

LDST 101- Leadership and the Humanities-- AUTUMN, 2025

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QUOTES TO QUESTIONS:

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? 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 occurs? Accurate predictions and comprehensive control--shouldn't those be the aims of a higher education?

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”?

Rachel Kushner: “Charisma does not originate inside the person called ‘charismatic.’ It comes from the need of others to believe that special people exist. . . . Charismatic people understand this will-to-believe best of all. They exploit it. That is their so-called charisma.”

Charisma often results from the appearance of what Yeats called “passionate intensity,” so are what he called “the worst” better able than “the best” at generating the “will-to-believe.” How does charisma differ from celebrity, if at all? Whom do you consider charismatic, and what do your answers say about your willingness to believe?

Napoleon Bonaparte: “We are here [at the *Conseil d'État*] to guide public opinion, not to discuss it.”

When is it fair for a council to make a raft of decisions for the public rather in response to -- or at least, with reference to -- prevailing public opinions

Ulysses S. Grant: “All the romance of feeling that [wo]men in high places are above personal considerations and act only from motives of pure patriotism and for the general good of the public has been destroyed. An inside view proves too truly very much the reverse.”

Is this just post-civil war cynicism or does it still ring true? If the latter holds and the self-interested who aspire to high places are really imposters adept at camouflaging their selfishness to perpetuate that “romance of feeling,” what should you and the leaders you choose to occupy those “high places” in politics, commerce, or the academy do about it?

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?

George Bernard Shaw: “Democracy reads well, but it doesn't act well.”

Do you agree that democracy doesn't act well? What might make it act better?

Percy Bysshe Shelley: “Power, like a desolating pestilence, pollutes whate'er it touches.”

Yet leaders we admire seek power to do good, to lower barriers to noble enterprise. If power is pestilential—if it corrupts, as Lord Acton said—should we start sifting plausible redefinitions of “power”?

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 they are docile and therefore incomplete citizens? Is it fair to call them “incomplete”? Is it fair to compare them with machines? How important is it for leaders to criticize tradition?

Aurelius Augustine: “Justice having been removed, what are kingdoms but gangs of thieves 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 the agreements or covenant governing the association in which plunder is divided according to a constitution of sorts. To illustrate, take the answer given by a captured pirate to Emperor 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.”

If you were Alexander, how would you respond to the pirate’s equation?

Stuart Hampshire: “Successful leader[s are] always rather loose in [their] thinking, flexible, not bound by principles . . . not bound even by [their] own intentions. [They are] like burglar[s] who [are] ready to change direction when [they] run up against an obstacle in the dark.”

Would you call this a flattering comparison? Flexibility seems an OK virtue for leaders, but what about principles? Are they any use if they’re not binding?

In this section of LDST 101, we’ll revisit these quotes at different times and raise the questions in italics beneath them as well as other concerns that derive from these assignments and from current events. BUT answers to these and to other questions won’t establish the foundation of leadership studies, but the asking might. And the conversations generated by our asking will likely problematize some ideas we take for granted, prompting confrontations with the problems and wannabe problem-solvers whom we’ll find in our assigned texts as well as in our class.

So, 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, please check the next section on . . .*

REQUIREMENTS & GRADES

Lively, informed encounters with our questions, obviously, require lively and informed participation in class discussions. I expect it; recurring absences and unfamiliarity with assignments will lower your grade for LDST 101.

First Paper (due September 20, 2 PM); 10 points, 800 word limit.

2 Mid-term oral exams. You'll be divided randomly into pods and meet with the instructor. Interlocutors earn up to 15 points per exam by sounding informed and wise but also by helping your pod colleagues do so as well.

5 quizzes: 5 points each; formats may vary, though the basic "ask" is: have you completed the day's assignment thoughtfully?

For example, let's say you're assigned the quotes at the front of the syllabus. Your quiz would might three terms and the prompt will ask you to relate them to each other and to a significant theme in the class: **democracy, Shaw, and Pericles**. And one reasonable response: "Perhaps one reason Shaw believes democracy acts badly is that too many mindlessly follow their leaders who, as Pericles, prefer not to be led or swayed by their constituents. Might democracies act better if more leaders were less like Pericles or, on the contrary, if leaders, as he did, led without catering to constituents?"

