Leadership and the Social Sciences

Don Forsyth, Instructor

Spring 2011

Course Description
Introduction to the study of leadership through theoretical and empirical explorations of social interaction. Readings selected from anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology. Emphasis on advancing the understanding of leadership through an increased appreciation of the rich complexities of human behavior. This course may be taken before or after LDST 101.

Course Goals

Content

Scholars and sages have long puzzled over the nature of leadership. Philosophers raised questions about the nature of leadership itself: its rationality, its utility, and its moral implications; political theorists examined such processes as justice, rights, law, and authority; historians studied the life course of those individuals who were able to change the outcomes of events both large and small. But in the 1900s these scholars were joined by researchers who took an empirical, social science, approach to leadership.

One of the primary aims of this course is to review the results of their work, as well as examine the methods they use to extend our understanding of leadership. We will consider basic questions about human behavior, in general, and leadership, specifically.

Topics will include:
- What is leadership, and how do different societies conceptualized leadership?
- How can leadership be studied, scientifically?
- Why do people follow leaders?
- Do leaders have distinctive personalities?
- How do leaders communicate with, and persuade, others?
- Why do leaders emerge within bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states?
- Are women and men equally suited to lead?
- Does leadership have genetic and/or evolutionary roots?
- What theories have been developed to explain leadership?

Process

Beyond declarative content—the facts, theories, and findings—we will also examine the process of leadership study: how social scientists generate theories and do research. We will not only learn things like “Theory Y predicts this will happen” or “Such and such study supported this hypothesis,” but also the assumptions that guide the research. We will therefore spend considerable time examining research methods per se, including the use of data and statistics to test hypotheses about leadership processes.

Skills

I hope you will participate actively in this course, and so develop a number of academic and scholarly skills, including gains in critical thinking, ethical thought, writing and communication, information search and retrieval, technological skills, skill in conducting scientific research (including data collection and literature review), and study skills. You may also develop leadership skills, but this course is not a “how to lead” course.

Course “Mission”

The course is a key component of the overall University of Richmond curriculum. Hence, it sustains “a collaborative learning and research community that supports the personal development of its members and the creation of new knowledge. A Richmond education prepares students to live lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a global and pluralistic society.” As a course in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, this course strives to educate people “for and about leadership”. The key word in the name is studies.
Leadership and the Social Sciences

**Topics**

LDST101 examines the philosophy, history, and political side of leadership. LDST102 (this course!) examines leadership from the perspective of the social sciences, so we will be searching through all the social sciences (anthropology, economics, sociology, history, political science, geography, psychology, and others) for theory and research pertaining to leadership in all its many and varied forms. We will examine theories of human behavior, in general, and how they apply to leadership processes.

Examples of topics we'll be considering follow.

- Authority, Obedience, and Leadership
- Dark Side of Leaders’ Personalities
- Do Leaders Make a Difference?
- Do People Need Leaders?
- Empirical Procedures in Studying Leadership
- Endorsing Leaders
- Ethics of Leadership
- Evolutionary Perspectives
- Followership
- How Effective Are Leaders?
- Inequities and Leadership
- Influence and Persuasion
- Intelligence and Leadership
- Leadership across Cultures
- Leaders as Skilled Decision Makers
- Men, Women, and Leadership
- Neuropsychology of Leadership
- Origins of Leadership in Human Society
- Perceiving & Evaluating Leaders
- Personality, Situations, and Experiences
- Power and Leadership
- Research Methods
- Self-presentation Processes
- Social Identity and Leadership
- Status and Hierarchy
- Strengthening the Relational Side of Leadership

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### The Big Picture

University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life.

It teaches us to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophisticated, and to discard what is irrelevant.

It prepares us to fill any post with credit and to master any subject with facility.

It shows us how to accommodate ourselves to others, how to throw ourselves into their state of mind, how to bring before them our own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, and how to bear with them.

The educated person is at home in any society, has common ground with every class, knows when to speak and when to be silent, is able to converse, is able to listen, can ask a question pertinently, and gain a lesson seasonably when he or she has nothing to impart.

Cardinal Newman, 1852

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### Text and Readings

You will acquire much of your information about leadership, both in this class and for the rest of your life, by reading and studying texts. This course uses books, articles, and online sources. The two required books are:

- *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, by Dale Carnegie (978-0-671-02703-2)

Since the best work in a science is published in journals and book chapters, we will supplement these books with specific readings. Only “real” readings will be assigned: if we aren’t going to examine the reading, then I identify the reading as “optional” and you won’t be required to know its content. The readings are original source papers and chapters and selected to give you an “inside look” at how social science is done.

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### Teaching and Learning Methods

We will use a variety of structured learning experiences to achieve course goals, including lecture, discussions, demonstrations, activities, projects, and audiovisual events. Our class sessions serve several purposes: they clarify difficult topics discussed in the readings, raise questions about the scientific method, stimulate you to think critically about leadership, and provide you with the opportunity to express your understanding of leadership in your own words. It is essential that you prepare for class by doing reading, reviewing, and analyzing the assigned topic prior to the class. The amount of time you need to set aside to prepare will depend on your background in social science.

We will also do things beyond the confines of the class, depending on availability. We may, for example, conduct research projects to further examine questions raised by readings, and attend presentations by experts visiting campus. Also, this class uses World Wide Web-based instruction extensively.

