From quotes to questions:

Keith Thomas: “The humanities offer an indispensable antidote to the vices which inevitably afflict a democratic, capitalist society. They counter the dumbing down of the media by asserting the complexity of things . . . and they challenge the evasiveness and mendacity of politicians by placing a premium on intellectual honesty.”

**Really?** Thomas has a rather ambitious agenda for the humanities. Can the humanities somehow take on the media and effectively challenge sly, evasive politicians? And How do the humanities put a premium on honesty?

Aurelius Augustine: “Justice having been removed, what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms? A gang is a group of persons under the command of a leader, bound by an agreement or covenant that governs the association in which plunder is divided according to a constitution of sorts. . . . For the answer given by a captured pirate to Alexander the Great was amusing but true. When great Alexander asked why the pirate terrorized seafarers, the latter boldly replied, suggesting that his purpose and Alexander’s were identical. When I do what I do with a small vessel, he noted, I am called a pirate. Because you do the same with a mighty navy, you are called an emperor.”

**Does the anecdote prove Augustine’s point about government and larceny?** If you were Alexander how would you answer the pirate’s equation?

Jonathan Clark: “Perhaps the quest for core values will only cease when a new Aristotle shows us that democracy is now but a term for the various means by which the few govern the many.”

**Could that new Aristotle be correct?** Doesn’t the term, “democracy,” suggest that the many govern the few? When has it worked that way in practice? Under what conditions? Might the quest for “core” (or shared) values be more stirring and effective, if the many ever wanted to take back “democracy” from the few. What do you think? Can you imagine circumstances in which the core values of some contradict the common sense of others?

Lord Byron: “I deny nothing but doubt everything.”

**One can construe this as something to celebrate, inasmuch as Byron seems to commend both tolerance and an inquisitive spirit.** Perhaps the poet can afford the two, but is it practical for one who wishes to lead others to be so set against denying some options and inflexibly maintaining that other courses, practices, and policies are beyond question or doubt?
Martha Nussbaum: “Nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful, docile, technically trained machines rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements.”

Nussbaum thinks that the humanities could and should serve as an antidote. Do you share Nussbaum’s distress? If docile citizens are useful and well-trained, should we object that somehow they are docile and therefore incomplete citizens? Is it fair to compare them with machines? How important is it for leaders to criticize tradition?

Robert Penn Warren’s Willie Stark campaigning for votes: “He didn’t start out thinking about all the other hicks and how he was going to do wonderful things for them. He started out thinking of number one, but something came to him on the way. How he could not do something for himself and not for other folks of for himself without the help of other folks. It was going to be all together or none. That came to him.”

Doing for oneself and doing for others: you’d probably find that each of these “doings” gets packed into leaders’ motives, and onlookers often find it hard to tell one from the other. Or do you think there’s an easy was to distinguish between selfish (or self-centered) and selfless leaders? And once leaders realize they must take measures—perhaps unsavory ones—to keep “number one” in positions to do for others, the distinction gets blurred, does it not? Are there ways to ensure that leaders think first of others, and of themselves only as an afterthought? Is that desirable?

Susan Sontag: “The photographer’s intentions do not determine the meaning of a photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it.”

Nonsense? Aren’t the loyalties and disloyalties—as well as the whims—of communities determined by the images that artists/photographers give them? Isn’t the person behind the camera in control? Don’t the persons, factions, and media-moguls, who pay the freight, frame what viewers see? And doesn’t what we see shape how we think about wars, leaders, candidates, poverty, nobility?

Dante: “O good Fabricius, you twice refused great wealth that would have stained your honor, and chose to live in poverty, free of vice.”

Good choice? Fabricius was consul in Rome in the third century BCE. He refused bribes, died destitute, and was buried at the government’s expense. Dante meets him (as will you) in Purgatory, where “good Fabricius” is part of the poet’s screed against greed. Gordon Gekko, Michael Douglas’s character in Wall Street tells us “greed is good.” Doesn’t a healthy dose of greed grease the machine that invests capital to acquire more capital? Don’t we need material incentives to be at our best and to improve conditions for others as well as for ourselves?

