The Ethics of Influence
LDST 390-05

Spring 2018

Course Syllabus

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Office Hours: Open door and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
All leaders exercise influence to get people to do things. Using influence tactics differs, in some respects, from coercing followers and from outright lying to them, which—by assumption—are not morally permissible. But these tactics are not without problems of their own. For example, some forms of manipulation constitute neither coercion nor deception. One question we will address is what makes a behavior manipulative. A second question is whether influence is problematic even when it does not involve manipulation. This course is thus an ethical examination of the ways in which leaders influence followers. Our main goal is to discover the moral limits on the influence tactics that leaders use.

To achieve this goal, we must first get a handle on what leaders do and on what works. We will begin with classic, popular texts detailing the influence tactics leaders actually use—and use effectively. Our first step, then, will be to identify the behaviors under investigation. Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People and Cialdini’s Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion will set the stage for our moral examination.

Next, we will assess the morality of the influence tactics. Our tools for assessment will be traditional moral theory and contemporary philosophical literature on manipulation. The moral theory most obviously opposed to manipulation is Kant’s deontological theory. Kantian ethics prohibits manipulation because it treats followers as mere “means” to an end, not as ends in themselves (Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals). As we shall see, however, it is not easy to specify what manipulation is and how, exactly, it differs from what we might think are morally acceptable forms of influence. Coons and Weber’s edited collection, Manipulation: Theory and Practice, will take us a long way in the right direction.

The course will end just as practically as it started. We will take an extended look at the morality of public policy efforts to influence behavior with “nudges.” Cass Sunstein’s The Ethics of Influence provides a leadership context for us to think about much of what we will have learned in the course.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

• The student should be able to catalog the influence tactics leaders use and to explain why they are successful.

• The student should be familiar with the main philosophical arguments against the influence tactics and, especially, manipulation.

• The student should be able to engage critically and constructively with these arguments.

• The student should understand the special place of influence, including potential justifications, in the exercise of leadership.

REQUIRED TEXTS


REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

1. Class Contribution — 15%
2. Midterm Quiz — 10%
3. Short Paper — 10%
4. Presentation and Draft — 15%
5. Long Paper — 25%
6. Final Examination — 25%

A WORD ON DEADLINES AND SCHEDULED EXAMS

The instructor takes class, deadlines, and scheduled exams very seriously. In fairness to your classmates, any emergencies that arise should be brought to my attention as soon as possible.
Please note that computer problems never constitute an acceptable excuse. I do not accept late work, but I will accept and grade incomplete work.

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-** 70-76
- **D+** 67-72
- **D** 63-66
- **D-** 60-62
- **F** 50-59

**SCHEDULE** (Subject to Change as the Course Progresses)

* Short Paper opportunity

- **W Jan 17** Carnegie, Parts One and Two
- **W Jan 24** Carnegie, Parts Three and Four
  Rae Langton, “Duty and Desolation” (JSTOR)*
- **W Jan 31** Cialdini, Introduction-Chapter 4
- **W Feb 7** Cialdini, Chapter 5-Epilogue
  Baron, “Manipulativeness” (JSTOR)*
- **W Feb 14** Midterm Quiz
  Coons and Weber, “Introduction” (Coons and Weber)
- **W Feb 21** Noggle, “Manipulative Actions” (JSTOR)*
  Barnhill, “What is Manipulation” (Coons and Weber)*
- **W Feb 28** Gorin, “Towards and Theory of Interpersonal Manipulation (Coons and Weber)*
  Manne, “Non-Machiavellian Manipulation (Coons and Weber)*
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<td>W Mar 7</td>
<td>Wood, “Coercion, Manipulation, and Exploitation” (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td>Baron, “The Mens Rea and Moral Status of Manipulation (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
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<td>W Mar 21</td>
<td>Blumenthal-Barby, “A Framework” (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td>Cave, “Unsavory Seduction and Manipulation (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td>W Mar 28</td>
<td>Long, “Information Manipulation” (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td>Cholbi, “Implications of Ego Depletion” (Coons and Weber)*</td>
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<td>W Apr 4</td>
<td>Sunstein, Chapters 1-5</td>
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<td>F April 27</td>
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