

## LDST 101- Leadership and the Humanities-- spring 2026

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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 impostaers 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?*

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

*Into the hands of the people’s representatives? Under what conditions does it go(seldom, if ever, to return) into authoritarians’ inner circles? Or is it a testament to the shrewdness of that inner circles or--for that matter--to the cunning of peoples’ representatives that power only seems to come from the 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 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?*

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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?*

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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, 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.

**2 Mid-term oral exams.** You'll be divided randomly into pods and meet with the instructor. Interlocutors earn up to 20 points per exam by sounding informed and wise but also by helping your pod colleagues do so as well.

**6 participation exercises:** 5 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.

For example, let's say you're assigned the quotes at the front of the syllabus. The prompt might ask you to relate three terms or authors to each other and to a significant theme in the class: **democracy, Shaw, and Pericles**. And one reasonable response: "Perhaps the reason that 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 leaders were less like Pericles or, on the contrary, if leaders, as he did, led without catering to constituents?"

**Final Paper**, 30 points. By noon, April 27, you'll submit a PDF or Word document (as an email attachment) responding to a paper prompt circulated a week or three 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. SO, CONSULT THE SCHEDULE FOR YOUR SECTION'S FINAL EXAMS AND PLAN YOUR DEPARTURES ACCORDINGLY, in case you miss a quiz.

### **Several taboos: late arrivals, early departures, 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)

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

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.

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

January 13: introduction, The syllabus and your questions arising therefrom

January 15: Read “What do Populists Claim . . . ” pp. 25-32, blackboard

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Jan 20: Read Thomas More's **Utopia**, all of book 1 and any 25 consecutive pages of book 2.

Jan 22: Watch the first hour and ten minutes of the film “Coriolanus” and read Act 1 scene 1 and Act 3, scene 3.

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Jan 27: Read Hannah Arendt's **Eichmann in Jerusalem**, chapters 1-3, 5, and 8; watch the film “V for Vendetta.”

Jan. 29: Watch the film “Swing Kids.”

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February 3: Read Rosen's **Pursuit of Liberty** (books to be distributed to you) chapters 1 and 2, chapter 3, pp. 68-77, and the book's conclusion.

Attend one of Rosen's conversations, February 4

February 5: no assignment

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Feb 10: Read Robert Penn Warren's **All the King's Men**, chapters 1-4.

Feb 12: Watch "The Ides of March."

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Feb 17: Read **All the King's Men**, chapters 5-7 (finish the novel by the second oral).

Feb 19 through March 2, no classes: oral exams to be scheduled.

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March 3: Read Michael Klarman's "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis"; C Vann Woodward's chapter, "Capitulation to Racism," in **The Strange Career of Jim Crow**; and Booker T Washington's "Atlanta Exposition Address."

March 5: Watch "Dry White Season"

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Have a great Break

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Mar 17: Read Mark Edmundson's "On the Uses of a Liberal Arts Education as Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students"

Mar 19: Read Wendy Brown's "Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism's Remaking of State and Subject"

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Mar 24: Read C Wright Mills, **The Power Elite**, chapters 14 and 15

Mar 26: Read Ari Adut's **Reign of Appearances**, pp. 1-14

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March 31: Read Machiavelli's **Prince**, books 1 - 23

April 1: **Prince**, books 24 - 26 and watch the film "Primary Colors."

- [Primary Colors](#)

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April 7: Read Anne Applebaum's **Twilight of Democracy, The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism**

April 9: Read Susan Stokes, "Psychological Bases for Support for Backsliders," pp, 159 - 81.

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April 14 - 21: no classes, but prepare for your second oral exams, this week thru April 21. Start work on your final paper, due April 27.

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April 23: Read Daniel Trilling, "Is This Fascism," pp. 1-11.