From quotes to questions:

Hannah Arendt: “The poets will always be accused of lying. After all, they are the only ones from whom we expect the truth.”

What truth do you expect from poets? Are there synonyms for “lying” that you’d use to avoid the connotation of deceit yet to capture the distance poets often maintain from what you’d consider concrete, pragmatic concerns?

Caroline Walker Bynum: “Surely our job as teachers is to puzzle, confuse, and amaze. We must rear a new generation of students who will gaze in wonder at texts and artifacts . . . slow to project . . . quick to assume there is a significance, slow to generalize about it. For a flat, generalizing, presentist view of the past . . . makes it boring, whereas amazement yearns toward an understanding, a significance always a little beyond both our theories and our fears. Every view of things that is not wonderful is false.”

Seriously? Aren’t you here to solve puzzles rather than to be puzzled? What is presentism? Can we avoid it? And, if we’re not trained to generalize from particulars, that is, to come up with statements that make sense of particulars, how can we predict and control what happens? Accurate predictions and comprehensive control—shouldn’t those be aims of higher education? Amazement is extracurricular; isn’t it?

William Butler Yeats: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

What might Yeats have meant by “best” and by “worst”? What would those terms have to signify for you to subscribe to the truth packed into this line?

Thucydides: “Pericles . . . was their leader rather than being led by them [the Athenians], because he did not speak to please them.”

Shouldn’t we expect leaders to be led by followers’ preferences when, in a democracy—and ancient Athens purportedly was “the cradle of democracy”—leaders are elected to implement what citizens want done?

Aurelius Augustine: “Justice having been removed, what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? And what are criminal gangs but miniature 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. [To illustrate, take the answer given by a captured pirate to Alexander the Great. 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 ship, he said, I’m called a pirate. Because you do the same with a mighty navy, you’re called an emperor.”

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

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 the humanities could and should serve as an antidote. Do you share her distress? If docile citizens are useful and well-trained, why 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?
Susan Sontag: “To be sure, nobody who really thinks about history can take politics altogether seriously.”

What could Sontag be thinking about here? Surely, political leadership is one of the most serious considerations put before us. Or is it? Her comment follows a short discussion of Sébastião Salgado’s photographs collected under the title “Migrations: Humanity in Transition.” Google those images, and see if they make “politics” seem “unserious.”

In this section of LDST 101, we’re going to revisit some of these quotes and raise these questions as well as others that you’ll find in the schedule portion of the syllabus in bold print. You’ll want to take special note, because the material above could reappear on exams. But we ask these questions not because the answers lay at the foundation of leadership studies; the asking does. And the conversations generated by our asking ought to problematize some ideas we take for granted, and prompt encounters with the problems and wanna-be problem-solvers we might otherwise have left unexplored.

We’ll start with several classics in the humanities that examine the caliber of leadership in various settings. Along the way, you’ll be asked to formulate opinions about the “dirty hands theory,” and the usefulness of such terms as “charisma,” “populism,” “absolutism,” “meritocracy,” and “faction.” You’ll also be asked under what circumstances leaders would be well-advised to shock followers instead of appeasing or consoling them. We’ll inquire to what extent and why leaders should honor conventions and when they should cultivate misgivings about conventional wisdom. Then we’ll be tackling what I call “applications,” taking what we learned about leadership and applying it to problems your generation currently faces—and for the foreseeable future will face. We’ll mix that with several classics to keep us alive to the possibilities of drawing lessons from back then into our contemplation of what’s next.

If this appeals and the work I’ll ask you to complete, which is detailed in the schedule below, doesn’t frighten you into another section of LDST 101 or into another class . . . welcome !!!

But . . . before you decide whether all this might be a good way to spend parts of your semester and strap yourselves into this course, check the next section on . . .

Requirements and Grades

Lively, informed encounters with our questions, obviously, require your lively and informed participation in class discussions. “Require” means that I expect it. I deduct points from the final grades of participants who don’t meet that expectation—who are often absent and/or unfamiliar with assignments. 100 points are available. You’ll take two quizzes (September 2, 8% and October 21, 7%) and 2 exams (September 25; 25% and November 18; 35%). You’ll be asked to compose a take-home essay as your final, 25%. Submit the final essay no later than the last day of exams, December 17.

Students who miss a midterm due to illness (please obtain a physician’s note) or to deaths in the family, and students who miss a midterm to represent the university on the road may take the in-class portion within 2 weeks of the scheduled date. But please check your other courses. If they require co-curricular or extra-curricular activities that conflict with exam dates in my class, drop this course. Other classes’ assignments do not excuse you from my exams.

