Leadership Ethics
LDST 450, Section 5

Fall 2024

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Terry L. Price
E-mail: tprice@richmond.edu
Meeting Requests: Please contact me via email to set up a meeting.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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? 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 **well-being** and **happiness** 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 among belief, motivation, and action. Throughout the course, we will use my book *Leadership Ethics: An Introduction* to consider a central component of the moral psychology of leadership: a belief about **justification**—namely, that leaders are sometimes justified in doing what others are not allowed to do. If leaders have a convincing reason or set of reasons to behave in ways that are proscribed for the rest of 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.

Rule breaking is a central theme—perhaps *the* central theme—in the course. **What are the rules and who gets to break them?** But there are many other, often related, themes at the core of discussions in leadership ethics. These topics also raise questions about the moral distinctiveness of leadership. We will take up *doing vs. allowing*, *negative and positive duties*, *egoism*, *self-defense and defense of others*, *authenticity*, *moral luck*, *dirty hands*, *the role of feelings,* and *role responsibilities*. All are topics worthy of examination on their own merits, but our work on them will allow us to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the main theories of moral leadership covered in the course.

In the final sessions of the course, we will turn to the *ethics of influence* and issues that fall under what we might call *ethics broadly construed*—what is a good, moral life as a leader and/or follower and what constitutes *a meaningful professional life.*

All of my courses are designed for rigorous discussion of the issues, which means that students bear an equal burden in explaining, critiquing, and developing the ideas conveyed in the readings. To facilitate this kind of engagement, I use assigned seating. I regularly call on people and ask them to answer specific questions about the readings so they can demonstrate **Preparation and Engagement.** For each class, you should be prepared to answer the following questions **and point to passages in the text to support your answers**:

1. What is the author's main conclusion? (Example of evidence: the author's thesis statement.) How did the author get there? (Evidence: examples, assumptions, arguments.)
2. Given the central questions of the course, what is the author's most important, provocative, or controversial claim? (Example: "Unlike Kant, she argues that lying is permissible in some circumstances." Evidence: the passage where she makes this claim.)
3. What part of the author's argument is most susceptible to critique? Can the argument be saved?

Each student is also required to write at least one **Short Paper**. Short papers are 800-1000 words, and they engage critically with readings identified as "short paper opportunities." Because these papers are supposed to convey your understanding and analysis of the readings, **outside sources are prohibited and will be considered unauthorized assistance in the completion of the assignment.** I will often use these papers to structure class and ask that they be read aloud, so they are due to me via email the day before class—with a grace period until 9 a.m. on Wednesday. I *strongly* recommend that you write more than one short paper. Your **Solution Paper** must be based on work from your short papers. Also, each additional short paper that you write (up to four total short papers) adds one point to the grade of your strongest short paper. You may choose *once* to write on a reading from the class just previous. Assuming you haven't already taken advantage of this option, you can use it to get credit for a paper *received* after 9 a.m. on Wednesday. **Otherwise, please do not ask me to accept a late paper.**

There will be two **Readings Tests**. These tests serve several functions. They give you extra incentive to read carefully and to retain what you've read. They also give me a sense of your understanding of the course basics. Careful reading, retention, and understanding are necessary for achieving the main goals of the course: engaging with the material at a sophisticated level in

class discussions—including in response to presentations of other students—and in your final papers. *The tests are therefore means to an end, not ends in themselves.*

Attendance affects your **Preparation and Engagement** grade, your **Short Papers** grade (in-person attendance for the entire class is required for your paper to count), and—in all likelihood—your **Readings Tests** grades. Please email me if you are unable to attend class.

Please note that **we begin and end on time** and that students are expected to remain in class for the entire class period. We will take a break!

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Computers, tablets, phones, and similar devices are not permitted in class. In my experience, their costs outweigh their benefits because they are distracting for all students and make it harder for them to stay engaged in class exercises and discussions. Any such devices brought into the classroom must be silenced and placed out of view during class. Students should minimize all other distractions and respect the rules of standard classroom etiquette.

Recording class sessions or meetings is also prohibited. There is no need to record class sessions (or to worry about getting complete notes) because I provide comprehensive class notes after each session. Learning in this class occurs primarily through discussion and by developing philosophical habits of mind through practice. My classroom is set up for students to make, and learn from, mistakes. Lots of mistakes. Knowing that there is a recording of one's efforts impedes the intellectual risk-taking I expect of students. Finally, I aim to create an environment in which students feel free to express controversial and unpopular opinions. Recording class discussions has a chilling effect on this kind of expression and, therefore, is at odds with one of the primary goals of the course.

THE HONOR CODE AND USE OF AI

As a student at the University of Richmond, you are bound by the Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits the use of any unauthorized assistance. For this course, the use of text-generating artificial intelligence tools (such as, but not limited to, ChatGPT) will be considered unauthorized assistance. I will work with Honor Council to investigate and address any potential violations. This includes the use of generative AI for any stage of the work from conception to completion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- The student should understand the relationship between leadership and rule breaking.
- 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, in particular, the moral psychology of leadership.

