

LDST 101
Foundations of Leadership Studies

Dr. Wren
Fall Term, 2008

Course location: Jepson Hall 102
Class meeting time: TTH 2:15-3:30
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Course Synopsis

This course is intended to be a beginning point for the examination of the issues and concepts involved in the study of leadership. Note that this is a course addressing the *foundations* of leadership studies, and is not an *introductory survey* of existing literature on leadership studies. This means that our efforts this term will involve the careful reading of several classic texts that touch upon the problems and possibilities of leadership as a manifestation of – and response to – the problems and prospects of the human condition. The readings and class discussions will focus on a series of central questions designed to isolate the basic premises of leadership, which will in turn enable us to apply our new-found understanding to contemporary leadership issues and challenges. Completion of this course should also lay an appropriate “foundation” for further work in the field of leadership studies.

Texts

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. and intro. by Desmond Lee, 2d ed. (London: Penguin Books, c. 375 B.C.E./2003)

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and intro. by David Wooton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1513/1995)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. and intro. by C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1690/1980)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. by Donald A. Cress, intro. by Peter Gay (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, c. 1756/1987)

J. Thomas Wren, et al., eds., *Traditional Classics on Leadership* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004)

In addition, on occasion there will be supplemental readings assigned, which will be placed on electronic reserve.

Course Requirements

- (1) Student response papers.** Our class discussions will benefit from the fact that a few students in each class period will have engaged the readings in a more formal manner in the form of a *response paper*. These papers—each student will do three over the course of the semester—are to be just that: your response to the issues posed and the responses provided by the assigned author(s). It will be your responsibility to (a) identify an issue that you think is central [this can be accomplished in most cases in a brief paragraph]; (b) summarize quite briefly the author(s) response(s) to your chosen issue; and (c) assess the strengths and weaknesses of that response. These papers will be brief—four to five pages, double-spaced—and require no outside research. They are intended to serve the dual purpose of giving you practice at such analysis and helping to guide our class discussions. **THESE PAPERS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO ME ELECTRONICALLY BY 5:00 P.M. ON THE DAY PRECEDING CLASS. (10% each; total of 30%)**
- (2) application exercise.** One of our tasks this term is to make the effort to apply the theoretical content of our readings to actual leadership challenges and issues of the present. This will be accomplished by student “teaching teams” who will be responsible for conducting class exercises and discussion. At the conclusion of our class discussions of each major text, we will set aside a class day for application. The class will read some supplemental materials on reserve pertaining to a contemporary leadership issue. It will be the responsibility of the teaching team to plan and conduct a class session that examines and reflects upon the insights of the text for our understanding of the chosen issue. **(10%)**
- (3) midterm examination.** The purpose of the midterm examination is to allow you to pause and pull together the various strands of thought we have been pursuing. The process of review and, hopefully, the act of responding to the examination itself are intended to help you to consolidate your learning in the course. **(25%)**
- (4) final examination.** The purpose of the final exam is to cause you to reflect upon the larger issues of the course. It also is intended to help you refine your own individual conceptualization of leadership. It will be comprehensive. **(35%)**
- (5) class attendance and participation.** The essential approach of this course is best captured in the phrase “shared learning experience.” The implication is that instructor and students will be fellow sojourners in the search for insights into leadership. This means that it is imperative that you complete the assigned readings prior to each class. You will be expected to attend class, and to enlighten us with your insights. Attendance will be recorded. Unless you have a legitimate reason for being absent (which must be communicated to the instructor prior to class), any absences will lower your final grade.

The Questions of Leadership

Our efforts in this course will take the form of a continuing inquiry into some of the central questions of leadership. By parsing some of the great works of the (Western) tradition, we will glean a variety of answers. To these we must add our own reasoned responses. Because there will always be differences in the answers to the central leadership questions, this class will be one of intellectual engagement, where each of us must contribute to a reasoned dialogue. Although undoubtedly other questions will spring up, the following queries will guide our discussions. By the end of the term, we should be able to respond to these queries in an informed manner. We will know not only how our chosen commentators answered these questions, but we will also *begin* to devise our own responses. I stress *begin* because this course is intended to be just that: a beginning in your thinking about leadership, hopefully a part of an intellectual quest that will occupy you for life.

The “questions of leadership” can be separated into three categories:

A preliminary question

The most basic question we will address is also one of the most important:

What is leadership?

Although we will address this issue in a preliminary way at the outset of the course, in reality the answering of this query will occupy you throughout the term, and, indeed, for a long time to come. The reason that our response will be so long in coming is not that leadership cannot be defined – in fact, we will have an adequate starting point before we complete our initial class – but because the topic is so rich and complex that I will encourage you not to take a simplistic and reductionist approach. Part of the joy of the class will be our continual uncovering of further nuances about the nature of leadership.