Several taboos: late arrivals, early departures, impromptu mid-class breaks, multi-tasking.
You’ll be responsible for readings on electronic reserve as well as for all (or assigned parts) of the books available at the student book store. ER indicates availability of electronic reserve. If you have questions, folks at the library’s front desk will have answers.

TEXTS -- available at the bookstore

Wendy Brown, WALLED STATES, WANING SOVEREIGNTY  William Chafe, CIVILITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS
Machiavelli, THE PRINCE  Shakespeare, CORIOLANUS  More, UTOPIA
Robert Penn Warren, ALL THE KING’S MEN  (avoid the restored edition)
Hannah Arendt, EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM  Shaw, MAJOR BARBARA

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SO--- what do we do and when do we do it?

August 26: NO CLASS

August 28: Read Mark Edmundson’s essay on liberal education (ER).

September 2: Read ALL THE KING’S MEN, chapters 1-3: prepare for your first quiz—today.

“Judge Irwin has come out for Callahan.” That said, Governor Willie Stark sprints to the judge’s home in chapter one, leaving a photo opportunity at his birthplace to get to Burden’s Landing. Penn Warren stages the confrontation between the two memorably. What do you remember? Chapter two is an extended flashback. You’ll learn how Willie, after a false start, becomes the governor and how he conducts himself in office. Do you agree with his assessment of the importance of “dirt”? What impressions of Jack Burden, Judge Irwin, Sadie Burke, and Hugh Miller have your formed?

September 4: Read Ari Adut’s REIGN OF APPEARANCES, chapter 1 (ER).

Adut thinks “civic dialogue” is a fiction and, as a result, citizens become spectators rather than active participants in the drama of public life. What would a desirable alternative look like? Is Adut correct? Has he described a problem that leadership could address? If so, how?

September 9: Read Machiavelli’s PRINCE

If you had to select only 2 chapters to assign to your class so student colleagues would get a good glimpse of what THE PRINCE was about, which 2 would you select and assign? Why? Select two figures Machiavelli introduces as examples. Of what are they examples? THE PRINCE has been characterized as political science and as political satire. How would you characterize it? Why?

September 11: Read Michael Walzer’s essay on “The Problem of Dirty Hands” (ER)
Compose three sentences that relate each of the following to the others and relate all of them to a significant theme in this class: Machiavelli, Willie Stark, Michael Walzer.

September 16: Read Hannah Arendt, EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM, chapters 1-6 and ALL THE KING’S MEN, chapters 4-5.

Ponder the term “show trial.” Do the two words seem to fit together? Identify some contemporary illustrations that help you determine whether and to what extent the administration of justice should resemble a show? And, while you’re at it, apply the term “justice” to what you learn about Eichmann and the characters in KING’S MEN.

September 18: Read Arendt's EICHMANN, chapters 7-8 and the epilogue.

Readers fretfully ponder the book’s subtitle, “The Banality of Evil”; what does it lead you to expect? Find statements in the assignment that would help you launch a discussion of one of the quotes you find at the front of this syllabus. For example, “[A] more . . . decisive flaw in Eichmann’s character was his almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow's point of view” —- Nussbaum.

September 23: Finish ALL THE KING’S MEN.

Be prepared to draw “leadership lessons” from your impressions and interpretations of Jack Burden, Adam Stanton, Willie Stark, Anne Standon, and Cass Mastern, using one or more of the quotes at the front of the syllabus (my choices would be the Yeats and Augustine).

September 25 — first mid term

September 30: Read Robert Frost’s poem, MENDING WALL (google it) and Wendy Brown’s WALLED STATES, WANING SOVEREIGNTY, chapters 1-3

When and why do good fences make good neighbors? Has Brown convinced you that walls are symptomatic of waning sovereignty? Define sovereignty. Frost’s narrator seems to scuffle verbally with his neighbor as they replace stones and mend the wall, yet he meets every year to do just that. What does that tell you about the poet’s purpose?

