LDST 306: Leadership in Cultural and Historical Contexts

FALL 2016

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION: Mon, Wed 10:30-11:45, Jepson 101
CLASS WEBSITE: https://blackboard.richmond.edu

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Chris von Rueden
EMAIL: cvonrued@richmond.edu
OFFICE: Jepson 235
OFFICE HOURS: Wed 3pm-5pm & by appointment

Course Description:
In this course, we will study the ecological and cultural factors that shape political organization. Through cases studies drawn from primatology, cultural anthropology, and political history, students will learn about what makes human leadership unique and investigate why leadership and political organization vary across human societies, both historically and cross-culturally. Some of the questions we consider include: Why do humans adopt leader and follower roles at all? What is the nature of leadership in other social animals, particularly chimpanzees? Are there any human societies that lack leadership? Are there societies in which, on average, women wield more power than men? Why are some human societies more hierarchical than others? The goal of the course is not only to expose students to the ecological, cultural, and historical contexts that shape leadership but also to stimulate them to think critically about human social behavior in general.

Readings:
The readings for this course consist of a mix of empirical social science articles and more popular journal articles or opinion pieces (see Reading List below). All of the readings will be available through BlackBoard. In addition, three books are assigned for this course and are available for purchase at the UR bookstore:

How you will be graded:

1. Discussion (15% of grade)

The format of the class is a mixture of lecture and open discussion about the readings. You must come prepared to class with questions and comments, having carefully read what is assigned for that class (see Reading List below). In addition, two students will be assigned as discussion leaders for each reading; one student will summarize the main points of the reading for the class (3-5 minutes) and then the other student will critique the reading and connect it to the broader themes of the course (3-5 minutes). I encourage you to contact me before you are due to present if you need help, though I don’t expect you to be an expert on the reading. Raising questions for the class is as important as drawing your classmates’ attention to the specifics of the readings. Students should not be timid and all students are expected to contribute to each class discussion. Attendance and lateness are also factored into your discussion grade. I ask that you not leave during class-time unless you are in physical discomfort. Use the bathrooms before you arrive to class.

2. Reaction Papers (15% of grade)

You need to write a reaction to a minimum of 15 assignments (whether articles or book chapters), throughout the semester. These should be critical evaluations as well as summaries of the main points of the readings. Reaction papers will be graded as check minus, check, or check plus. You will receive a check or check minus if you simply summarize or if it appears you didn’t complete the reading. These are not formal writing assignments, but informal opportunities for you to organize your thoughts, pose questions, raise criticisms, and develop ideas in response to the readings, in preparation for class discussion, the exams, and your final paper. These papers do not need to be time-consuming; I won’t grade for grammar or spelling and you may write in note-form.

It is up to you to decide for which of the readings you will turn in reaction papers. Reaction papers should be turned in at the start of the class during which we are scheduled to discuss the particular reading. The reaction paper should be roughly 1 page long (typed, double spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins). You must include your name and the title of the reading and use staples if you are turning in more than one page.

3. Midterm Exam (20% of grade)

The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions having you compare and contrast positions taken by authors we’ve read and material presented in lecture.

4. Final Paper (20% of grade)
Throughout the course you will work in groups of 3 to research the political organization of a particular human society (details to be provided in class). In the final paper, which you write jointly with your group members, you present the results of your research. You must develop a clear argument for the paper that is based on theory we’ve discussed in class. The paper should include a minimum of 10 pages of text (double spaced, 12-point font) and structured into four sections: Introduction, in which you present your argument; Body, in which you defend your argument with literature from class and from your own research; Conclusion, in which you restate your argument and situate it within the broader context of the course; References, in which you list your cited articles. Wikipedia and non-scholarly websites are not valid bibliographic sources for papers written in this class. I will grade the paper according to the following criteria: (1) clear and interesting thesis; (2) sustained and well-organized defense of the thesis; (3) unambiguous writing; (4) incorporation of class readings and own research; (5) accurate use and proper citing of sources. In addition to the paper, your group will deliver a presentation to the class on your research during the final two class periods. I encourage you to be as creative as you like for your presentation, e.g. incorporating culture-specific cuisine, song, interpretive dance, etc.

