From quotes to questions:

William Shakespeare: “Yet looks he like a king.”

Appearances are deceiving. Are a leader’s looks (wardrobe, demeanor, decorum, pageants, oratory) significant? How might they enhance or betray a leader’s power? Do leaders look like leaders even when their authority is challenged as it was in RICHARD II, wherein the Richard’s sense of dignity outlasted his most influential subjects’ perception of same? The king seemed to be at the end of his rope by Act 3, “yet look[ed] he like a king.”

Reinhold Niebuhr: “In political and moral theory ‘realism’ denotes a disposition to take into account all factors in a social and political situation, which offer resistance to established norms, particularly factors of self-interest and power. In the words of one notorious ‘realist,’ Machiavelli, the purpose of the realist is ‘to follow the truth of the matter rather than the imagination of it; for many have pictures of republics and principalities which have never been seen.’ This definition of ‘realism’ implies idealists are subject to illusions about social realities, which indeed they are.”

Are idealists ill-equipped to be effective leaders or change agents because they underestimate resistances? Given their sense of the formidable character of “resistances” and of the pervasiveness of self-interest, might realists be tempted to accept “established norms” that need changing or to grow deaf to legitimate calls for change?

Immanuel Kant: “One must take [people] as they are and not as uninformed pedants or good-natured dreamers fancy that they ought to be. But ‘as they are’ ought to read ‘as we have made them.”

Does Kant’s statement, “as we have made them,” seem too controlling? Does it undermine the notion of human nature? When should leaders listen to people, taking them “as they are” as well as where they want to go? And when should leaders lead people—their constituents—where they may not want to go—or, as Kant might have said, remake them? Would term limits prohibit leaders from leading or, making them more responsive, improve their ability to lead?

Joan Baez: “The letter you wrote me was written in shame. And I know that your conscience still echoes my name”

Joan Baez is singing of a lover rather than a leader, yet one could ask at what point do leaders’ unfulfilled promises become lies? Is shame among leaders’ assets or liabilities? When leaders develop echo-chamber consciences, are their abilities to lead impeded?

Michel de Montaigne: “He who fears what he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears.”

We often think of leaders as fearless, and Montaigne would seem to agree that fear is debilitating. (You’ll soon read Roosevelt telling followers that they have nothing to fear but fear.) Nonetheless, by “suffering,” in anticipation, what fearful consequences of one’s actions or policies might be avoided? And doesn’t a person “suffer[ing] what [s]he fears” become a more competent, compassionate leader? Should fear as well as shame be counted among leaders’ assets or virtues?
In LDST 101, we’re going to raise these questions as well as others, not because the answers lay at the foundation of leadership studies. The asking does, as do conversations generated by our inquiries, conversations in class that, ideally, will draw our different premises into the open; problematize answers we might take for granted; prompt intriguing encounters with problems, problem-solvers, and a number of issues we might otherwise have left unexplored. We’ll spend a few sessions contemplating why we’re here (in a class on leadership foundations, at a university, at this university, and on this planet--certainly several sessions should be sufficient). Then we consider whether and why we need leaders, and we try to find standards with which to measure the effectiveness and integrity of leaders. We’ll talk with “old masters”--Machiavelli, Thomas More, Shakespeare. We’ll take a long look at public policy in the middle of the twentieth century, sifting fiction, FDR, and frightful events in the 40s. And, before we cross the finishing line, we’ll explore the case for term limits and the effects of same--real and imagined--on leadership in the twenty first century.

But before you strap yourselves into this challenge, though, attend to the next section on . . .

Requirements and Grades

Lively, informed encounters with our questions, obviously, require your lively and informed participation in class discussions. Frequent absences and/or conspicuously flawed preparation will cost you.

I’ll explain in class why I’ve chosen to test and--one hopes have you develop--a certain set of skills during this class. What you need to remember, however, is that there will be three exams: your first and second, respectively, during class time on February 10th and March 22nd. A third, final exam, scheduled by the university, will ask you to write concise, plausible, persuasive answers to questions similar to those asked in the first two exams and on the impromptu quizzes. The point distribution is as follows: Final exam: 6 sets (30 points); 1st exam 4 sets (20 points); 2nd exam 5 sets (25 points). There is one set per quiz--six quizzes. Your five top grades will count. Hence, you can earn a total of 25 points on the quizzes. All this raises the understandable question--what the heck does he mean by a set? You will find on each quiz a set of three terms. You’ll be asked to compose two intelligible, legible, grammatical, thoughtful, radiant sentences for each set, sentences that relate each term in the set to the others and all three to a significant theme in this class. (You can get a sense of the significant themes by reviewing the quotes and questions in the syllabus.) You’ll have plenty of chances to practice, so you should be able to anticipate many of the questions, yet you may be assured that I formulated this procedure to challenge you to become critical readers as well as agile, interesting interpreters--not to overtax your memories.

