

## LDST 450: Leadership Ethics

**Professor:** Dr. Sam Director

**Email:** sdirecto@richmond.edu

**Office Hours:** [Link to scheduling.](#)

**Office Location:** Jepson Hall 119D

**Class time:** MW section 01 (9:00-10:15AM) section 02 (10:30-11:45AM)

**Class Location:** Humanities 245

**Course Description:** here is the catalog description of our course: “Application of moral theory to the values and assumptions of leadership, focusing especially on the ethical challenges of leaders past and present, group behavior, and leadership theory. Topics include self-interest, power, charisma, duty, obedience, and the greater good.” More generally, the goal of this course is to analyze the ethical challenges facing leaders and moral agents more generally.

This course is intended as a capstone to your Jepson experience; you’ve learned about what leadership has looked like in the past, what leadership looks like in the present, and now it’s your chance to think about what leadership *should* look like.

We will begin very briefly with **Unit 1**, a discussion of meta-ethics, wherein we will ask whether claims about morality and ethics are objectively true or not. After all, for there to be a leadership ethics, we need to establish that there is something about ethics that is real and which authoritatively binds our behavior.

After this brief unit, **Unit 2** will discuss the three historically dominant approaches to normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. We will have two goals in this unit. First, we will investigate these ethical theories in the abstract, trying to determine what the nature of the good is and what the content of our obligation(s) are. Second, we will ask how these theories apply to leaders. For this latter goal, we will explore various categories of leaders and explore what their decisions would look like according to each theory.

**Unit 3** will focus on issues in applied ethics that are relevant to leadership and which affect leaders uniquely. For example, leaders are in a position of influence over those they lead, and influence poses unique ethical problems.

The units so far have focused on questions in interpersonal ethics-how should we treat other people we interact with in our lives. Leaders are not just faced with interpersonal decisions; they are often embedded in *political* contexts. This naturally leads to **Unit 4**, an investigation of applied issues in the ethics of political leadership. Here, we are asking the question of what just leadership looks like. When leaders are engaged in projects that go beyond interpersonal connections, they need to act justly. Of course, justice is a part of morality generally. On one influential view, justice is the part of morality that may be coercively enforced. We will discuss specific issues in the politics of leadership

and specific roles that leaders occupy. We will examine ethical issues facing public health officials, elected officials, and more.

We will conclude the class with **Unit 5**, which concerns the intersection of leadership and the good life/the meaning of life. An important question in ethics concerns what it means to live well and to have a good life. For those occupied in leadership positions, these positions should be connected to their goal of living well.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this class, my goal is that you will have made significant progress toward achieving the following outcomes:

#### *Writing Outcomes:*

1. Students will produce written work that reflects disciplinary conventions and attention to audience and situation.
2. Students will produce written work with a clear perspective and, where appropriate, forward claims supported by evidence, and cite sources responsibly.
3. 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.
4. Students will compose written work with clarity, cohesion, concision, and minimal error.

#### *PEIC Outcomes:*

1. Students will analyze the origins and dynamics of structural inequities and power imbalances in specific societal contexts.
2. Students will analyze how attitudes, experiences, and/or beliefs are shaped both by context and/or cultural identity.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the effects of inequities and power imbalances on a society, and the historical or current efforts, successful and unsuccessful, used to reduce such effects.

**Course Structure:** This class will involve a mix of lecture and discussion. On a typical day in class, you will have done a pre-assigned reading on a topic, and I will begin with a summary of that reading and the crucial issues involved in it. At various points in my lecture, we will pause for discussion and questions. The goal is for lecture to take up about 40% of each class with discussion being the remaining 60% of the class.

**Course Materials:** All of our assigned readings will be excerpts from books or journal articles. Each reading will be posted to Blackboard. You do not need to buy any books for this class. I post all of the slides from class on Blackboard as well. They will be available after that day in class.

### **Grading:**

I grade on the following scale, and **I do not round grades up:**

- 100-99 (A+)
- 98.9- 94 (A)
- 93.9 - 90 (A-)
- 89.9 - 87 (B+)
- 86.9 - 84 (B)
- 83.9 - 80 (B-)
- 79.9 - 77 (C+)
- 76.9-74 (C)
- Etc.

