Leadership Ethics
LDST 450, Section 2

Fall 2014

Course Syllabus

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Office Hours: Open door and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, you will analyze and construct arguments about what actions are morally right, what goals are morally good, and what aspects of character are morally virtuous. In this respect, the course is similar to other endeavors in ethical inquiry in that it too seeks to answer the basic question: what matters morally? However, this question is made concrete in the exercise of leadership. General ethical problems take on a particular guise in leadership contexts. So this course is different from other courses in ethics in that it uses moral philosophy to address central issues in leadership studies. Our main goal will be to identify and understand the peculiar moral challenges faced by leaders.

We begin the course by framing traditional ethical questions in leadership contexts. Some examples are the following: Are leaders special? Do they have their own morality? What motivates them to lead? Does anything count morally aside from a leader’s self-interest—a leader’s wants, plans, and projects? Is it possible for leaders to act against self-interest if morality asks that they do so? Can morality and self-interest be reconciled? Is character the focus of the ethical analysis of leaders, or should we look instead to particular actions? If ethics is concerned primarily with the actions of leaders, should our assessments of their behavior consider the intentions behind the actions—what was willed—or the consequences in which leaders’ actions result? What should be the basis of a leader’s motivation? Do consequences other than pain and pleasure matter morally?

As we work through these questions, we will pay special attention to the moral psychology of leadership. Moral psychology is a subfield of ethics dedicated to the study of the relationships between belief, motivation, and action. In this class, we will use my book to consider a central component of the moral psychology of leadership is a belief about justification—namely, that leaders are sometimes justified in doing what others are not allowed to do. Indeed, if leaders have a convincing reason or set of reasons to behave in ways that are proscribed for the rest of

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1 What follows draws directly from Price, Leadership Ethics: An Introduction, 4-5.
us, then ethical leadership may be consistent with breaking the moral rules. We must therefore ask whether leaders are distinctive in their ability to meet demands for justification.

What reasons might leaders use to justify their behavior? There are several potential lines of justification, most of which are variations on the reasons any person might give for breaking rules that apply more generally to others. The morally relevant difference is that leaders who appeal to these reasons seem to be in a relatively better position to build a special case for rule-breaking behavior. Some plausible reasons include the following: he did it…

because he has his own morality (moral relativism).
because he does not care about morality (amoralism).
because he could (egoism).
because he is special (virtue ethics).
because we said he could (social contract theory).
because he had to (moral situationism).
because he has special obligations to his group (communitarianism).
because it was for a higher cause (cosmopolitanism).

Any of these reasons could be similarly applied by one of us in an attempt to justify our own behavior. What distinguishes an appeal to these reasons in the leadership context, however, is that the rule breaker’s standing as a leader generally gives (at least the impression of) greater substance to the justification. More so than the rest of us, leaders may well be in a position to develop a convincing argument based on one or more of these reasons.

One particular situation for ethical concern is the case in which leaders use their roles to justify sexual indiscretion. In an attempt to understand the moral psychology behind this kind of case, we will engage in a detailed examination of the John Edwards scandal.

This course is designed for rigorous discussion of the issues, which means that all participants bear an equal burden in explaining, critiquing, and developing the ideas conveyed in the readings. To facilitate this process, each student will be asked to keep an up-to-date Ethics Journal. I will regularly ask students in the class to speak from their own perspectives on the course material.

Please note that we begin and end on time and that students are expected to be in class for the entire class period. You may use computers in class, but you must first send me an email pledging that you will restrict your usage to the course-related activities of note-taking and accessing course readings. All other electronic devices must be turned off during class.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

• The student should develop an intellectually sophisticated view of the relationship between morality and self-interest and, in particular, of the ways in which this relationship is manifested in the exercise of leadership.
• The student should be able to catalog the strengths and weaknesses of competing theories of moral leadership.
• Drawing on philosophical ethics, the student should become a keen moral observer of leadership and, for example, recognize the justifications leaders give for exception making.
• The student should learn how to critique moral arguments and how to present moral arguments of his own.
• The student should be able to analyze past ethical problems from a broadened moral perspective and to address future ones with the mature use of moral imagination.
• The student should become cognizant both of the particular moral perils associated with the exercise of leadership and of the features of this process that give rise to these perils: the appeals to emotion, the utilization of power, the connection to the group, and the preoccupation with consequences.
• The student should be able to provide an ethically informed reading of leadership theory.