Final Paper, 35 points. By April 30, 9AM, you'll submit a PDF or Word document (as an email attachment) responding to a paper prompt given a week earlier. Length 1,800 to 2,000 words. You may collaborate, deliberating with others, and submit solo or submit a single paper as a group of up to four colleagues.

(On the date and time set for this class's final exam, those with excused absences (out-of-town representing the university, ill, death in the family) will complete graded assignments they missed. Quizzes will be as described above. If you miss an oral exam, you will take a blue book examination covering the relevant portion of the class.)

Several taboos: late arrival, early departure, Mid-class breaks, multi-tasking

TEXTS *You're advised to purchase (or kindle or E-book) the following:*

Thomas More, **UTOPIA**. (available on-line and in most used book stores as well as campus bookstore and Amazon, and . . .)

Niccolò Machiavelli, **THE PRINCE** (same as above)

William Shakespeare, **CORIOLANUS** (same as above)

Hannah Arendt, **EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM**.

Wendy Brown, **WALLED STATES, WANING SOVEREIGNTY**

Anne Applebaum, **TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY: THE SEDUCTIVE LURE OF AUTHORITARIANISM**.

Adam Hochschild, **AMERICAN MIDNIGHT**

Robert Penn Warren, **ALL THE KING'S MEN**. *Beware: do **not** use the restored edition (burgundy and gold cover). That's his first not his final, prize-winning draft. I like the Harcourt edition, but Scribner's also has one.*

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

August 25 / 26, introduction: The syllabus and questions arising therefrom

August 27 / 28, Read Jeannie Suk Gerson's "War and Power" (blackboard)

Sept 1 / 2 Read ALL THE KING'S MEN, chapters 1-4 and watch film, "Ides of March."

Sept 3 / 4, Read KING'S MEN, chapters 5-6.

September 8 / 9, Read KING'S MEN, chapter 7; (Pozen, chapter 7 "Reading Efficiently"—library, e-book); Washington's "Farewell Address;" and Rosen, chapter 7: "Resolution: George Washington's Self-Command."

Sept 9, Attend Rosen's presentation

Sept 10 / 11, Read Wendy Brown, "Undoing Democracy."

Sept. 15 / 16, Read Coriolanus, act 1, scene 1 and acts 2 and 3; watch the film "Coriolanus."

Sept. 17 / 18, watch the film "V for Vendetta"

Sept. 20, 2 PM: first paper due.

Sept. 22 / 23, Read UTOPIA, book 1 and any 30 consecutive pages of book 2; read Plato's APOLOGY

Sept. 24 / 25, Read Stone's essay on Socrates ("A Wild Goose Chase"); read Adut's "Critique."

Sept. 28 thru Oct. 10 Oral Exams: pods will select their days and times (no classes Sept. 29 / 30 and Oct. 1 / 2).

Oct. 6 / 7, Read AMERICAN MIDNIGHT, part 1, pp. 1 – 159.

Oct. 8 / 9, Read MIDNIGHT, part 1, pp. 160 – 198.

B R E A K

Oct. 15 / 16, Read Edmundson, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education"

Oct 20 / 21, Read MIDNIGHT, part 2.

Oct 22 / 23, Read TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY, chapters 1 and 2

Oct 27 / 28, Finish TWILIGHT; read Machiavelli's PRINCE, chapters 5 – 10.

Oct. 29 / 30, Read PRINCE, chapters 19 and 23 – 26.

Nov. 3 / 4, Read chapters from C. Wright Mills's THE POWER ELITE, "The Conservative Mood" and "The Higher Immorality."

Nov. 5 / 6, Read EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM, chapter 1.

Nov. 10 / 11, Read EICHMANN, chapters 2-4, 8, 14, and the Epilogue; watch the film, "The Swing Kids."

Nov. 12 / 13, Greene's law #17 and DEMOCRACY AND TRUTH, chapter 4.

Nov. 14 thru Nov. 23 Oral Exams: pods will select their days and times (no classes Nov. 17, 18, 19, and 20) [See and, ideally, start assignments for Dec.]

Nov. 24 / 25, Watch the film "Crash"

T U R K E Y

Dec. 1 / 2, Read WALLED STATES AND WANING SOVEREIGNTY, chapters 1 – 3 and Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Wall."

Dec. 3 / 4, Review