Your grade will be determined by the following categories:

- Midterm exam (20%)
- Career Reflection Paper (10%)
- Quizzes (20%)
- Term Paper First Attempt (25%)
- Term Paper Revisions, Presentation, and Defense (25%)

I realize that there are extenuating circumstances each semester for many people. If you find yourself in an extreme situation that affects your ability to perform well in this class, please talk to me about it. I cannot guarantee that I will be able to accommodate you, but I may be able to.

### **Assignments:**

*Exam:* there will be a midterm exam. The goal of this exam is to test how well you understand the material covered in class by seeing if you can summarize (in your own words) what we have covered in class and in readings. I see exams as a means to the end of incentivizing careful reflection and reading.

*Term Paper:* we will write a longer paper (10-12 pages) that takes an issue of your choosing from class and that takes a stance on it. This will be a research paper that requires you to engage with peer-reviewed literature. The term paper will be evaluated in **two graded portions**. You will write your best first attempt at the paper and will then receive feedback from me, with which you will revise the paper for a final version.

*Term Paper Presentation and Defense:* after you have written your revised term paper in light of my comments, you will submit it. Additionally, you will present your argument to the class and will have to defend it from objections. The presentation of your paper should be at least 10 minutes long, and you will be cross-examined. The questioning will mainly be done by me, but there will be space for your fellow students to ask questions as well.

**Note:** your grade on the revised term paper and your grade on the presentation and defense are combined. The presentation is in place of a final exam.

*Career Reflection Paper:* there will be a short paper (5 pages) in which you examine an ethical dilemma or issue from your desired future profession. The point of this paper is to think about a dilemma or

challenge that you might face in your future career and to examine what you think ethical leadership requires in that situation.

*Quizzes:* on most days in class, we will have a short reading quiz. I will not tell you in advance which days will have quizzes. These will be short quizzes that ask questions intended to see if you have done the reading. The goal of these quizzes is to give you an incentive to do every reading.

### **Class Policies:**

- *Plagiarism:*
  - As 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.
  - To clarify my AI policy: I consider any use at all of AI to be prohibited. This includes asking AI to find sources, come up with arguments, format your paper, etc. I realize that the private sector (including many of your internships) uses generative AI a lot. I myself have even published research on the potential uses of AI in medicine. I say this to show that I'm not against AI. I just think it has its proper place. In the private sector, as long as you are not breaking the law, your boss probably doesn't care about *how* you produced your work. In education, I care a lot about *how* you produce your work. Learning how to produce your own ideas and synthesize them is one of the key values achieved by a liberal arts education. Using AI to write your papers clearly conflicts with this goal.
  - Also, consider the practical benefit to yourself. Students across the country are using AI to cheat in college. While this may get them a degree, it will rob them of developing strong writing and critical thinking skills. Think of how much better of an employee you will be if you spend the time now to invest in your soft skills. I would wager a lot of money that the students who invest the time now in the traditional college education will outperform the students who rely on AI.
  - The use of AI to produce your work is also deeply personally hurtful to me. I care very deeply about students becoming the best thinkers they can be. To that end, I spend a long time reading your papers and giving you detailed feedback. If all I'm commenting on is what Chat-GPT says about your topic, this is deeply disrespectful to me and my time. Weeks before our class started, my wife and I had our first-born child. Every minute I spend grading papers is a minute I am not spending with my infant son. Cheating in this class amounts to robbing me of time I will never, ever get back with my son.
- *Attendance:*
  - Attendance in class is mandatory.
  - Of course, if you have some incredibly extenuating circumstance that requires you to miss class, please let me know. For example, if you are on a university athletics team that travels frequently, have a severe illness, etc., we can figure out a solution.
  - If you miss a quiz on the day of your absence, it is your responsibility to come to my office hours and take an alternate quiz.

