

LDST101 Historical Foundations of Leadership
University of Richmond
Spring 2026

Dr. Nicholas Baker
Weinstein Hall, room 102D
nbaker2@richmond.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 2pm-3pm

In a 2019 book, James Hankins coined and defined the term *virtue politics* to describe the pursuit of a curriculum that would educate better leaders for the societies of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy. The basis of this curriculum was immersion in the writings of classical Greece and Rome. From the Italian Renaissance to the early twentieth century, this curriculum, or something like it, remained the ideal (and idealized) preparation for political leadership. This semester we will explore why and how this classical tradition of virtue politics developed focusing on first-century BCE Rome, Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the British colonies in North America and the early United States in the eighteenth century. We will explore this trajectory in a reverse chronology, starting in eighteenth-century North America and concluding in first-century BCE Rome. Yes, this sounds like a survey only of elite white men, but it won't be.

What I hope you will get from this class

1. A small community that appreciates the fun of learning.
2. An understanding and evaluation of the concept virtue politics.
3. The ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate a variety of texts, both secondary and primary, on the manifestation of virtue politics in three historical periods.
4. The ability to demonstrate historical thinking, historical understanding, and critical analysis in written work and classroom discussions.

Learning Outcomes for Historical Inquiry Courses

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.

Readings

Cicero *On the Good Life* (Penguin, 1971)

Jeffrey Rosen *The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America* (Simon & Schuster, 2024)

The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978)

The Jepson School will supply each of you with a copy of Rosen. You need to purchase the other two books – they are not in the Spider Store but are available in the all the usual places.

All other readings will be provided digitally via BlackBoard.

Note that some of the readings/images we will encounter are historical texts (primary sources) and so reflect the ideas, cultures, societies of the distant past and times and places very different to our own. They may contain sentiments, ideas, or actions that are challenging, upsetting, or even offensive to us. This is particularly true of the myths and literature of classical antiquity. Some of the historical analysis that we will read may include descriptions of similarly challenging or upsetting ideas and actions.

Weekly Work

1. Read

Please complete the reading for each week before the class meeting indicated in the schedule. Active, engaged reading is crucial: take notes, mark-up and write all over your books or readings. Reading is the foundation for everything else we will do this semester.

2. Question

For Weeks 2-13 (excluding Spring Break), you need to bring a hand-written question/discussion prompt designed to provoke conversation to each class based on the assigned reading for that class. This is your ticket to class, and you need to submit it to me before we begin for the day. The question/prompt needs to be a thought-provoking query or statement on the assigned reading. It must include a specific quote and page number from the reading. This reference can be part of the question/prompt or appended to it. Each question/prompt will receive a simple letter grade (A-D). The best seventeen (17) of a possible twenty-one (21) will count toward your final grade.

3. Discuss

Active participation in our class meetings is necessary for this course. We always learn more in a community than alone. Simply attending class is not participating in class.

- Bring an open mind, the assigned reading, and any notes to class.
- Come prepared to offer and discuss specific examples or evidence.
- Bring any questions that you have.

Written Assessments

In addition to the questions/prompts (see above), you will submit the following assessments

1. Two in-class tests in Weeks 4 and 8. Full details will be available on BlackBoard.
2. Research Presentation: A ten-minute presentation based on research into one of the three case studies we are exploring (eighteenth-century America, Renaissance Italy, first-century Roman republic). Full details will be available on BlackBoard. Presentations will occur in Weeks 14 and 15. Presentation order will be assigned randomly.
3. Reflection: A 1000-word critical reflection on the theme of virtue politics in history. Full details will be available on BlackBoard. Due 29 April.

Honor Code

All work submitted for this class should be done in accordance with the Honor Code. Any potential violation of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Council for investigation.

Generative AI

For assessment in this class, Large Language Models (LLMs, misleadingly called Generative AI) may **only** be used in the following manner:

1. Brainstorm preliminary ideas and avenues for assessment tasks.
2. Edit a working draft that you have written.
3. As research assistant to aid you in identifying potentially useful texts and sources for assessment tasks.

