshall Ganz's work on public narratives. According to Ganz, strong narratives speak to people's agency and have the ability to spur them into action. You will speak about your ambition and personal motivation to make change. Once again, we start this class with individual student presentations, followed by a brief Q&A.

Readings:

- Bill George (2007), *True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership*. Wiley: Josey-Bass. Chapters 1 & 2, and do the exercises on pages 219-220.
- Marshall Ganz (2008). *What is Public Narrative?* Available at the course website.
- Materials of your fellow students who present today.

Class 11: Thursday, January 22

Presenting Your Case & Wrapping Up

For the last time, we begin with individual presentations, followed by a brief Q&A. For the remainder of the class, we review the key messages of the course and take stock of the lessons learned.

Readings:

- Materials of your fellow students who present today.

Friday, January 23: Final Paper

Due on this date (official deadline of the school)

Friday, February 3

Grades available online

Papers & Grading

Grades reflect the quality and quantity of your work throughout the course according to the grading standards of the Harvard Extension School. In this particular course, your grade will be based on written assignments, a presentation in class, and class participation throughout the course. Class participation is essential to this 'discussion based' course, since much of what you learn will come through conversations with your fellow students.

Assignment	Subject & Details	Due by	Maximum	% of grade
Change Challenge	<i>Describe a challenge of your own choice</i> Format is provided in this syllabus & course website	Friday December 25	750 words	0

Paper 1	<i>Your change challenge</i> Instructions will be provided in class 2	Friday January 8	500 words	15
Final Paper	<i>Your change challenge</i> Details will be provided in week 2	Friday January 22	1500 words	40
Final Presentation in Class	<i>Presenting your work in progress & Responding to feedback from classmates and instructors</i> Your presentation must include a logic visual presentation (e.g., Power Point slides, max. 4), to be uploaded to the course website prior to your performance.	Week 3	8 minutes plus Q&A	20
Class Participation	n/a	n/a	n/a	25
Participation in online discussion thread	<i>Participate in online discussion</i> You are required to ask questions to each fellow student about his/her change project. Each student enters 1 paragraph (300 words) as discussion entry at the course website about his/her challenge; all others respond by asking 2 questions.	Week 3	2 ques- tions in each discussion entry	0

General Requirements

1. *Prepared, complete, and on-time attendance.* Every class builds on the previous ones, so it is important to attend all sessions. Please let the instructor know in advance by email if you are ill or have an emergency situation and can't make it to class. All students are expected to be well prepared and to have read all reading materials before class.
2. *Active participation.* What matters is not the quantity or volume of your comments, but their quality and relevance to the discussion. The key is to enable learning for yourself and fellow students in the class.
3. *Papers should be submitted on time* and within the size limits (maximum number of words). There will be no flexibility with regard to the deadlines, except in cases of medical and family emergencies.
4. *Expect to be cold-called.* Always come to class prepared and make sure you are ready to share your analysis of a case or your takeaways from a reading. Cold calls are a tool for the instructors to bring particular expertise or perspectives into the discussion, as well as give special opportunities to excel. They also keep everybody focused and alert which benefits the quality and vitality of the class conversation.

Reading Assignments

As you have read, there are readings and teaching case assignments for each class session. There are several ways in which you can obtain the reading materials. Most of the cases and articles will be posted on the course website in PDF format; information to obtain other materials will be provided as well. Some cases may need to be purchased from Harvard Business School Publishing or the Harvard Kennedy School Case Program. Information about placing case study orders will be provided on the course website. Many students find it convenient to purchase books. Online booksellers are likely to have the titles in stock. Alternatively, you may want to check availability of used books at the COOP (the Harvard bookstore on Harvard Square).

Teaching Methods

The course pedagogy starts with the basic premise that you are all experienced, competent, and curious people. At the same time, you have different education backgrounds and professional experience, and different views and opinions. We hope to offer a learning environment that accommodates the group's diversity and encourages interaction and intellectual productivity. Teaching methods primarily include: working with your own change challenges; discussion-based learning as exemplified by the Harvard Case Method; exercises in small groups, and we play a simulation game.