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### Donelson R. Forsyth, Professor

Don is a social psychologist who studies leadership, ethics, group dynamics, and a variety of other interpersonal processes. He received his BS from Florida State University and his Ph.D. from the University of Florida. He holds the Leo K. and Gaylee Thorsness Chair in Ethical Leadership.

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Email: dforsyth@richmond.edu
Office Hours: WF AM and online
We will carry out a variety of activities during the semester, including quizzes, exams, papers, etc. In some cases some of these projects may be completed by groups rather than individuals.

Quizzes: usually administered online, open book, 10 questions typically

Short papers and/or journal: reaction papers, brief summaries of readings, self-assessments, reports on short term projects, and/or weekly reflections (usually submitted via Blackboard)

Events: The Jepson School is based on an academic “commons” model, so it assumes that students are engaged in learning both in and out of class. Students will be asked to attend several “events” that occur outside of regular class hours.

Exams: We will have 2 or 3 examinations. Items on the tests will cover all course material, no matter what its source (e.g., lecture, text, video). Exams will be multiple choice and/or short answer.

Research: Students are required to take part in research and/or attend local and/or regional presentations of research. The research requirement is

In general—but not entirely—grades will be criterion-referenced, individualized, and teacher-generated. First, most of the grading in this class is not normed, but in some cases members’ scores will be determined by relative rank. Second, scores will be based on individual and collective work. Third, in some cases a portion of your grade will be based on others’ evaluations of your work.

This course deals with complex subjects and is challenging and you should budget your time demands accordingly. Cut offs for grades are etched in stone, and based on the following percents.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92 to 97.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 to 91.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88 to 89.9%</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>82 to 87.9%</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80 to 81.9%</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>68 to 69.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62 to 67.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 to 61.9%</td>
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</tbody>
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If logistical problems arise (or errors in planning must be corrected), then this system may be revised. You will be notified, in class, of any changes. There is no “extra credit” in this class.

This course deals with complex subjects pertaining to human behavior, so students should realize that they may acquire insight into their own personalities, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. We will often focus on very sensitive issues, including religious values, human nature, morality, values, and what not. All of us should strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions. As a general rule, the goals of any particular exercise will be described beforehand except when full disclosure in advance will undermine the educational or scientific value of the

Sensitivity. This course examines sensitive topics pertaining to human behavior, so students should realize that they may acquire insight into their own personalities, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. We will often focus on very sensitive issues, including religious values, human nature, morality, values, and what not. All of us should strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions. As a general rule, the goals of any particular exercise will be described beforehand except when full disclosure in advance will undermine the educational or scientific value of the

Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require I provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking such adjustments or accommodations should follow the procedures established by the University, and contact me as soon as possible so that adjustments or accommodations can be arranged.
As the instructor, I will help you learn the course material by giving lectures, leading discussions, assigning activities that ask you to think about leadership processes, answering your questions, and giving you feedback about your progress towards your goals. Remember that my primary responsibility is to help you learn about (a) leadership processes, (b) the social science of leadership, and (c) to think critically, and scientifically, about leadership processes and claims about leadership processes. If you have any questions about course material, please email me, call, or come to my office.

Student Responsibilities

You are responsible for completing the assigned readings, coming to class, studying the material, taking the required examinations, completing the assigned activities, and logging into Blackboard regularly. Your task of learning will be much easier if you (a) ask me questions about the readings and topics; (b) keep up with the readings; (c) communicate with classmates regularly; (d) talk to me during office hours; and (e) take advantage of electronic resources available to you. This course will require between 20 and 25% of your week’s time spent on academics, and more if you are unfamiliar with the methods of social science, just beginning advanced studies, or a relative slow reader. Budget your time accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your learning in this class: if you earn an A you can be proud of your accomplishment, but should you fail you will have to bear the blame.

Policies

- Please plan to arrive on time and remain until the final minute of class.
- If you must be absent from class for religious reasons, because you are involved in University-level athletics, or some other good reason, inform me by email of the conflict.
- If you are ill on the day of an examination, leave a voice mail message prior to the class.
- Our classroom is OUR space so do not communicate with non class members during class time. In other words, you are welcome to use a laptop device in class, but use it only for these 3 purposes: taking/displaying your notes, displaying the readings, and visiting Wikipedia. Never open email, facebook, or any other site during class.
- Please be certain to review and comply with the University’s academic integrity policy.
- Please heed the basic rules of etiquette pertaining to class discussion.

Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 12-14</td>
<td>What is leadership?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 19-21</td>
<td>What are the social sciences?</td>
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<td>Jan 26-28</td>
<td>What is the “science” of leadership?</td>
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<td>Feb 2-4</td>
<td>Using data to test theories of leadership</td>
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<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Is leadership in the eye of the beholder?</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Test One</td>
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<td>Feb 16-18</td>
<td>Is leadership part of human nature?</td>
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<td>Feb 23-25</td>
<td>Why do people follow leaders?</td>
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<td>Mar 2-4</td>
<td>Who will lead?</td>
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<td>Mar 16-23</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar 25</td>
<td>Test Two</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 30-Apr 1</td>
<td>How do leaders establish their status and identity?</td>
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<td>April 6-8</td>
<td>How do leaders claim identities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 13-15</td>
<td>How do leaders influence followers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 20-22</td>
<td>How do leaders win friends and influence people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>Final Exam, 7 PM</td>
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"If you cannot control the urge to check your email and messages during class, do not bring your laptop or smart-phone."