- Please do not come to class if you are sick. I will excuse your absence.
- *Participation:*
  - Our goal is to get closer to the truth. We do this by discussing the issues with each other. So, it's very important that we all actively participate in the discussion.
  - Participation most often looks like asking questions and bringing up points of discussion. But, I recognize that this is not the only way to participate in class. Active listening, note taking, talking with me about the material in office hours, etc. all count as participation.
- *Discussion Etiquette:*
  - We will be discussing important and often controversial issues. Given this, we should try to be charitable to our fellow classmates and not jump to harsh conclusions about their views. If a fellow classmate says something that strikes you as false, *or even offensive*, try to interpret his or her claim in the best possible light. The same goes for the authors that we will be reading.
  - However, even though we should be charitable to our classmates and authors, we should still voice disagreement with each other. In a college classroom, it is not rude to disagree with someone; to disagree with someone's reasoning is to acknowledge that person as a peer who is worthy of being debated. Disagreeing with someone does not mean that you are dismissing their views. Rather, it means that you are engaging with their views. This policy extends to me. I heavily encourage you to disagree with me. Note: I'm assigning one of my own papers this semester, and I am expecting that you will come to class ready to tell me all of the things I am wrong about in that paper!
  - More generally, my policy is to make the classroom a place of open expression and dialogue. I care a lot about *why* you believe what you believe (much more so than I care about *what* anyone believes). This course is a chance to explore ideas and to see where you think the truth leads. If you leave the course with all of the same beliefs about ethics that you entered with, that is completely fine with me, so long as you critically examined your reasons for your beliefs. I have no agenda, and there is no particular view advocated by the course. Of course, I do have many strongly held views and am happy to share those, but my goal is not that you adopt my beliefs, and you certainly are not graded based on adherence to those beliefs. If the goal of this class is to allow free exploration of ideas in the pursuit of truth, none of us can constrain the speech or thought of others. It is difficult to test an idea if we don't discuss and analyze it. For this reason, I affirm a strong policy in favor of free expression in the classroom. This, of course, entails a strong policy in favor of debate, criticism, and examination of each other's beliefs and arguments. The goal is that iron can sharpen iron in the discussion. As college students, it is extremely unlikely that you have made up your minds about most issues of social importance, and the classroom cannot be a place of intellectual exploration if you fear social sanctions from your peers for expressing your views. Again, this still means that we can, and should, vigorously disagree and debate views that our peers endorse.
  - See also: [UR's statement on freedom of speech and expression](#).
- *Technology:*
  - Laptops, cellphones, etc. will not be allowed in class. There is lots of evidence that we (and the people around us) learn better when technology is absent and when we have to write things by hand.

- If you have a disability accommodation that allows you to use technology in class, I am happy to accommodate this.
- If you receive an urgent phone call, please feel free to step out of class to take it.
- Recording of class will not be allowed, largely to aid in the goal of creating a space of free expression in the classroom.
- *Office Hours:*
  - The scheduling link to my office hours is listed above. If you would like to talk about material from or adjacent to class, clarify a point from class, get help with an assignment, talk about your grade, etc., feel free to make an appointment with me. I also genuinely want to get to know you as my students. You are always welcome to come say hello while I'm in my office.
- *Late Work:*
  - My policy is that for every day that your assignment is late, you will lose a full letter grade on it.

### Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignment Due
8/25	Introduction to the class and discussion of syllabus.	None.	
<b>Unit 1: Metaethics</b>			
8/27	Metaethics	Plato. <i>The Republic</i> (The Ring of Gyges).  James Rachels. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism." From <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> .  Michael Huemer, <i>Ethical Intuitionism</i> (1-11, 48-54, 63-66).	
<b>Unit 2: Normative Ethics</b>			
9/1	Normative Ethics: Axiology	Chris Heathwood. "Monism and Pluralism about Value." In the <i>Oxford Handbook of Value Theory</i> : 136–157.	

