

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP: LEADING FROM CENTER
PUBP 502 – ODKM Executive class – Summer 2007

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Summer 2007

Professor: *Mikaela Seligman, MPA, CC*
Class Location: Arlington campus
Class Time: Fridays 5-10 PM - 5/25, 6/22, 7/13
Saturdays 9-5 PM - 5/26, 6/23, 7/14

E-mail: mikaela@tenconversations.com
Telephone: (202) 550-2720
Office hours: By appointment

*"If you want to be a leader...
Stop trying to control.
Let go of fixed plans and concepts,
And the world will govern itself."
Tao Te Ch'ing*

"I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." Oliver Wendell Holmes

"How can I remain unmoving until the right action appears all by itself?" Lao Tzu

"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better." Samuel Beckett

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Leadership. We hold the formal positions and have the titles that suggest we are leaders. Many in the OD and KM program work with those in the positions at the top of organizations and institutions. But, are we exercising the leadership that is required to create the world we seek to leave to the next generation? How are our definitions or past experiences of leadership helping or hindering our progress? What can we learn not only by expanding how we define leadership, but by broadening our awareness of ourselves as leaders and our experience with different leadership models?

The course will respond to these questions and others by focusing on leading in these complex and uncertain times. The challenges we face are often undefined and hard to identify clearly. They require the work of more than experts called in to "fix" problems. They involve challenging people above and below the neck and choosing between seemingly competing or contradictory values. Often, those "leading" are not those in charge. Busting the myth of leader as hero, lone agent, or the person born with the "right traits," we will explore leaders as artists, innovators, teachers, coaches and stewards. We will develop ways of seeing and mobilizing our communities to

find a new way forward in facing some of our greatest social and organizational challenges.

Through “case-in-point” classroom learning (large and small group) and other assigned readings and activities, students will identify, understand, and use or reshape established patterns and tendencies; heretofore “blind spots;” preferred styles of leadership, experiences with others at differing levels of formal authority; and individual strengths/weaknesses. Students in this course will ultimately be asked to discover and define their own leadership path and will be prepared to exercise leadership in a range of cultural and organizational contexts, with new awareness, practices, competencies and tools.

The course offers students the opportunity to see how groups in organizations resonate with different factions and give them insights into approaching these factions differently. It also builds a container in which feedback can be requested and given honestly and completely. In this way, students will have the opportunity to see themselves as they are seen.

The objectives of the course include learning to:

- ❖ Diagnose complex leadership challenges by seeing the factions, the values, and the work and the loss that groups are facing in the midst of rapid and constant change
- ❖ Use self as data and recognize opportunities to learn/intervene effectively in real time
- ❖ Develop a practice of responding in a way that accounts for the entire system (organization, community, society)
- ❖ Lead from a place of center --- one’s core values, beliefs, aspirations and ambitions
- ❖ Give and receive useful and focused feedback
- ❖ Build trust in a range of contexts and cultures

The course prepares students to:

- ❖ See clear distinctions between adaptive and technical work; authority and leadership; and how these distinctions pave a clearer path for results
- ❖ Listen beneath the words – understand the deeper issues that organizations present and how to address them
- ❖ Partner effectively across lines of authority in and outside organizations
- ❖ Have courageous and effective conversations up, down and across the hierarchical chain in organizations
- ❖ Identify and work with dissonant voices – including all team members in forward motion

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Students will learn through a variety of means, including lectures, personal case analyses, readings, films and audio portions, structured exercises and experience. The course has a strong experiential component. Students are expected to use the

actual dynamics of the class as data to explore the principles of stewardship, role, authority, power, factions, work and work avoidance, group learning and adaptive work. In addition, to mine the richness of the individual student experiences, students will present their personal leadership case studies to a small peer consultation group that will meet during each class session.

Course readings:

Required books are listed below.

- Heifetz, Ronald A. (1997). *Leadership Without Easy Answers*.
- Pink, Daniel (2006). *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*

Additional required readings listed in syllabus below. Optional reading list available after Session One.

Course Assignments:

This section provides specific information on what is expected for successful participation and completion of assignments.

Classroom work

Evaluation of classroom work is based upon how much and how well the student supports the learning of other students through powerful questions, comments and reflective practice. I will look at how students intervene to create learning for others and how well they build upon course readings and concepts in the class conversation.

Small group consultation sessions and written analyses

The class will be randomly divided into small groups of 5-6 students. The small groups will meet during class for 1.5 hours each session. The purpose of these sessions is to give students a laboratory to:

1. Apply what you learn in class and in the readings to your professional experiences;
2. Explore ways to exercise leadership with and without authority;
3. Discover and analyze the dynamics of how groups accomplish and avoid adaptive work.

Each student prepares a case study from his or her professional experience and presents it to the group for consultation. One student serves as a chairperson for the group on a rotating basis. The process for conducting these student-guided groups will be described in greater detail in the first class. Please bring your first attempt at the case study, as included in assignments below, to the first class. We will build on this model throughout the term.