Please acquire the following--available at the university bookstore

Robert Penn Warren, ALL THE KING’S MEN

William Shakespeare, CORIOLANUS   William Shakespeare, RICHARD II

Thomas More, UTOPIA   Niccolo Machiavelli, THE PRINCE   Martin Marty, MARTIN LUTHER

Articles on term limits by George Will and others as well as essays and speeches by Gerald Graff, Andy Abbott, Robert Pozen, Cass Sunstein, Max Weber, Susan Sontag, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Albie Sachs, Al Sharpton, and Barak Obama have been placed on electronic reserve, although you’ll find some on line where the URL follows the designated reading.
1/11-- Introduction

1/13-- Read Andy Abbott’s ZEN OF EDUCATION, http://magazine.edu/0310/features/zen.shtml What skills do you expect to acquire from college instruction? Do you agree with Abbott that many of the experiences and skills that we associate with college can be gotten more easily elsewhere?

1/18-- Read Graff, THE PROBLEM PROBLEM and TWO CHEERS, both on e-reserve. What are the perils of participating in the argument culture, and what is the problem problem? What does Graff mean when he says that education is “a forum for disagreement? Do you agree? If so, have you undermined the purpose of education by agreeing?

1/20-- Read Pozen, FINANCIAL CRISIS. (google “Robert C Pozen” for information)

THURSDAY, 1/21-- 4:30 (place tba): Pozen’s presentation.

1/25 “social capital”; no reading assignment. Time, therefore, to begin your novel, Robert Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN, see 3/29 for details.

1/27-- Read Renshon, POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, e reserves.

2/1-- Read Sunstein, ANALOGY AND IDEAL, e reserves.

2/3-- Read Weber, SOCIOLOGY OF CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY, e reserves.

2/8-- Read Machiavelli, THE PRINCE.

2/10-- First exam--

2/15-- Day off--R&R.

2/17-- Still recovering? Why not, but see the film, Henry V, the version with Kenneth Brannagh as King Henry. Look for two lines: 1) “what’s he that wishes so,” noting what follows and 2) “sort our nobles from our common men,” attending to Shakespeare’s emphasis on the distinction between Henry’s mixing with the English commoners/yeomen and the French appeal.

2/22-- Read Shakespeare’s CORIOLANUS, acts 1-3.

2/24-- Read CORIOLANUS, acts 4 and 5.

3/1-- Read Marty’s LUTHER, chapters 1 and 2 and Luther’s DISPUTATION on e reserve.

3/3-- Read LUTHER, chapters 3 and 4 and the brief afterword. Which of the “ambiguities in [Luther’s] legacy do you find most perplexing? Could you argue that Martin Luther was politically tactful though religiously irresponsible?

BREAK-- BUT, PLEASE KEEP READING Penn Warren’s KING’S MEN

3/15-- Read the Roosevelt packet, e reserve, the information about FDR’s presidency and the selection of his speeches and addresses. Note his aforementioned fear of fear, but also mark his combativeness. Roosevelt faced economic and military challenges, as does our current president. Sift Roosevelt’s and
Obama’s rhetoric (next assignment), and see if you can identify similarities in style, if not in content as well.

3/17-- Read the two speeches by Obama (2004 democratic convention and 2009, Nobel acceptance) along with Al Sharpton’s ADDRESS to the Democratic convention, 2004, all on e reserve. Compare the Sweden speech with Roosevelt’s rhetoric, and compare Obama’s and Sharpton’s approaches to race.

3/22-- Second exam--

3/24-- Read the first book of Thomas More’s UTOPIA.

3/29-- Be sure you’ve completed Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN through p. 243 and formulate some preliminary comparisons between Hythloday in More’s fiction with Jack Burden in KING’S MEN.


4/5-- Read Sachs, THE JUDGE WHO CRIED, e reserves. Sachs stipulates that campaigns for social justice might start down one of three routes—the libertarian, the communitarian, and the dignitarian. Which of the three would you prefer a political leader to favor? Why? Why not the others?

4/7-- Finish Robert Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN. Guest presenter, James (Jimbo) Parrott, Special Counsel to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUD) in Washington.


4/19-- Read George Will’s RECOVERY OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY, e reserve.

4/21-- Read Shakespeare’s RICHARD II. Browse or consult a plot outline to give you the trajectory of the play, but read with great care Act 1, scene 3; Act 2, scene 1; Act 3, scenes 2 and 3; Act 4, scene 1; Act 5, scene 5.