9/3	Normative Ethics: Utilitarianism/Consequentialism	James Rachels, "The Debate Over Utilitarianism." From <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> .	
9/8	Absolute Deontology	Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (26-33).  Judith Jarvis Thomson. "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem." <i>The Monist</i> (1976): 204-217.	
9/10	Moderate Deontology	W.D. Ross, <i>The Right and The Good</i> (16-33, 34-42).	
9/15	Virtue Ethics	Julia Annas. "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing." <i>Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association</i> : 61-75.  Rosalind Hursthouse. "Normative Virtue Ethics." From <i>How Should One Live? Essays on the Virtues</i> . 19-33.	
<b>Unit 3: Applied Ethical Issues in Leadership</b>			
9/17	Leaders and nudging	Selections from Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein. <i>Nudge</i> .	
9/22	Leaders and Coercing	Selections from Elizabeth Anderson, <i>Private Government</i> :	

		<i>How Employers Control Our Lives.</i> 2017.	
9/24	Leaders and Deception/Transparency	<p>Thomas Carson. "The Range of Reasonable Views about the Morality of Lying." In <i>Lying: Language, Knowledge, Ethics, and Politics</i>. 145-160.</p> <p>Jennifer Saul. "Just Go Ahead and Lie." <i>Analysis</i>: 3–9.</p>	
9/29	Leaders and Equality Within Organizations	Elizabeth Anderson. "Equality and Freedom in the Workplace." <i>Social Philosophy &amp; Policy</i> (2015): 48-69.	
10/1	Leaders and the Obligations of Firms to the General Public	<p>John Hasnas "The Normative Theories of Business Ethics: A Guide for the Perplexed." <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>: 19-42.</p> <p>Milton Friedman. "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits." <i>New York Times Magazine</i>.</p>	
10/6	Leadership in a Disaster	Matt Zwolinski. "The Ethics of Price Gouging." <i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i> : 347–378.	
10/8	Leadership and Manipulation of Desire in the Marketplace	Roger Crisp. "Persuasive Advertising,	<b><u>Career reflection paper due on</u></b>

		Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire.” <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> : 413–418.	<b><u>Blackboard by 11:59PM</u></b>
<b>Fall Break (10/10-10/14)</b>			
10/15	Leadership and Dirty Hands	Jessica Flanigan. “Sweatshop Regulation and Workers’ Choices.” <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> : 79–94.	
10/20	Leadership and Corporate Stances on Social Issues	Jill Fisch and Jeff Schwartz. “How Did Corporations Get Stuck in Politics and Can They Escape?” Working Paper: 1-37.	
10/22	<b><u>Midterm Exam</u></b>		
<b>Unit 4: Ethical Issues in Political Leadership</b>			
10/27	Leadership and Political Authority	Selections from Michael Huemer. <i>The Problem of Political Authority</i> .	<b><u>Complete anonymous instructor midterm evaluation.</u></b>
10/29	Public Health Leaders and Coercion	Nuffield Council on Bioethics. “The Nuffield Ladder.”  Kalle Grill and Kristin Voigt. “The Case for Banning Cigarettes.” <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> : 293–301.  Jessica Flanigan. “Double Standards	

		and Arguments for Tobacco Regulation." <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> : 305-311.	
11/3	Leadership and the Distribution of Scarce Resources	Govind Persad, Alan Wertheimer, and Ezekiel Emanuel. "Principles for allocation of scarce medical interventions." <i>The Lancet</i> : 423-431.	<b><u>Term paper first attempt due on Blackboard at 11:59PM.</u></b>
11/5	Political Leaders and Unintended Consequences	<i><b>Skim</b></i> these readings:  Jordan Nickerson and David Solomon. "Car Seats as Contraception." <i>Journal of Law and Economics</i> : 517-553.  Blalock, G., Kadiyali, V., & Simon, D. H. "Driving fatalities after 9/11: a hidden cost of terrorism." <i>Applied Economics</i> : 1717-1729.	
<b>Unit 5: Leadership and the Good Life</b>			
11/10	The Meaning of Life/The Good Life/Happiness	Thaddeus Metz. "The Meaning of Life." <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> .  Dan Haybron. "Happiness." <i>The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> .  Complete The Death Clock and Your Life	