- The student should learn how to critique moral arguments and how to present original moral arguments.
- The student should be able to recognize and respond to peculiar challenges to our moral assessments of leadership: leader exceptionalism, moral luck, dirty hands cases, role responsibilities, and so on.
- The student should be able to provide an ethically informed reading of leadership theory.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OBJECTIVES—WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
- Students will produce written work that reflects disciplinary conventions and attention to audience and situation.
- Students will produce written work with a clear perspective and, where appropriate, forward claims supported by evidence, and cite sources responsibly.
- Students will produce written work undergoing an iterative process, where content evolves (creation, drafting, and revision) and improves based on feedback from the faculty member.
- Students will compose written work with clarity, cohesion, concision, and minimal error.

<u>REQUIRED TEXTS</u>

Terry L. Price, *Leadership Ethics: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Barton Swaim, *The Speechwriter: A Brief Education in Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).

Blackboard Readings.

<u>REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING[1]</u>

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

1.	Preparation and Engagement	20%
2.	Short Papers	25%
3.	Readings Test 1	10%
4.	Readings Test 2	15%
5.	Solution Paper	30%

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[1] I reserve the right the refuse to accept any work submitted without the honor pledge.

I take deadlines and scheduled exams seriously. In fairness to your classmates, any emergencies that arise should be brought to my attention as soon as possible before scheduled tests or the final paper. **Otherwise, I do not accept late work.** I will accept and grade unfinished work. There are no extensions for short papers, and they must meet the 800-word minimum to count. I do not give "extra credit."

I will round final grades. For example, 92.5 is sufficient for an A in this course.

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

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

Pretty much failsafe in my experience!

1. Attend all classes. You should not on staying engaged in the discussion, not notetaking. I will provide all necessary notes.

2. Carefully complete all readings in advance of class meetings. When reading, identify passages to which you can easily refer to answer the three sets of questions above. (Some material may require re-reading.)

3. Use the whole week to prepare for our one-day-per-week class. Do the after-class readings and spread your work out over shorter, focused blocks. Do not save this course for Tuesday night!

4. Write the maximum number of short papers (4).

5. Be an informed participant in discussions by drawing directly on the texts. (See 2 above.)

6. Write a final paper that builds on your best short paper and responds to my comments, as well as—if applicable—the comments of your classmates.

SCHEDULE (subject to change as the semester progresses)
      * Short Paper Opportunity

I. The distinctive challenge of leadership ethics

Wednesday, August 28
    Before Class:
    Hollander, "Conformity, Status, and Idiosyncrasy Credit," 120-121
    Hollander, "Competence and Conformity in the Acceptance of Influence"
    Price, "Leader Exceptionalism"
    After Class:
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 1-8

II. What is the nature of the rules, and why do people do people break them?

Wednesday, September 4
    Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"*****
    G. E. M. Anscombe, "Who is Wronged?—Philippa Foot on Double Effect: One Point"
    Judith Jarvis Thompson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"*****

Wednesday, September 11
    Before Class:
    Plato, *Republic*, 12-40
    Ludwig and Longenecker, "The Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leaders"*****
    After Class:
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 73-81

III. What are the moral rules? (Or is that even the right way to think about ethics?)

Wednesday, September 18
    Before Class:
    Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 61-73, 88-92
    Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil"*****
    After Class:
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 38-43

Wednesday, September 25
    Before Class:
    Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, 95-113
    Flanigan, "The Ethics of Authentic Leadership"*
    After Class:
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 44-51

Wednesday, October 2
    READINGS TEST 1
    Before or After Class:
    Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 185-202
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 192-204

Wednesday, October 9
    Before Class:
    Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"*
    Williams, *Critique of Utilitarianism*, 93-118*

Wednesday, October 16
    Before Class:
    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 33-53
    Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"*
    After Class:
    Price, "The Virtue of Leadership"

IV. When necessity and bad luck get in the way…

Wednesday, October 23
    Before Class:
    Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 54-72
    Nagel, "Moral Luck"*
    Williams, "Moral Luck"*
    After Class:
    Price, *Leadership Ethics*, 145-151

Wednesday, October 30
    Before Class:
    Walzer, "Political Action: The Dilemma of Dirty Hands"*
    Thalos, "Dirty Hands: The Phenomenology of Acting As an Authorized Agent"*

V. What are the moral limits on motivating others?

Wednesday, November 6
   Before Class:
   Baron, "Manipulativeness"*****
   Noggle, "Manipulative Actions" *****

Wednesday, November 13
   Before Class:
   Swaim, *The Speechwriter: A Brief Education in Politics*
   Barton Swaim Lecture, Ukrop Auditorium, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, November 20
   READINGS TEST 2

Wednesday, November 27
   THANKSGIVING WEEK

Wednesday, December 4
   TBA

Monday, December 16
   FINAL PAPERS DUE VIA EMAIL (Friday, December 13, strongly preferred)