

LDST 450: Leadership Ethics
The Purpose Project
Fall 2023

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Content Overview: In this course, we will learn about ethical theory, historical examples of ethical and unethical leadership, current events, and hypothetical cases to gain new insights into the ethics of leadership in our own lives.

This class is focused on learning philosophy as a way of life. This means that each week, students will first learn about some aspects of ethics in class, and they will apply these lessons in their own lives throughout the week. At the end of each week, students will submit detailed reflections on their experiences by applying the philosophical readings to their own lives (Purpose Projects). In addition to these projects, students will also write an original philosophical essay about a topic that they personally care about.

In Part 1, students learn about philosophical methodology. We will discuss prominent ethical theories, such as consequentialism and Kantianism. These readings will provide a foundation for understanding ethics, and we will reference these theories throughout the class.

Part 2 is about the specific challenges that leaders and followers face when they deliberate about their moral obligations. For example, we will discuss the temptations of power, the challenges of acting against one's moral convictions, the ethics of making decisions that involve luck or chance, and whether reasons of partiality conflict with moral obligations.

In Part 3, we discuss the basis of leaders' authority, whether followers have duties to obey, and whether bystanders have duties to intervene when they witness injustice. In this part of the course, we focus on political leadership, which provides the foundation for a discussion of justice and leadership. We will address questions about social and economic justice, such as whether leaders are required to promote distributive equality and whether leaders' obligations to others change in the global context.

Finally, in Part 4, students will reflect on the development of their character and career plans in light of the previous lessons. In this final part of the course, we discuss the challenge of balancing self-interest against the duty to assist others and the relationship between morality and meaningful life.

Objectives: This course is the capstone class for a leadership studies degree. Students are encouraged to reflect on the moral dimensions of leadership in light of their Jepson education and their plans going forward.

Students will discover philosophical perspectives that change how they think about leadership, work, politics, and the meaning of life.

Students will develop skills that enable them to develop and evaluate moral arguments. For example, students will learn to assess the soundness and validity of an ethical argument.

Students will create original philosophical essays that address the ethics of leadership.

Students will think in a clear and systematic way about the normative dimensions of their career or personal choices going forward.

Students will learn to develop and write an original philosophical argument.

Students will learn to revise papers in response to counterarguments.

Students will write the best papers they've ever written in their lives.

Students will apply ethical theories to contexts beyond the classroom.

Students will critically evaluate ethical questions in the real world in order to better understand how ethics applies to their own lives.

Schedule

Part 1: Normative Ethics and Leadership

Week 1: How should we reason about moral problems?

Shafer-Landau, Eleven Arguments Against Moral Objectivity

Thomson- Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem

Week 2: Should leaders promote the greatest good?

Chappell- Arguments for Utilitarianism

LaGuin- The Ones who Walked Away

Nozick- The Experience Machine

Williams- Consequentialism and Integrity

Week 3: Kantianism: Are leaders constrained by moral rules?

Pallikkathayil- The Possibility of Choice

Schapiro- Kantian Rigorism and Mitigating Circumstances

Week 4: - When is partiality justified?

Velleman- Love as a Moral Emotion

Scheffler- Relationships and Responsibilities

Part 2- Moral Deliberation

Week 5- Self-Scrutiny

Hill- Bystanders and the Duty to Resist Oppression

Price- Ethical Failure in Leadership
Joshi- What are the Chances You're Right About Everything?

Week 6- Risks and Small Effects

Guerrero- Don't Know, Don't Kill
Gregory- The Sorrow and Shame of the Accidental Killer
Parfit- Five Mistakes in Moral Mathematics

Part 3- Leadership and Justice

Week 7- Choosing and following political leaders

Nozick- The Principle of Fairness
Klosko, 'Presumptive Benefit & Political Obligation'
Huemer- What if there is No Authority?

Week 8: FALL BREAK + Distributive Equality

Frankfurt- Equality as a Moral Ideal

Week 9: Ethics and Distant People

Zwolinski- Sweatshops, Choice, and Exploitation
Greaves et al- Duties to the Distant Future

Week 10: Social Equality

Cherry- Forgiveness, Moral Exemplars, and the Oppressed
Preston-Roedder- Faith in Humanity

Part 4: Meaningful Leadership: Self-Interest and Character

Week 11: Memory and Community

Cocking and Kennet- Friendship and Moral Danger
Game: Monumental Consequences

Week 12: Meaning and Morality

Wolf Moral Saints
Langton- Duty and Desolation

Week 13: Emotional Valence

Moller: Anticipated Emotions and Emotional Valence

Week 14: Meaning and Religion

Scheffler- The Afterlife
Siderits -Freedom, Caring and Buddhist Philosophy.

Week 15: Meaning and Absurdity

Setiya- The Midlife Crisis
Nagel- Birth, Death, and the Meaning of Life

Grading:

Grade	Weight
Class Participation	10%
Perusall	10%
Top 10 Purpose Projects	30%
Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will apply a $\frac{1}{3}$ grade late penalty to your final essay grade if you do not meet with me and submit a thesis outline by week 5 I will apply a $\frac{1}{3}$ grade late penalty to your final essay grade if you do not submit a draft by week 10 Final submissions are due by the end of week 15 	30%
Final Exam	20%

All grades are entered as numbers.

The numerical values of essay grades are:

A+ 98.5	A+/A 97	A 95	A/A- 93	A- 91.5	A-/B+ 90
B+ 88.5	B+/B 87	B 85	B/B- 83	B- 81.5	B-/C+ 80
C+ 78.5	C+/C 77	C 75	C/C- 73	C- 71.5	C-/D+ 70
D+ 68.5	D+/D 67	D 65	D/D- 63	D- 61.5	D-/F 60

The numerical values for final letter grades are:

A+ 100-97	A 96.99-94	A- 93.99-90
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B+ 89.99-87	B 86.99-84	B- 83.99-80
C+ 79.99-77	C 77.99-74	C- 73.99-70
D+ 69.99-67	D 66.99-63	D- 63.99-60

Participation (10%)

Your participation grade is based on how well you contributed to class discussions and activities and how often you attended class. I posted participation guidelines online to give you a rough sense of the standards for each grade.

Perusall (10%)

Your perusal grade is based on whether you completed the assigned reading and engaged in conversation on Perusall before class.

Purpose Projects (30%)

Every week will include two purpose projects. You can choose which one to do.
Your grade will consist in the top ten highest scores for your purpose project submissions.

Essay (30%)

One of our goals in this course will be to develop your writing abilities further. Specifically, I want you to write the best paper you've ever written. For that reason, **you can revise your essay every week for a higher grade**, as long as you meet with me to discuss revisions.

Exam (20%)

The Registrar sets the final exam time and date. Information about the final is posted online.

Grades:

Make a copy of the GoogleDoc grade rubric and I will update your grades there. If this system doesn't work for you for some reason, contact me to opt out and we will find an alternative.

Academic Integrity:

Students may not use course materials from previous versions of this course, and students may not distribute the course materials (e.g. exams) without authorization.

Students must complete every assignment on their own unless otherwise specified.

Students may not use artificial intelligence to assist with writing assignments.

Students must comply with the UR honor code.

Students may not submit work from previous courses for this course.

Materials:

All readings are on Perusall. You can print the readings and bring them to class.

Laptops and iPads are not permitted in class without authorization.

This syllabus may be revised throughout the semester.