The leadership template

The heart and soul of our analysis this term will center around the questions contained in something I call the “leadership template.” For those of you who eventually take LDST 300, Theories and Models of Leadership, you will find that modern leadership scholars study something called “implicit theories” of leadership – that is, “implicit beliefs and assumptions about the characteristics of effective leaders” that “influence the expectations people have for leaders and their evaluations of leader actions.” (Yukl, 2006, pp. 129-130). For purposes of this course, I have co-opted (and to some extent expanded) the term “implicit theory of leadership.” To me, implicit theories of leadership are the result of an individual’s answers to a series of fundamental questions about leadership, and, indeed, the human condition. How one responds to these central questions will, in turn, determine one’s definition of leadership, the ends it serves, the

respective roles of leaders and followers, and indeed, one's fundamental values. Applying the template of leadership to our texts will allow us to perceive the "implicit leadership theory" of each commentator we encounter. And, because we will continually be debating the wisdom of the responses we come across, in the process you will be developing your own implicit theory of leadership.

Now, a word about my use of the term "template." The dictionary defines "template" as "a gauge, pattern, or mold used as a guide." Back in the day, before the use of icons on computers, there used to be a thin plastic overlay that we placed over the "function" keys at the top of our keyboards to tell us what "F1" could do, etc. Those days are (thankfully) over now, but the questions of the "leadership template" perform a similar function. By, in effect, placing the questions of the leadership template alongside the texts we will be studying, we can use the questions of the template to make sense of our texts from a leadership perspective. Because few of our readings address the central issues of leadership in a direct fashion, our template can help us puzzle out the implicit leadership theories of each commentator, and to thereby gain an expanded knowledge of leadership for ourselves.

Below, I set out the ten questions of the leadership template, together with a brief elaboration. Further explication will come in class.

1. What is the leadership challenge?

Another way of putting this question is: "What causes the need for leadership?" In other words, what perceived problems or challenges sparked the individual to consider a reaction that we might label a leadership response? The perceived nature of the challenge quite logically has a great impact on the content of the response. Having identified the challenge at the outset, after completing our study of the text we can look back and consider whether or not the commentator's leadership response was adequate and appropriate. This question also invites analysis of the role of context in leadership.

2. What is the perception of human nature?

In a phenomenon like leadership which is dependent upon a relationship between leaders and followers, the assumptions one makes about the human condition become critical. Subtopics that should occupy our attention include: is human nature essentially individualistic or communal? are humans unregenerate or perfectible? are they capable of governing themselves? The answers to such questions fundamentally shape the conception of the leadership relation.

3. What is the proper end or purpose of leadership?

This question is often related to the initial query regarding the leadership challenge; that is to say, the intended "end" of leadership is often some form of solution to the perceived problem. But this question is really getting at a deeper issue. It asks about the aspirations that drive the leadership relation, and about the moral purpose of

leadership. Uncovering these can yield enormous insight into the consequent structures, relationships, and processes.

4. What is the epistemology of leadership?

This is another term that may require explanation. By this I intend to ask the question: “How do we know what to do, and if what we are doing is correct?” Usually this involves identifying some external standard to guide behavior and measure success. For example, that standard may be the common good, the actions of the market, or truth, or the commentator could even look to the outcomes of certain appropriate *processes* as the appropriate guide for behavior. Although the potential for overlap with other questions exists here as well (e.g., the “common good” could be both end and measure of success), our focus here is on what the participants in the leadership process look to as they seek to realize their ideal of leadership.

5. What is the role of the leader?

This question includes such issues as who should be chosen as leader, as well as role expectations for the leader. It is worth noting that this single question is really the sole focus of the modern social science version of “implicit theories of leadership.” This demonstrates, in turn, how much more widely we are casting our net.

6. What is the role of followers?

This query explores the other side of the leadership equation: the followers (in the public sphere, this will be “the people”). Since most of our readings this term are set in historical periods prior to the rise of important private organizations (like corporations), most of our discussions will revolve around the role of the people in the public sphere. Therefore, we will address such issues as: where does sovereignty reside? what are the expectations of the people? when can the people legitimately resist their leaders? Later, as you think about the role of followers in modern organizations [not our focus this term], parallel issues will come up, but the themes will be “empowerment,” “followership,” “whistle-blowing,” and the like.