The following uses are unacceptable and will be considered a potential violation of the Honor Code:

1. Generate **any** portion of writing submitted as part of an assessment.
2. Generate summaries of any assigned reading or any text/source that you are using for an assessment as an alternative to you reading it yourself.

Any LLM tool used must be identified and acknowledged on the submitted assessment. Students should preserve copies of all logs produced when using LLM and submit them with the assignment.

Note, we will discuss the potential and problems of LLMs in our first meeting.

Grades

Questions/Prompts 15% (weighted average of seventeen)

Class participation 15%

Two in-class tests 30% (15% per test)

Presentation 25%

Reflection 15%

If you are having trouble meeting a deadline for any class task, please talk with me before the assignment is due – see Life Happens below. Submitting work late without discussing an extension with me will negatively affect your grade for that task.

Life Happens

Life happens. We all know this. Sometimes life gets in the way of academic work, sometimes something else in your life is more important than writing a paper or critical reflection for this class. Hopefully, nothing like this will happen to you this semester, but if it should, please talk with me as soon as possible so that we can work out the best way to keep you on track for the semester. I'm not qualified to solve the problems that life might throw at you and I don't need to know the details, but I can certainly help make sure that work for this class doesn't make things harder. Aside from life, almost all problems related to academic work are easily resolvable, but I can't help you if I don't know there is a problem.

Note, if you email me after 5pm Mon-Thu, expect an answer the following morning. If you email me after 5pm on Friday or anytime Saturday or Sunday, expect an answer on Monday morning. There is nothing that we do in this class that is so urgent that it requires 24/7 email access.

Class Schedule

Please note that the schedule may be modified if necessary.

<i>Class meeting</i>	<i>Reading and class preparation</i>	<i>Other information and reminders</i>
Virtue Politics in Eighteenth-Century America		
Week 1		
Tue 13 Jan	N/A	
Thu 15 Jan	Schein "Canon, Class, and Ideology"	
Week 2		
Tue 20 Jan	Rosen <i>Pursuit</i> cc. 1-3	
Thu 22 Jan	Rosen <i>Pursuit</i> Ch. 4	
Week 3		
Tue 27 Jan	Rosen <i>Pursuit</i> cc. 5-6	
Thu 29 Jan	Rosen <i>Pursuit</i> Ch. 7	
Week 4		
Tue 3 Feb	Winterer, <i>Mirror of Antiquity</i> , Ch. 1 Wheatley Poems: "To William, earl of Dartmouth," "To his excellency, General Washington," "On the Capture of General Lee," "On the Death of General Wooster"	You must attend Jeffrey Rosen's lecture this week: Wed 4 Feb, 4:30pm, Ukrop Auditorium
Thu 5 Feb	*First In-Class Test*	
Virtue Politics in Renaissance Italy		
Week 5		
Tue 10 Feb	Hankins <i>Virtue Politics</i> Ch. 1	

Thu 12 Feb	Hankins <i>Virtue Politics</i> Ch. 2	
Week 6		
Tue 17 Feb	Petrarch in <i>Earthly Republic</i>	
Thu 19 Feb	*No class: Dr. Baker will be at a conference in San Francisco.*	
Week 7		
Tue 24 Feb	Loschi in <i>Earthly Republic</i>	
Thu 26 Feb	Poliziano in <i>Earthly Republic</i>	
Week 8		
Tue 3 Mar	Ross "Throwing Aristotle from the Train" Cereta <i>Collected Letters</i> , Letters 18, 35-56	
Thu 5 Mar	*Second In-Class Test*	
Week 9: **SPRING BREAK 9-13 MARCH**		
Virtue Politics in Late Republican Rome		
Week 10		
Tue 17 Mar	Goodman cc. 3-4	
Thu 19 Mar	Schofield <i>Cicero's Political Philosophy</i> Ch. 1	
Week 11		
Tue 24 Mar	Cicero, <i>Good Life</i> pp 49-116	
Thu 26 Mar	Cicero, <i>Good Life</i> , pp 117-139	
Week 12		
Tue 31 Mar	Cicero <i>Good Life</i> , pp. 139-171	
Thu 2 Apr	Hemelrijk, <i>Matrona docta</i> , Ch. 3	
Week 13		
Tue 7 Apr	Plutarch "Life of Lycurgus" Plutarch "Life of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus"	Pay attention to the women!
Thu 9 Apr	Rosen, <i>Pursuit</i> , Ch. 12	
Week 14		
Tue 14 Apr	Presentations	
Thu 16 Apr	Presentations	
Week 15		
Tue 21 Apr	Presentations	
Thu 23 Apr	Presentations	

