In this course, we will analyze and construct arguments about what leadership behaviors are morally right, what ends of leadership are morally good, and what aspects of a leader’s character are morally virtuous. In this respect, the course is similar to other courses in ethics—in that it too seeks to answer the basic question: what matters morally? However, this question takes on a particular guise in leadership contexts. Do the same things matter morally in leadership, and do they matter in the same way or to the same extent. So this course is different from other courses in ethics in that it uses philosophy to investigate the moral distinctiveness of leadership. Our main goal will be to identify and understand the peculiar moral challenges faced by leaders, as well as potential responses and solutions.

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 terms of 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.

In the final section of the course, we will consider the ways in which a leaders and followers use their roles to justify unethical behavior in group contexts. To understand the place of role morality and partiality in unethical leadership, we will pay particular attention to historical examples of moral disasters such as My Lai and the Holocaust.

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 kind of engagement, I will regularly call on people and give unannounced Quizzes. Each student will also be asked to keep a Journal to track time spent on the course.

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. Smartphones and similar devices must be turned off and placed out of view 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: deviation, instrumentalism, partiality, inequality, and influence.
• The student should be able to provide an ethically informed reading of leadership theory.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Reserve Readings, Blackboard. [R]
REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

1. Quizzes 10%
2. Journal 10%
3. Midterm Examination 20%
4. Ethical Analysis 25%
5. Final Examination 35%
6. Holocaust Museum/Lecture P/F (for class)
7. Ethics Assessment Extra Credit (1 point max)

Attendance affects your Quizzes grade and your Journal grade—in addition, in all likelihood, your Examination grades. 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:

A+ 97-100
A 93-96
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-62
F 50-59

I reserve the right the 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

Wednesday, August 30
   Introduction: The Problem

Friday, September 1
   Ludwig, Chapters 1-2

Wednesday, September 6
   Ludwig, Chapters 2-3

Friday, September 8
   Ludwig, Chapter 5-6

Wednesday, September 13
   Ludwig, Chapter 6-7

II. Egoism and the Exercise of Power

Friday, September 15
   Ludwig, Chapters 8 & 9
   Plato, “Justice and the Leader”
   Price, Chapter 3, pp. 65-73

Wednesday, September 20
   Plato, “Ring of Gyges”
   Ludwig and Longenecker, “The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders” [R]
   Price, Chapter 3, pp. 73-81

Friday, September 22
   Rand, “Why Self-Interest Is Best”
   Price, Chapter 3, pp. 81-89

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3 Dean, not Arnold, Ludwig.
III. Kantian Leadership

Wednesday, September 27
Kant, “Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative”
Price, Chapter 2, pp. 38-43

Friday, September 29
Kant, “Good Will, Duty, and the Categorical Imperative”
Price, Chapter 2, pp. 44-51

IV. Utilitarian Leadership

Wednesday, October 4
Mill, “What Utilitarianism Is”
Price, Chapter 8, pp. 192-201

Friday, October 6: REVIEW SESSION

Wednesday, October 11: MIDTERM EXAM

Friday, October 13: NO CLASS

Friday, October 13 through Tuesday, October 17: Fall Break

V. Justifying Leadership: Necessity, Virtue, and Consent

Wednesday, October 18
Machiavelli, “The Qualities of Princes”
Price, Chapter 6, pp. 142-151

Friday, October 20
Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands” [R]
Williams, “Politics and Moral Character” [R]
Lee, “Dirty Hands and Dirty Mouths” [R]

Wednesday, October 25
Aristotle, “Virtue Ethics”
Price, Chapter 4, pp. 101-116
Friday, October 27
Hobbes, “Self-Interest and Human Nature”
Hollander, “Social Exchange and Leadership” [R]
Price, Chapter 5, pp. 119-123

VI. Moral Defenses Against Leadership

Wednesday, November 1
Glover, Part I

Friday, November 3:
Glover, Parts I-II

Wednesday, November 8:
Glover, Part II

Friday, November 10:
Glover, Part III

Wednesday, November 15:
Glover, Part III-IV

Friday, November 17:
Glover, Part IV

Monday, November 20: ETHICAL ANALYSIS DUE

Wednesday, November 22: NO CLASS

Friday, November 24: NO CLASS

Wednesday, November 29:
Glover, Part V

Friday, December 1:
Glover, Parts V-VI

Wednesday, December 6:
Glover, Part VI

Friday, December 8: COURSE SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION
Glover, Part VII

Tuesday, December 12, 9:00-12:00: FINAL EXAM (Section 4)
Monday, December 18, 2:00-5:00: FINAL EXAM (Section 5)
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).