7. How should leaders and the people [followers] interact?

This clearly relates to and derives from the previous questions, but the focus is different: instead of looking at leaders and followers (the people) in isolation, we will look at the nature of the relations between them, and what might be called the leadership *process*, in which leaders and followers interact as they seek to achieve societal or organizational goals. Several issues will arise: what is the nature of this relationship (should it be one of deference or equality)? In the public sphere, this means that we will need to contemplate matters such as these: what kind of “social contract” is there, and what are the implications? What is the role of representation? Although we will not be addressing such matters in this class, later, when you encounter more modern social

scientific scholarship on leadership, say, in the Theories and Models of Leadership class, you will encounter narrower, more focused approaches to the leadership process.

8. How is the matter of diversity and/or minority interests addressed?

This is an issue of paramount importance to us as we consider modern-day leadership, both in terms of the ends of leadership and in the nature of the relationships among the participants. You may be surprised to find out that concerns of this nature are of relatively recent vintage. For a very, very long time it was merely assumed that everyone had identical interests, and/or that those who did not were to be excluded rather than assimilated. Witnessing the early stirrings of concern for this issue will be one of the intriguing storylines of this course.

9. What institutions and processes must be designed to accommodate the premises and assumptions revealed in the answers to the questions in the leadership template?

Given the fact that most of the commentators we will be studying are seeking to address a perceived leadership challenge, it should come as no surprise to us that most also come forth with some specific institutional and/or policy recommendations to remedy it. Having parsed their work, using the template of leadership to identify their key assumptions and premises, we are in a better position to evaluate each commentator's proposed solution. Does it solve the problem? What other difficulties does it bring in its train? Is the proposed solution consistent with the commentator's underlying premises and values? This last leads us to the next template question.

10. What values become evident in the course of answering the preceding questions?

It is important to recognize that no stance on the preceding questions (or any question, for that matter) is value-free. In claiming that humans are individualistic or communal, perfectible or unregenerate, we are, in part, setting out different value claims that might be contested by others. In a similar vein, choosing appropriate actions by looking to the market rather than some version of truth is also making a claim that is subject to debate. These debates are all about values, and we will be engaged in trying to identify the values of our commentators (and of ourselves), and subject them to scrutiny. For example, we will identify (and label) such values in tension as freedom and order, hierarchy and equality, individualism and community, and the like. Many have acknowledged that values are at the heart of leadership, and part of our learning this term is to become better fitted to identify values and their implications.

The ultimate query

Having worked through the types of analysis suggested above with regard to the chosen commentators (and ourselves), we will be in a position to contemplate a larger question:

DOG response papers due 5:00 p.m. Sept. 10

Week 4

- Sept. 16 Plato: Education
 Plato, Part III, pp. 67-111
 Part VIII, pp. 249-274

ABLE response papers due 5:00 p.m. Sept. 15

- Sept. 18 Plato: Concluding
 Plato, Part IX, pp. 275-334

BAKER response papers due 5:00 p.m. Sept. 17

Week 5

- Sept. 23 Make-up Day
- Sept. 25 Application: Plato and the Leadership of Modern Democracy
 Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, in Wren, et al., *New Perspectives on Leadership*, 403-424
 Ronald Heifetz, "On a Razor's Edge," in Wren, et al., 425-449
 J. Thomas Wren, "How Should Leaders and the People Interact?" in Wren, *Inventing Leadership*, 376-387
 On reserve

PLATONISTS lead discussion

Week 6

- Sept. 30 Ideal Leadership
 Traditional Classics, pp. 57-131.

CHARLIE response papers due 5:00 p.m. Sept. 29

- Oct. 2 Machiavelli
 The Prince, pp. 5-80
 Discourses (on reserve)

DOG response papers due 5:00 p.m. Oct. 1

Week 7

The D.C. gun rights case; the NRA and guns at Disney
World:

(readings TBD)

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act [FISA]:

(readings TBD)

On reserve

LOCKEANS lead discussion

Nov.6

Rousseau

Books I & II, pp. 17-48

DOG response papers due 5:00 p.m. Nov. 5

Week 12

Nov. 11

Rousseau

Books III & IV, pp. 49-103

Nov. 13

NO CLASS

Week 13

Nov. 18

Application: Rousseau, the Individual, and the Community

Game theory:

Richard Dagger, "Encouraging Citizenship," in Dagger,
Civic Virtues, 98-116

J. Thomas Wren, "What Is the Perception of Human
Nature?" in Wren, *Inventing Leadership*, 352-363

On reserve

ROUSSEAUEANS lead class discussion

Nov. 20

The Status of Followers

Traditional Classics, pp. 219-275

Week 14

Nov. 25

Challenges to Authority

Traditional Classics, pp. 279-334.

Nov. 27

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15

Dec. 2 Make-up and Review

Dec. 4 Conclusion: Educated Citizens, Public Intellectuals

*** * * FINAL EXAMINATION TUESDAY DEC. 16, 9 A.M.-12 NOON * * ***