REQUIRED TEXTS


E-Reserve Readings, University of Richmond Library. [R]
REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

1. Class Contribution 10%
2. Ethics Journal 20%
3. Midterm Examination 15%
4. Term Paper 25%
5. Final Examination 30%

Attendance affects your class contribution grade. If you are absent, you will not be able to contribute to the class. Excessive absences will result in a failing grade for this assessment. The Ethics Journal will include a course log, notes and reflections on the readings, study guides, term paper drafts, and so on.

The instructor takes deadlines and scheduled exams very seriously. In fairness to your classmates, any difficulties that arise should be brought to my attention as soon as possible before the deadline or scheduled exam. No late work will be accepted, unless accompanied by a completed and approved request form. The form can be found attached to this syllabus.

Grading legend:

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2 I reserve the right to refuse to accept any work submitted without the honor pledge.
SCHEDULE (subject to change as the course progresses)

I. The Distinctive Challenge of Leadership Ethics

Tuesday, August 26
Introduction: The Moral Psychology of Leadership

Thursday, August 28
Ludwig, Chapters 1-2

Tuesday, September 2
Ludwig, Chapters 2-3

Thursday, September 4
Ludwig, Chapter 5

Tuesday, September 9
Ludwig, Chapter 6

II. Egoism and the Exercise of Power

Thursday, September 11
Ludwig, Chapters 8 & 9
Plato, “Justice and the Leader”
Price, Chapter 3, pp. 65-73

Tuesday, September 16
Plato, “Ring of Gyges”
Ludwig and Longenecker, “The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders”
Price, Chapter 3, pp. 73-81

Thursday, September 18
Rand, “Why Self-Interest Is Best”
Price, Chapter 3, pp. 81-89

III. Kantian Leadership

Tuesday, September 23
Kant, “Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative”
Price, Chapter 2, pp. 38-43
Thursday, September 25
Kant, “Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative”
Price, Chapter 2, pp. 44-51

IV. Utilitarian Leadership

Tuesday, September 30
Mill, “What Utilitarianism Is”
Price, Chapter 8, pp. 192-201

Thursday, October 2
Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” [R]
Price, Chapter 8, pp. 201-204

VII. Social Contract Theory

Tuesday, October 7
Hobbes, “Self-Interest and Human Nature”
Hollander, “Social Exchange in Leadership” [R]
Price, Chapter 5, pp. 119-128

Thursday, October 9: MIDTERM EXAM

Friday, October 10 through Tuesday, October 14: Fall Break

V. Leadership and Necessity

Thursday, October 16
Machiavelli, “The Qualities of Princes”
Price, Chapter 6, pp. 142-151

Tuesday, October 21
Hampshire, “Morality and Machiavelli” [R]
Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands” [R]

Thursday, October 23
Williams, “Politics and Moral Character” [R]
Lee, “Dirty Hands and Dirty Mouths” [R]
Tuesday, October 28
   Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil”
   Langston, “Duty and Desolation”

VI. Virtue Ethics and Moral Saints

Thursday, October 30
   Aristotle, “Virtue Ethics”
   Price, Chapter 4, pp. 93-116

Tuesday, November 4
   Wolf, “Moral Saints” [R]
   Price, “Why Leaders Need Not Be Moral Saints” [R]

Thursday, November 6
   Nagel, “Concealment and Exposure” [R]
   Nagel, “The Shredding of Public Privacy” [R]
   Price, “Leadership and the Social Value of Privacy” [R]

VIII. Psychopathology, Narcissism, and Sexual Deviance

Tuesday, November 11
   Ludwig, Chapter 7
   Ronson, “Night of the Living Dead” [R]

Thursday, November 13
   Young, Acknowledgment, Prologue, Chapters 1-3

Tuesday, November 18
   Young, Chapters 4-6

Thursday, November 20
   Young, Chapters 7-10

Tuesday, November 25
   Young, Chapters 11-13, Epilogue

Wednesday, November 26: TERM PAPER DUE (Thanksgiving break begins)

Tuesday, December 2
   TBA
Thursday, December 4
Course Summary and Discussion

Thursday, December 11, 2:00-5:00: FINAL EXAM
REQUEST FOR EXTENSION/MAKE-UP

1. Today’s Date:

2. Original Assignment Date:

3. Reason for Extension/Make-up:

4. Proposed Due Date/Make-up Date:

5. Instructor Signature:

6. Your Signature:

Submit this form with the completed assignment (e.g., paper, make-up exam, etc.). This form will not be accepted if incomplete (e.g., if #5 is blank).
Awarding of Credit

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.
http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html

Disability Accommodations

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/disability-services/policies.html

Honor System

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”
http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/honor/

Religious Observance

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.
http://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html