Full Bibliographic Details for Reading Assignments

Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, translated and edited by Diana Robin (University of Chicago Press, 1997)

Cicero, *On the Good Life*, translated by Michael Grant (Penguin, 1971).

The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society, edited by Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

James Hankins, *Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy* (Belknap Press, 2019).

Martin Goodman *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 150* (Routledge, 2012).

Emily A. Hemelrijk, *Matrona docta: Educated Women in the Roman Elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (Routledge, 1999).

Plutarch, *Greek Lives*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 1998)

Plutarch, *Roman Lives*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 1999)

Jeffrey Rosen, *The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America* (Simon & Schuster, 2024).

Sarah Gwyneth Ross “Throwing Aristotle from the Train,” in *The Routledge History of the Renaissance*, ed. William Caferro (Routledge, 2017).

Seth L. Schein, “‘Our debt to Greece and Rome’: Canon, Class, and Ideology,” in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, edited by Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Blackwell, 2008).

Philip Schofield, *Cicero: Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Phillis Wheatley *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*, ed. Julian D. Mason Jr. (University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750–1900* (Cornell University Press, 2018).

Jepson School of Leadership Studies

Common Syllabus Insert

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

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/

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

Addressing Microaggressions on Campus

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.¹ Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups.² Furthermore, both students and faculty that are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world).³ A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism.⁴

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To this end, the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion (SCEI) was created in 2021 and offers ongoing support and assistance for a diverse student body.⁵ With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

¹Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The Case for Cultural Competency in Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 525–548. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651>

²Bergom, I., Wright, M.C., Brown, M.K. and Brooks, M. (2011), Promoting college student development through collaborative learning: A case study of *hevruta*. *About Campus*, 15: 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044>

³Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 57–66.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>

⁴Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, 1(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106>

⁵ <https://inclusion.richmond.edu/>

*Updated 8/2025



The Weinstein Learning Center is your go-to destination for academic support. Our services are tailored to help you achieve your academic goals throughout your time at the University of Richmond. To learn more and view service schedules and appointment times, visit wlc.richmond.edu. Available services are outlined below.

Academic Coaching

Meet with a professional staff member who will collaborate with you to assess and develop your academic and life skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, and more).

Content Tutoring

Peer consultants offer assistance in specific courses and subject areas. They are available for appointments (in person and virtual) and drop-in sessions. See schedules at wlc.richmond.edu for supported courses and drop-in times.

English Language and Intercultural Learning

Attend one-on-one or group consultations, workshops, and other services focused on English, academic, and intercultural skills.

Quantitative and Programming Resources

Peer consultants and professional staff offer workshops or one-on-one appointments to build quantitative and programming skills and provide statistical support for research projects.

Speech

Prepare and practice for academic presentations, speaking engagements, and other occasions of public expression. Peer consultants offer recording, playback, and coaching for both individual and group presentations. Students can expect recommendations regarding clarity, organization, style, and delivery.

Technology Studio

Visit our student lab dedicated to supporting digital media projects. Services include camera checkout, video/audio recording assistance, use of virtual reality equipment, poster printing, 3D printing and modeling, and consultation services on a variety of software.

Writing

Assists student writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Meet with peer consultants who can offer feedback on written work and suggest pre-writing, drafting, and revision strategies.