5. Final Exam (30% of grade)

The final exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions having you compare and contrast positions taken by authors we’ve read and material presented in lecture. The final exam is cumulative but will emphasize the latter half of the course.

Notes:

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

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

3. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams. disability.richmond.edu

4. Reaction papers may be turned in late but they will be docked a grade (e.g. from a check plus to a check). If the final paper is turned in late, it will be docked 10 percentage points for each day late. I will waive the late penalty only under exceptional circumstances, e.g. a major illness with a doctor’s note, or a family emergency with a note from the Dean. The same requirements apply for rescheduling the midterm or final exam.
5. Students should be aware of University policies on plagiarism. Plagiarism in any form can result in failing the class or even expulsion. See the following link for advice on avoiding plagiarism.

http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/english/plagiarism.html

6. Be aware of the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge should be written on the formal written assignments you hand in: “I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.”

studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html

7. During class time, no phones are allowed. Laptops may be used for class-related work, such as referencing the assigned articles or taking notes, but you must turn your wireless connection off. I will ask you to do this at the beginning of each class.

8. If you ever have questions outside of class, I encourage you to drop by my office. Outside of office hours, it is best to set up an appointment via email to ensure I am in my office when you come by. I’m eager to help students but you must take the initiative to meet with me. Also, I won’t answer big questions by email.

Campus Resources:

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Skills Center (http://asc.richmond.edu, 289-8626 or 289-8956): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information processing, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement.

Career Services (http://careerservices.richmond.edu/ or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major, connecting with internships and learning experiences, investigating graduate and professional school options, and landing your first job. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor during your first year.

Counseling and Psychological Services (http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/ or 289-8119): Assists students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

Speech Center (http://speech.richmond.edu or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.
Writing Center (http://writing.richmond.edu or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.

Boatwright Library Research Librarians (http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/ or 289-8876): Research librarians assist students with identifying and locating resources for class assignments, research papers and other course projects. Librarians also provide research support for students and can respond to questions about evaluating and citing sources. Students can email, text or IM or schedule a personal research appointment to meet with a librarian in his/her office on the first floor Research and Collaborative Study area.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Aug 22  Introductions

Aug 24  Do Humans Have a ‘Nature’?


Aug 29  Nature and Nurture


Aug 31  Evolution of Cooperation in Groups


Sep 5  Evolution of Cooperation in Groups (cont.)


Sep 7  Multi-Level Human Societies

- Kaplan, H. et al. (2009). The evolutionary and ecological roots of human social organization. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, 364, 3289-3299. 11,12

Sep 12  Multi-Level Human Societies (cont.)

**Sep 14**

**Hierarchy and Leadership**


**Sep 19**

**Gender and Leadership**


**Sep 21**

**Egalitarian Societies**


**Sep 26**

**Egalitarian Societies (cont.)**


**Sep 28**

**Egalitarian Societies (cont.)**


**Oct 3**

**Transitions to More Centralized Leadership**


**Oct 5**

**MIDTERM**
Oct 10  
**No Class (Fall Study Break)**

Oct 12  
**Film: Ongka’s Big Moka**

Oct 17  
**Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Theory**


Oct 19  
**Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies**


Oct 24  
**Transitions to More Centralized Leadership: Case Studies (cont.)**


Oct 26  
**Re-) Emergence of Despotism**


Oct 31  
**States and Empires**

- Currie, T. et al. (2010). Rise and fall of political complexity in island South-East Asia and the Pacific. *Nature*, 467, 801-804. 14,1
Nov 2  States and Empires (cont.)


Nov 7  States and Empires: a focus on China


Nov 9  Technology and Institutions


Nov 14  Religion


Nov 16  Hierarchy and Reproduction


Nov 21  Is Democracy Best?

- Norberg, J. (2016, August 20). Why can’t we see that we’re living in a golden age? *The Spectator*.

Nov 23  No Class (Thanksgiving)
Nov 28  In-Class Presentations


Nov 30  In-Class Presentations

Dec 2   FINAL PAPER due (by 5pm, in my mailbox or at my office)

Dec 5   FINAL EXAM (9am-12pm)