In this section of LDST 101, we’re going to raise these questions as well as others that you’ll find in the schedule portion of the syllabus. We do so not because the answers lay at the foundation of leadership studies. The asking does. The conversations generated by our asking should draw our various premises
into the open, problematize some answers we may take for granted, prompt intriguing encounters with problems, with problem-solvers, and with 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 and the humanities, at a university, at this university, and on this planet--three sessions should be sufficient). Then we shall consider whether and why we need leaders and try to find standards to measure the effectiveness and integrity of leaders. First, we’ll throw ourselves into current political debates, because we are studying leadership at the very time folks in this country are vying with each other to lead it. We’ll ask whether changes could be made to “the system” of leadership selection to make leaders more responsive and more responsible, and we’ll ask whether those two terms, “responsive” and “responsible” can be put together as compatible, desirable traits in the leaders we select. We’ll get some help from headlines, fiction, political cartoons, and political commercials.

Then, we’ll talk with some “old masters”—Aquinas, Dante, Machiavelli, Thomas More, Shakespeare. They’ll help us tackle a few questions about leadership, influence and affluence. And, finally, with help from some more contemporary philosophers, historians, and novelists, we’ll plunge back into the here and now and concentrate on leadership challenges in the twenty-first century. Martha Nussbaum and Keith Thomas (in the quotation section; keep an eye on that section as we head to exams) give you an idea of the issues we’ll raise, but we’ll attend to problems that surface as we explore racial differences in, and immigration to, this country and others and when we try to conceive of what it might mean to agitate for—or lead others agitating for—moral change.

But before you agree that this might be a good way to spend parts of your semester and strap yourselves into this challenge, 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, but I’ve never found a satisfactory way to “grade” class participation, save to deduct some points from the final grades of participants often absent and/or unfamiliar with assignments. Four classes will begin with quizzes during which you’ll be asked briefly to reply to a question about the day’s assignment. Your replies will be graded, and your three highest grades will constitute 30% of your final grade. One mid-term examination scheduled for February 29th counts for 30%. The final exam counts for 40% of your final grade.

The following should now be available at the university bookstore

Susan Sontag, REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS

Robert Penn Warren, ALL THE KING’S MEN William Chafe, CIVILITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

William Shakespeare, CORIOLANUS (also available on line)

Thomas More, UTOPIA Niccolo Machiavelli, THE PRINCE (also available on line)

Kwame Anthony Appiah, THE HONOR CODE: HOW MORAL REVOLUTIONS HAPPEN
Schedule

1/11 Introduction

1/13 Read “Memories,” appended to this syllabus.

1/18 Read Penn Warren, ALL THE KING’S MEN, chapter 1, where you’ll meet Willie, the governor.

Why does he drive to confront Judge Irwin, and what does Irwin’s library tell you about his politics?

Also read Mark Edmundson’s “Uses of a Liberal Education,” www.ljhammond.com/essay.htm. What’s your take on the commercialization of education that Edmundson describes and despises?

1/20 Keep an eye on the headlines for today’s class. What’s the latest news from the political primaries? Read David Brooks’s “Two Moons,” appended to this syllabus and the selection from Christopher Hitchens’s “Voting in the Passive Voice” on electronic reserve. When you’ve read the assignments, formulate (but also answer) criticisms of the two-party democracy North Americans practice and, occasionally, think worth exporting? Would you agree with Brooks that some of the problems with democracy derive from the “minority mentalities that both of the two “majority” parties have developed? Has that—or something else—led to the polarization that many (you?) consider responsible for gridlock in government? OK, from polarization to polls: Hitchens holds pollsters and polling responsible for undermining democracy. He endorses the suggestion that “polling [is] an increasingly dangerous substitute for democracy, if not the precise negation of [democracy].” Do you (dis)agree? Why?

1/25 Read Niven, “The Other Side of Optimism,” http://www.jstor.org/stable/1520062 and the second chapter of Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN, which, for the most part, is a flashback to Willie’s pre-gubernatorial experiences. Put the quote that I transplanted from this chapter to the syllabus in the context of Willie’s rise to power. Usually the term “hick” is an insult, but Willie’s deployed it differently. Why does it work well for him?


2/1 Read Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN, chapters three and four, and watch the film, PRIMARY COLORS, on reserve in the library.

2/3 Read Penn Warren’s ALL THE KING’S MEN, chapters 5 and 6.

2/8 Finish ALL THE KING’S MEN, and read the short selections from Aquinas’s SUMMA and Dante’s INFERNO and PURGATORY, on electronic reserve. Aquinas and Dante were concerned with the effects that inordinate desire (“covetousness,” envy, and avarice or greed) had on leadership. Which of these, theologian Aquinas or poet Dante, if either, presents the disincentives on offer persuasively? Could King’s Men also be described as a narrative with a point to make about inordinate desire? And what point would that be?