October 2: Read Samuel Huntington’s HISPANIC CHALLENGE (ER), Robin Kirk’s CITY OF WALLS (ER), and watch the film, “9500 LIBERTY” — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNiGwsZ5dkI

Why does Huntington think recent Hispanic immigration is unique? Does the uniqueness argue for limitations on Hispanic immigration? What leadership lessons might you draw from the film about Prince William County, Virginia? From Kirk’s description of Belfast?
October 7: Read Lischer, FROM IDENTIFICATION TO RAGE (ER); watch the film SELMA; listen to three speeches: Martin Luther King’s DREAM; Barak Obama’s NEITHER RED NOR BLUE; Al Sharpton’s MULE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vP4iY1TtS3s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueMNqdB1QIE
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SBFREiCkf8

Immigration poses one challenge to leaders trying to build or dismantle a pluralistic society when we study nationalism and ethnonationalism. The long history of exploitation in the United States poses another. Is it wise or possible to transcend racial differences? Measure the realism and idealism in the three speeches you’ve been assigned. What have you learned from them—and from the Lischer article about rhetorical strategies?

October 9: Read Michael Klarman’s HOW BROWN CHANGED RACE RELATIONS (ER)

Describe the backlashes in Klarman’s “Backlash Thesis.”

October 14 BREAK

October 16: Read Chafe, CIVILITIES AND CIVIL RIGHTS, introduction, chapters 1-5 and 8-9.

Was the sit-in an effective tactic? How would you measure effectiveness? In my iteration of the Jepson course entitled “Justice and Civil Society,” I exchanged an “or” for the “and.” Would you consider the exchange justifiable after reading Klarman, watching “Selma,” and reading Chafe’s accounts of the Woolworth counter and subsequent “insurgent efforts”? Evaluate Luther Hodge’s leadership tactics. Compose a question that would enable those who answer to incorporate what they’ve learned from Klarman, Lischer, and Chafe. Compose a question that would enable those answering to grapple with one of the quotes at the front of the syllabus and the commentary or questions in bold font that follow it. What is a “progressive mystique”?

October 21: Watch the film “CRASH” and prepare for your second quiz—today.

October 23: Read Clarence Thomas’s concurring opinion in the Seattle Case (ER)

Thomas agreed with the majority opinion, which struck down school integration programs in Seattle and Louisville. A footnote to his opinion claims that “nothing but an interest in classroom aesthetics and a hypersensitivity to elite sensibilities justifies . . . racial balancing programs.” He disagreed with dissenting justices who argued that “benign race-based decisions” were permissible to repair damage done by what Justice Breyer called “stubborn facts of history [that] linger”—to the great disadvantage of African-Americans. Do you agree with Thomas that there are no “benign race-based decisions”? 
October 28: Read Shakespeare’s CORIOLANUS, acts 1-3.

Do Shakespeare’s sympathies seem to be with the citizens, with the senate, or with Coriolanus? Prepare to defend your choice. Relate the Thucydides quote at the front of the syllabus to today’s assignment.

October 30: Fiennes film, “CORIOLANUS”

How does the film differ from the play?

November 4: Read, from C. Wright Mills’s POWER ELITE, “The Conservative Mood” and “The Higher Immorality” (ER), Helen Andrews’s THE NEW RULING CLASS, (ER), and book one of Thomas More’s UTOPIA.

What, according to Mills, is “the higher immorality”? Mills wrote in the 1950s about “the intellectual and political collapse of American liberalism.” After you define “liberalism,” tell me whether such an assessment applies today. Mills also refers to “the Machiavellianism of the little man.” What does he mean? Does he consider it politically promising? Do you? Andrews discusses meritocracy, aristocracy, and the current character of political elites. Do her assessments of “the rise of a bureaucratic class” ring true and affect the way we think of leadership, merit, and character? In all this give-and-take about merit, power, and liberalism, where would you place Thomas More’s Hythloday? Watch carefully what happens in UTOPIA’s book 1 at Cardinal Morton’s table.


How much individual freedom are Utopians willing to trade for social harmony? How about you? As I write this syllabus headlines feature efforts to socialize medicine and establish “universal healthcare” or “a single payer system” that would deprive patients of some choice with respect to insurance and perhaps with respect to healthcare providers—so that all may be insured and provided for. Look at where that debate is today and relate it to the Utopian approach to choice and common wellbeing.

November 11: Read Shaw’s MAJOR BARBARA (the play)

The first act in the drawing room is banter; scan it so you get to know the characters and pay closer attention to the second and third acts. The play pits idealist Barbara against her realist father Andrew Undershaft. Stake your position on power and poverty alongside either of the two or between them. Adolphus Cusins is a key character. Is he a turncoat? How would you compare Perivale St Andrews to More’s Utopia?

