

LDST 101- Leadership and the Humanities-- autumn 2026

pkaufman@richmond.edu -- (919) 357--1594 -- <https://peteriverkaufman.com>

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 . . . slow to project . . . quick to assume there is a significance, slow to generalize about it. For a flat, generalizing view of the past makes it boring, whereas amazement yearns toward 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 chief 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?

Robert Frost: “So altruistically moral, I never take my own side in a quarrel”

What’s the use of having a side, an informed, transferable “side” if you won’t take it when challenged (“in a quarrel”)? Is it “altruistic” to withhold your opinion or disrepute? Or irresponsible? When and how (tentatively) should leaders explicitly take and stand by their sides? The situation, you might say, should dictate, so let’s map out some situations?

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?

Bertolt Brecht: “power comes from the people, but where does it go?”

How far does it go? Into the hands of the people’s representatives? Under what conditions does it go (seldom, if ever, to return) into authoritarians’ or the elites’ inner circles? Or is it a tribute to the craft (cunning) of elite or inner circles or of peoples’ representatives that power only appears to come from “their” people?

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 whatever it touches.”

Yet leaders we admire seek power to do good, to lower barriers to noble enterprise.

Nomi Claire Lazar: “When order fractures [and] when ‘the time is out of joint,’ as Hamlet put it, then . . . leaders can use temporal-rhetorical framing to create the perception that order will be restored.”

This seems a golden opportunity for leaders to play upon their followers’ desires (or to create them) for “restorative nostalgia? It also provides incentives for leaders to fracture time or create the impression that their innovations will restore order. What methods might we expect them to use?

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 anyone object that they are docile 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 assignments listed below and from current events.

BUT answers won't establish the foundation of leadership studies. The asking might. And the conversations generated by our asking will likely problematize some ideas we take for granted while prompting confrontations with 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 part of your semester and before you strap yourselves into the course, please check the following 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.

2 Mid-term oral exams. You'll be divided randomly into pods and meet with the instructor. Interlocutors earn up to 16 points per exam by sounding informed and wise but also by helping to prepare your pod colleagues for a challenging conversation. (see the schedule below)

8 participation exercises: 6 points each; formats may vary, but the "ask" is: have you completed the day's assignment thoughtfully? Usually, exercises will be completed mid-session, enabling you to relate undiscussed parts of your assignments with those already covered in class conversations. But exercises may also launch or conclude our conversations. I'll circulate an assortment of questions or suggestions that should assist you to capture the critical themes in your assignments and to contextualize them, but exercises also invite your take on what you've read and watched. Make-ups scheduled Dec 8 for colleagues absent due to disease, family crises, UR responsibilities.

Final EXAM 20 points. At the time scheduled by the university for the final, you'll answer several questions, drawing from any assignments you'd consider significant to the prompts. You'll write for 2 hours, then, to assist your reader, you'll type what you wrote and send as an email attachment during the third hour. Both your written and typed responses to the exam prompts will be submitted together.

If you miss one or more participation exercise(s) due to an excused absence for university travel or health, you'll complete a make-up on Thursday, Nov. 19. Persons who miss an oral exam will be assigned a paper, 2,000 +/- to be submitted before exams wrap up.

Several taboos: late arrivals, early departures, 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)

Plato, **THE APOLOGY**

Hannah Arendt, **EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM**

Justin Driver, **THE FALL OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

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?

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Aug 25: course introduction

Aug 27: (Re)read the syllabus, pp 1-3. Select the two quotes (with the questions/annotations that follow each) that you'd like to discuss.

Sept 1: Read Muller's WHAT IS POPULISM (e-book--be sure you've a clear understanding of the positions populists peddle; note especially, pp. 1-32 and 60-93; then read on Canvas/Blackboard (hereafter C/B), Daniel Trilling's essay on fascism (What distinguishes populism from fascism?); finally, read ALL THE KING'S MEN, chapters 1 and 2

Sept 3: relax.

Sept 8: Read ALL THE KING'S MEN, chapters 3-6

Sept 10: Watch IDES OF MARCH

Sept 15: Read KING'S MEN, chapters 7-8 (you'll be responsible for finishing the novel for the second oral exams, Dec. 1 thru 8) and watch PRIMARY COLORS

Sept 17: relax

Sept 22: Read Plato's APOLOGY; I.F. Stone's "A Wild Goose Chase" (C/B); Nikhil Krishnan's "Start Making Sense" (C/B); and Machiavelli's PRINCE, chapters 3-8 and 14-17.

Sept 24: Read the PRINCE, chapters 20-26.

Sept 29: Read Thomas More's UTOPIA, book 1 and any 30 consecutive pages of book 2.

Oct 1, 6, 8: oral exams TBA-- no regular classes

Mid-term break

Oct 15: Read Mark Edmundson's "On the Uses of a Liberal Education as Lite Entertainment" (B/C) and Wendy Brown's "Undoing Democracy" (B/C).

Oct 20: Read the first two chapters of Justin Driver's FALL OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (e-book).

Oct 22: Read Driver's FALL, chapter 4, pp. 166-83 and "Class Wars" (B/C)

Oct 27: Read Shakespeare's CORIOLANUS, act 1, scene 1 and acts 2 and 3.

Oct 29: Watch the film V FOR VENDETTA.

Nov 3: Read Jeffrey Rosen's PURSUIT OF LIBERTY, chapters 1 and 2 (C/B).

Nov 5: relax

Nov 10: Read C. Wright Mills, THE POWER ELITE, chapters 13-15, e-book.

Nov 12: Read Ari Adut's "Critique" (C/B).

Nov 17: Read Hannah Arendt's EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM, chapters 1-3, 7-8, 15 and the epilogue.

Nov 19: Watch SWING KIDS

T U R K E Y

Nov 30 - Dec 7: oral exams

Dec 8: Participation exercises: make-ups.

Final exams

Section 5: Monday, Dec 14, 2PM

Section 7: Thursday, Dec 17, 9AM.

The university asks that I include the optimal learning outcomes for this class; so, here they are.

1. Students will analyze questions about past events, ideas, and human worlds (political, cultural, social, economic, and/or physical).
2. Students will demonstrate historical thinking by contextualizing and analyzing primary sources and evaluating the nature and limits of historical evidence.
3. Students will apply interpretations and methods employed in the given area of historical study.
4. Students will formulate, advance, and properly document historical arguments, drawing on a combination of primary sources, secondary sources, and other research materials appropriate to the given area of historical study.

The Faculty Senate asks that I post AI rules and regulations for this course, but there are none. I will discuss the (dis)advantages of using AI during the first week.