2/10 No assignment today; take a break.

2/15 Read Machiavelli’s PRINCE.

2/17 More discussion of Machiavelli and his PRINCE.

2/22 Read Thomas More’s UTOPIA, book 1. Why does More’s principal narrator, Hythloday, advise those who would counsel leaders not to do so? Does he have a point? Is it Thomas More’s point?
that point (or More’s alternative, should you think he articulates one) appealing to you? Compare Hythloday to Jack Burden and Adam Stanton in ALL THE KING’S MEN. Can idealists become leaders without losing their ideals? Without losing their integrity?

2/24  Surely, we’ll need another day to sift the answers to the questions raised on 2/22, Hythloday’s, More’s, and yours. No reading today, but you’d be well advised to review your notes in preparation for the midterm and come today with any concerns that materialized during your preliminary preparations.

2/29  mid-term exam

3/14  Read More’s Utopia, Book 2: might More have created this society? What was he trying to prove? Was it a blueprint for a perfectly ordered, harmonious society or a joke?

3/16  Read Shakespeare’s Coriolanus, act 1. You’re the director; tell me how you’d stage the first scene of the first act.

3/21  Finish Coriolanus. You’re catching Rome just as it becomes a republic and experiments with democratic participation in decision-making. Return to the Clark quote in the syllabus, and decide whether you’d classify it as a failed experiment? Undeniably, Coriolanus was courageous, but he appears to have lacked qualities you’d expect in a leader. What qualities, precisely? Are they the qualities on display when the tribunes exercise their influence?

3/23  Watch THE HELP, the film, on reserve. We’re now heading back to current issues. Now climb around this comparison, and tell me whether it makes any sense: Miss Skeeter is comparable to the tribunes in Coriolanus, Brutus and Sicinius; the wives/mothers who hire the help might be compared to Menenius and the senators; and the maids might be compared with the crown in Coriolanus. Sure, it’s a stretch—or a series of stretches--but what do the similarities and dissimilarities help us explain?

3/28  Read Chafe’s CIVILITIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS, pp. 3-101. Evaluate the civic leaders’ sincerity, pragmatism, patriarchal attitudes, and progressivism. What was the Pearsall plan? Deferring to authorities close to the schools--local authorities--would seem to make sense and to be one of leadership’s worthy objectives. It led to “token desegregation,” but is that a price leaders may unfortunately have to pay for taking local opinion into account when making (or not making) decisions?

3/30  Read Chafe’s CIVILITIES, pp. 102-152.

4/4  Read Matthew Lindsay’s “Immigration as Invasion” on e-reserve, This article appeared in one of Harvard’s law reviews is a long (55 pp) and tough one, but you will want to evaluate the developments that it documents, specifically, the reasons why the country rolled up the welcome mat, surrendering “confidence in the assimilability of all immigrants” for practices that seem to demonstrate the country’s obsessions with economic (and more broadly) “national self-defense.”
4/6 Watch THE HELP, on reserve in the undergraduate library, and read Samuel Huntington’s “The Hispanic Challenge,” on e-reserve. Huntington makes the case that the latest set of immigrants (from Latin America) is different from the many sets that preceded it, AND that the difference threatens to change North America in unwelcome ways. Tell me which of his arguments persuaded you--or came close to persuading you. Tell me where, if anywhere in the article, he appears to be needlessly paranoid.

4/11 Read Susan Sontag’s REGARDING THE PAIN OF OTHERS and visit http://janetjarman.com and click on the photo series, “dream of the rich north,” to supplement the assigned reading with viewing. Does Sontag’s book successfully address Martha Nussbaum’s concerns (see the syllabus quotes) about conveying “the significance of another person’s suffering”? Revisit the Sontag quote, the second down from Nussbaum’s, and use the photographs in Jarman’s “dream” series to grapple with the issues that Sontag raises.

4/13 Read Appiah’s THE HONOR CODE: HOW MORAL REVOLUTIONS HAPPEN., chapter 1, “The Duel Dies.”

4/18 Read Appiah’s HONOR CODE, chapters 3-5. How do moral revolutions happen? What are the differences between “recognition respect” and “appraisal respect”?

4/20 Let’s wrap up, looking ahead to the final exam, but please read George Bornstein’s “Can Literary Study be Politically Correct?” http://www.jstor.org/stable/27546526.

Final exam scheduled for TUESDAY, April 24th, 9AM