November 13: Read MAJOR BARBARA (the preface, pp. 15-23, “The Gospel of St Andrew Undershaft”)

“The universal regard for money is the one hopeful fact in our civilization.” (Dis)Agree? Why? What would you consider “the one (or most) hopeful fact”? Why?
November 18

SECOND MIDTERM

November 20: Read ZEN OF EDUCATION  https://magazine.uchicago.edu/0310/features/zen.shtml

How would you evaluate Andy Abbott’s brief for a liberal arts education? Compare Bynum’s remarks (quoted at the front of the syllabus) to Abbott’s. Pay special attention to what Abbott says about the cognitive skills argument and the gymnastics argument for college education. I agree with his criticism of the first and strongly disagree with his characterization and criticism of the second. But, to sample that disagreement you might (optional) consult one of my efforts to defend college education:

http://gazette.unc.edu/archives/01jan10/file.3.html

https://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=b1d2dd5f-74bf-414a-b98a-61a66c6f7e26%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=9719059&db=mth

https://www.elgaronline.com/view/journals/lath/3-2/lath.2015.02.05.xml

November 25: off

November 27:

Turkey

December 2: Read Walker Connor, ETHNONATIONALISM, pp. 196-209 (ER)

What is ethnonationalism? Where do you find evidence of it in the twenty-first-century? Connor emphasizes emotions, which theoretically might be tamed in an effort to liberalize nationalism. Or would you agree with the following paragraphs excerpted from an essay that suggests nationalism cannot be tamed or liberalized?

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To say that the sentiments fueling nationalist fervor pass along networks of non-elites is not to deny the significance of pitchmen and princes—or presidents. Hitler’s appeal was (and is) incontestable. Yet, to my mind, pole position belongs to Niccolò Machiavelli, who compiled an assortment of ruthlessly effective leaders, from Darius and Hannibal to Cesare Borgia and Pope Julius II, to awaken his dedicatee, Lorenzo de’ Medici, to the need for an Italian redeemer in the early sixteenth century. Then, strictly speaking, there was no Italy. The Piedmont and peninsula were divided into republics and principalities, the elites of any acting with depraved indifference to the wellbeing of their neighbors. French troops camped in swatches of Lombardy; Aragonese officials ruled Naples, the south, and Sicily. Machiavelli thought foreign occupation humiliating. Packing his Principe with illustrations of self-interest, conflict, and the circumstances and daring that had made for ruthlessly effective leadership, he finished by emphasizing the need for ‘Italian valor’ and ‘Italian resourcefulness’ (virtù italica)—and Lorenzo’s leadership—to stop the flood of others (illuvione esterne) from dividing and
conquering all that was left of Rome’s greatness. An assortment of peculiarly Italian traits, Machiavelli tells Lorenzo, would ensure a victory over the ‘barbarians,’ for there were no better soldiers in Europe than Italians. It was providential that Italy had been overrun and had endured ordeals without leadership (senza capo). God created both the need and the vacancy, both of which beckoned (as Machiavelli had begged) Lorenzo to undertake a ‘sacred’ campaign.¹

Italy in fragments—some ‘owned’ by outsiders—disturbed and spurred Machiavelli, who would have had no brief for an early modern equivalent of the multi-ethnic state. He hoped that Lorenzo de Medici would tidy up the mess that a millennium and more of multi-culturalism made of Italy after Romans’ rule of Western Europe eroded. Challenges facing nationalists centuries later are related to what distressed Machiavelli and are related, of course, to the persistence of self-interest and conflict—a persistence liberals and political moralists call ‘assumption’ while political realists call it ‘fact.’ Yet challenges today are quite different. As I write, global and regional alternatives retain some appeal, even though so many regional associations are failing or feeble. What Tony Judt noticed in 1994 seems to be just as true now as it was then: nationalism, to many, is ‘more realistic than socialism’ and ‘more immediately reassuring than liberalism.’²

Realistic and reassuring, probably, yet Antje Helmerich notices that nationalist parties seem insatiable. Cheerful after an election cycle that rewards them with media recognition and perhaps a modicum of power, nationalists generally grow hungry for more—more privileges or more conformity within their ranks. Their very survival depends on pressing their arguments in multi-ethnic states for decentralization and political autonomy.³ Might satisfaction come when states are brought into line with ethnic boundaries? Arguably, no; for nationalists’ sentiments often morph into imperialist ambitions. And when internal enemies disappear—exiled, exterminated, or sequestered underground—external others will appear and be seen standing between nations and their destinies. But political realists, setting aside the drivel about democratic or even authoritarian utopias, understand that states’ striving for power is irrepressible. This striving can be overlooked—as some liberals and moralists demonstrate—but it cannot be overcome.

December 4: Discussing your final papers.