There will also be a full class debriefing in which the whole class participates in analyzing a student case in depth.

Following each session, students will submit written case study analyses for the two cases presented that course weekend. We will also review the format for this during the first class.

Reflection pieces

The first of these pieces is the no more than one page assignment of two questions on leadership, due in advance of Session One. In addition, there will be one other short piece reflecting on students' learning in class and associated aspirations or ambitions for applying this work in their professional lives.

Final projects

Due July 25. Purpose and form to be discussed in Session One.

Course Evaluation:

Classroom work	30%
Written analyses of the consultation group sessions	30%
Reflection pieces	15%
Final projects/papers	25%

For the first written assignments, please submit electronically. During class, we will identify the best way to submit moving forward. All work should be **double-spaced in 11-12 font and without extra folders or covers**. Also, always include a bibliography listing any sources (including the assigned class readings) that you use other than your own ideas. Please use the most recent version of the ***Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association or Chicago Manual of Style***.

Students with special needs:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

University policy on plagiarism:

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

(<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>)

SYLLABUS

SESSION ONE, 5/25 and 5/26

Leading in Complexity

Readings

Heifetz – Introduction and Chapters 1-4

Pink – Introduction, Part 1 and Part 2 pages 65-157

(Feel free to skim "portfolio" sections)

http://www.velinperformance.com/downloads/chris_argyris_learning.pdf

(You are invited, but not required, to read COMMENTARY at the end)

Two separate written assignments due before class (Email by 5/22)

Complete a one to two page case study using Case Study Guide at end of syllabus.

Respond to the following two questions in no more than one page total:

- Where in your life are you a leader? Where are you not?
- Where in your life have you read about/seen or known of someone exercising leadership effectively – what were the elements that made it "effective"?

Key Themes

Authority and leadership

Adaptive and technical work

Using ourselves as data
The role of the dissonant voice
Getting to the balcony
Using the case study approach
Work and work avoidance
Using partners
Handing the work back
Defining final projects/papers

Assignments due following class

Small group analyses – Due on June 8

SESSION TWO 6/22 and 6/23

Stepping into your leadership

Readings

Heifetz – Chapters 5-7

Pink – pp 157-247 (again, skim portfolio sections as you find useful)

Goleman, Daniel *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* **E-reserves**

Wheatley, Margaret, *Finding our Way*, “Leadership in Turbulent Times is Spiritual” **E-reserves**

Download article below:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/29/AR2006052900757.html>

Key themes

Working across six styles of leadership (EQ)

The Practice of leading as coach

Pacing the work

Generating trust

Focusing attention

The ripening of an issue

Protecting dissonant voices

Leadership pitfalls

Assignments due following class

Small group analyses – Due on July 6

SESSION THREE – 7/13 and 7/14

Surviving and thriving in organizations

Readings

Heifetz – Chapters 8-11

Gillette, Jonathon and McCollom, Marion, *Groups in Context*, Termination in Groups **E-reserves**

Download the following piece
<http://www.berkana.org/resources/corepractices.html>

Key themes

Leading without authority
Externalizing the conflict
Regulating distress
Becoming a lightning rod
Mobilizing groups effectively
How do we stay alive?
Sustaining others and ourselves
Distinguishing self from role
Creating sanctuary
Holding onto purpose

Assignments due following class

Small group analyses and Final Project – Due on
July 25

CASE PRESENTATION GUIDE

To prepare your **case study for Session 1**, please use format below. Do not exceed two pages.

Basic guidelines:

1. Choose a recent situation in which you believe you failed as a leader OR one which you currently face – one for which you still have unresolved questions. Ask yourself, “Is this something that kept/keeps me up at night?”
2. Prepare a one to two page summary to help you present to the group.
3. Plan for a 10-minute presentation to leave time for the group to consult to you.

Suggestions for structuring presentation:

1. Tell it like a good story. Give us details that help us understand the chain of events, rather than your assessments of what that chain of events represented. Try “I first noticed funny things happening in October when our Executive Director told me....” instead of “I had a problem with our new ED...”
2. Answer the following questions in your summary:
 - My intended outcome in this situation was _____
 - What I did was _____
 - The result was _____

- The person who irritated/annoyed me most was _____
 - The other players were/included _____
3. Sum up by clarifying how you see/saw the problem in the organization (system) and your leadership dilemma in the situation you are presenting.

To consider ahead for making presentation to class/your small group:

Frame the issue for the group to direct their listening – tell them one or two questions on which you want them to consult. For example:

- Are there underlying assumptions in my thinking about this problem that prevented me from diagnosing the situation accurately and coming up with better options for intervening?
- How could I have approached this problem to exercise leadership most effectively?

*Partially excerpted from PAL-101 Exercising Leadership, Harvard University
Kennedy School of Government*