Harvard Case Method

We will work with multiple cases that are designed according to the Harvard case method. A (Harvard) teaching case is a written description of a problem or situation. Unlike other forms of stories and narratives, a case study does not include analysis or conclusions, but only the facts of a story arranged in a chronological sequence. The purpose of a teaching case is to place participants in the role of decision makers, asking them to distinguish pertinent from peripheral facts, to identify critical choices among several issues competing for attention, and to formulate strategies and policy recommendations. The method provides an opportunity to sharpen problem-solving skills and to improve the ability to think and reason rigorously.

The case study method is demanding and requires significant preparation time as well as active class participation. It is intended to build on class members' personal experience and to allow them to learn from one another as well as from the materials and from faculty members. When preparing a case, in general, it is helpful to follow these steps:

- *Look at the study questions* that accompany the case (provided either with the case text or separately on the course website) to orient you to the key issues in the class discussion.
- *Read the case carefully*, underlining key issues, problems, decision points, facts, etc. as you go.
- *Answer the study questions*. You don't need to write out your answers, but do make notes, e.g., with the help of keywords.

The success of a case discussion in class depends largely on your active and vigorous participation. Remember to:

- Assert your ideas and be prepared to support them.
- Listen to others and evaluate their positions.

- Keep an open mind and be willing to change it with new insights or evidence.
- Make a decision; avoid equivocating.
- Enjoy yourself.

Simulation Game

We will also play one simulation game. Simulations are representations of actual historical or common situations that produce or have produced dilemmas for decision makers. The simulation used in this course will not use computers, but offline role-play. Each participant will be assigned a certain role in the simulation and together, the group will reenact the dilemma situation, thereby involving everyone's analytical and communicational resources.

After the simulation, the group will analyze the process and discuss the observed behavior and results and explore alternative ways to handle the situation. Simulations are intensive teaching tools and they usually generate a lot of energy and creativity among participants. A simulation game is "serious fun." It is a game, but it is hard work. The exercises are designed to be dynamic, demanding, and even frustrating—just like real life. The most important part of the exercise is the post-game reflection, where we evaluate the collective experience in terms of the theoretical frameworks derived from the course literature.

Personal Change Challenge

The most important learning method in this course is the work you will do on a "change challenge" of your choice. This might be a challenge you are currently working on in the organization you work for, the neighborhood you live in, the church you attend, the industry you are operating in, or the school your kids go to. It might also be a challenge you would like to take on in the future, or a challenge you have dealt with in the past. No challenge is too big or too small, as long as it requires a deliberate change effort that involves *not just you*. Changes, such as improving a personal skill, losing weight, gaining self-confidence, becoming a better person, are all praiseworthy, but not appropriate for this course

It is important to realize that you are expected to work on your challenges throughout the course and to reflect on it from different viewpoints. You will also be asked to present your challenge in class. If you want to keep the details of your challenge confidential, please contact Sanderijn Cels.

The challenge you choose to describe will not define you, but it will help you: a. to articulate (and re-articulate) the way you think about change, b. to learn, because you will be able to apply the theories that we introduce in class to a concrete project.

You are required to submit your written challenge by **December 25, 2015** and send it to sanderijn_cels@hks.harvard.edu It is important to meet this deadline. Please use the following questions to describe your challenge in **no more than 750 words**. Just write down what comes to mind, in your own words. This paper is not graded. What really matters is that you establish a concrete point of reference for yourself, for your fellow students, and for your instructor.

Change Challenge Format

1. Describe the situation you would like to change

For example:

- A dysfunctional relationship between agencies
- Structural maltreatment of certain social groups

2. What would you like to see changed and why?

For example:

- Improving cooperation between agencies to improve results and reduce waste
- Establishing rights to make maltreatment illegal and punishable

3. What is your role or position in this situation?

For example:

- A head of department, an employee, a stakeholder
- A concerned citizen, an affected party, a senior public manager
- A human rights activist, a journalist, a politician

4. Who are the main actors in this situation?

For example:

- Staff, the media, politicians, government agencies, activists, clients, pressure groups, etc.

5. What assets/resources do you have that will be valuable to making change?

For example:

- Time, information, authority, money, skills, a social network

6. What limits your ability to make change?

For example:

- Lack of time, information, authority, money, skills, a social network

7. What do you perceive to be the most important challenge?

See you in class!

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