		in Weeks (links on Blackboard).	
11/12	The Good Life and Work	Anca Gheaus and Lisa Herzog. "The Goods of Work (Other Than Money!)." <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i> : 70-89.  Optional: watch <i>Office Space</i> .	
11/17	The Meaning of Life and the Future of Humanity	Brooke Alan Trisel. "Human Extinction and the Value of Our Efforts." <i>Philosophical Papers</i> : 371-391.  Optional: watch <i>Children of Men</i> .	
11/19	The Meaning of Life and Community	Nancy Sherman. "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life." <i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i> : 589-613.	
<b>Thanksgiving Break (11/25-11/30)</b>			
12/1	Final Presentations		<b><u>Term paper revised version due on Blackboard before class.</u></b>
12/3	Final Presentations		
	Remaining final presentations will take place during our final exam period.		

	10:30AM section: Monday 12/8 (9-12PM) 9AM section: Friday 12/12 (9- 12PM)		
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UR's Final Exam Schedule: <https://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/schedule/exam.html>

# Syllabus Statements

## AI and the Honor Code

All assignments are expected to be the student's original work. The Jepson School follows the provisions of the Honor System as outlined by the School of Arts and Sciences. This means that no student is to use, rely on or turn in work that was paid-for, copied, excessively summarized without citation, created in collaboration (without permission), produced by AI, or is otherwise not the original work of the student for the specific assignment (without explicit permission).

## Disability Services

The University of Richmond's office of Disability Services strives to ensure that students with disabilities and/or temporary conditions (i.e., concussions & injuries) are provided opportunity for full participation and equal access. Students who are approved for academic accommodations must complete the following steps to implement their accommodations in each class:

- 1) Submit their Disability Accommodation Notice (DAN) to each of their professors via the Disability Services Student Portal available at this link: [sl.richmond.edu/be](https://sl.richmond.edu/be).
- 2) Request a meeting with each professor to create an accommodation implementation plan. Disability Services is available to assist, as needed.

It is important to complete these steps as soon as possible because accommodations are never retroactive, and professors are permitted a reasonable amount of time for implementation. Students who are experiencing a barrier to access due to a disability and/or temporary condition are encouraged to apply for accommodations by visiting [disability.richmond.edu](https://disability.richmond.edu). Disability Services can be reached at [disability@richmond.edu](mailto:disability@richmond.edu) or 804-662-5001.

## Awarding of Credit

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.

[registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html](https://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/academic-credit.html)

## Disability Accommodations

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.

[disability.richmond.edu/](https://disability.richmond.edu/)

## Honor System

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

<https://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/index.html>

### **Religious Observance**

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.

[registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html](https://registrar.richmond.edu/planning/religiousobs.html)

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

**Academic Skills Center** ([asc.richmond.edu](http://asc.richmond.edu)): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Tutors will be available virtually. The on-call peer-tutors available for these appointments are listed in the Box file: [On-Call Online Tutors](#) (<https://richmond.box.com/s/dpe37chr2zodr3o1amtj8omik72v2ktb>). Email [Roger Mancastroppa](mailto:rmancast@richmond.edu) ([rmancast@richmond.edu](mailto:rmancast@richmond.edu)) and [Marco Ortiz](mailto:marco.ortiz@richmond.edu) ([marco.ortiz@richmond.edu](mailto:marco.ortiz@richmond.edu)) for appointments in academic and life skills to request a Zoom conference.

**Boatwright Library Research Librarians:** ([library.richmond.edu/help/ask/](http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/) or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide library instruction, tutorials, research guides, and individual help. All research support will be provided online or by appointment and students can contact a librarian for help via email ([library@richmond.edu](mailto:library@richmond.edu)), text (804-277-9ASK), chat, or Zoom (by appointment).

**Career Services:** ([careerservices.richmond.edu](http://careerservices.richmond.edu) or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

**Counseling and Psychological Services** ([caps.richmond.edu](http://caps.richmond.edu) or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

**Disability Services** ([disability.richmond.edu](http://disability.richmond.edu)) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

**Speech Center** ([speech.richmond.edu](http://speech.richmond.edu) or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations. Remote practice sessions can be arranged; we look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

**Writing Center** ([writing.richmond.edu](http://writing.richmond.edu) or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.