

**EXEC-GP 1194 MPA Seminar: Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations Fall 2024**

# Course Description

What does it mean to lead? What does it mean to lead with an understanding of identity and culture, within the context of power, privilege and systemic oppression? This course is an exploration of both broad and specific notions of leadership, and what it means to lead with an equity mindset. As a guiding framework, we will study ideas and theories developed at Harvard University by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky over the last 30 years about the work of leaders in mobilizing groups to act to solve complex and seemingly intractable problems. We will contrast Heifetz and Linsky’s notion of leadership with more traditional theories of leadership. We will use personal stories, multimedia resources, and real world examples of leadership in action to support students to gain clarity about the “big idea” of leadership, and what types of leaders they are and can be. Throughout the course, students will be challenged to consider how they may lead in ways that disrupt institutional and systemic oppression, rather than reinforce it.

Strategic Leadership is an intensive leadership course designed to equip mid-career students with the tools, perspectives, and framework for executing high-impact strategy within mission driven organizations.

# Course Meeting Information

## August (in person class\*):

Tuesday and Wednesday, August 20 and 21 9:00am to 5:00pm

Tuesday and Wednesday, August 27 and 28 9:00am to 5:00pm

After the second class meeting on August 21st, students are invited to an optional happy hour with the instructors from 5:30 to 6:30 at an outside location, a short distance from where the class meets.

\*If you are sick, please text Michael at (917) 239-3641 and Surabhi at (917) 843-4737 as soon as you can.

**August class location**: NYU Global Center, 238 Thompson Street, Room 475

## September:

**Team presentation** - Check-ins with instructor(date/time will be dependent upon which group you are a part of):

Wednesday, September 18 5:30pm to 6:30pm\* (Surabhi’s groups)

**OR**

Thursday September 19, 5:30-6:30\* (Michael’s groups)

**Location: NYU** Zoom link to be posted to Brightspace

## October

**Adaptive leadership team presentations**:

Thursday, October 24, 5:00pm - 8:30pm

**October class location**: TBD

# Instructors

The course is being team-taught by Surabhi Lal and Michael Thomas Duffy.

**Surabhi Lal**

Surabhi.lal@gmail.com

(917) 843-4737

**Michael Thomas Duffy**

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(917) 239-3641

Surabhi Lal (she/her) is rooted in the belief that we can create a better future of work that is rooted in our humanity and collective belonging. A boundary-spanning leader, she has worked in social impact, higher education, start-ups, and workforce development before starting her own consulting practice, [SL Collaborative Ventures](http://www.surabhilal.com). Working in and across organizations, she sees the interstitial connections between people and organizations to create spaces where people feel connected to their work and each other in remote, hybrid, and in-person environments. She is multi-passionate with a strong sense of curiosity which she brings to her roles as a facilitator, consultant, creator and host of SIPS & Leadership, CliftonStrengths coach, educator, and board member. Using empathy and strategy she has coached thousands of job seekers, entrepreneurs, and organizations to help them create a better future of work. She is pursuing a PhD in Leadership and Change where her research is focused on understanding the ecosystem of belonging in the workplace. In addition to savoring her craft, she feeds her creativity (literally) through exploring food markets, cooking, travel, and dining, and is a parent to an active and curious tween in NYC.

Michael (he/him) is the president of [GO](https://gofellows.org/), which has a mission to provide students with access to a quality education through high dosage tutoring. Previously he worked at the NYC Department of Education, working for three years in the administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg to expand the number of high-quality charter schools in NYC. Michael’s efforts in education grew out of his work in the civil rights movement, having served as Chairman and Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ civil rights enforcement agency, a position he held for six years. He has also held leadership positions in the non-profit sector: he served on the Board of Directors of the Human Rights Campaign, for several years as its co-chair; two terms on the vestry of St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Manhattan; and is currently chair of the board of the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts. He was twice a candidate for public office in Massachusetts. Michael has a master’s degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a degree in Economics from Trinity College in Connecticut. He splits his time between NY and CT with his husband, Patrick and French Bulldog, Loulou.

# Course and Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

(1) learn how to distinguish technical challenges from adaptive ones;

(2) understand group dynamics and work avoidance when it comes to facing adaptive challenges;

(3) consider how identity and the role of power in society impacts leadership;

(4) explore the tactics of adaptive leadership, including pacing, forging partnerships, acting politically and distinguishing between the view from the 'balcony' and the 'dance floor';

(5) Explore the impact of white supremacy culture on organizations and how to disrupt it

(6) consider the risks to those who take on adaptive leadership challenges.

After taking the course, students will have a stronger sense of their own opportunity to lead, regardless of the formal authority that they may or may not possess. *Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations* will equip students with both a better understanding of how to approach threats that have resisted past attempts at resolution and a set of practical tools that they can employ in tackling those threats.

# Course Materials

The following course materials include books, articles, videos, podcasts and other online resources that may need to be purchased and should be reviewed before the start of the course:

**Books:**

Collins, Jim, **Good to Great and the Social Sectors**. HarperCollins, 2005

Heifetz, Ronald, Grashow, Alexander and Linsky, Marty, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership**,** Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA, 2009

Sanders, Chad, Black Magic**,** Simon & Schuster, 2021

Stone, Douglas; Patton, Bruce; Heen, Sheila Difficult Conversations**,** Penguin Books, 2010

**Media:**

[*Shane*](https://www.paramountmovies.com/movies/shane), Paramount, 1953 **Note**: Option to watch for free [is here](https://freegreatmovies.com/Free-Movie/Shane/4255)

[*The Times of Harvey Milk*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjpKuP9LEDU)*,* Criterion Films, 1984

[*Crip Camp A Disability Revolution*](https://youtu.be/OFS8SpwioZ4) *Netflix, 2020*

*The Wire*, Season 3, Episode 4, “Hamsterdam” & Episode 9, “Slapstick”, HBO 2004 (Available on HBO Max, Prime)\* **Note**: if you are unable to access the episode, please read [this summary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slapstick_(The_Wire)).

[Mr. Bates vs the Post Office](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/shows/mr-bates-vs-the-post-office/), Episode 1 (available via Amazon, Hulu, PBS)

**Articles**:

[Former Away employees describe a toxic work environment at the luggage company - The Verge](https://www.theverge.com/2019/12/5/20995453/away-luggage-ceo-steph-korey-toxic-work-environment-travel-inclusion)

Ancona, Deborah et al., [**In Praise of the Incomplete Leader**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gfivr7wpZz4QANXBdL6YgeGCkZn2d_pC/view?usp=sharing) Harvard Business Review, 2008

Gray, Asya [The Bias of Professionalism Standards](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_bias_of_professionalism_standards) Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2019

Meyerson, Debra E., *Radical Change the Quiet Way*, Harvard Business Review, October 2001. (available on Brightspace)

Coco-Net: White Supremacy Culture in Organizations [website](https://coco-net.org/white-supremacy-culture-in-organizations/) and [PDF](https://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf) (all)

Raelin, J. A. (2005). We the leaders: In order to form a leaderful organization. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *12*(2), 18-30.

Harvard Business Review, [**5 Harmful Ways Women Must Adapt in the Workplace**](https://hbr.org/2022/10/5-harmful-ways-women-feel-they-must-adapt-in-corporate-america)

**Podcasts**:

70 over 70, [*“Prologue: The Balcony and the Dance Floor with Marty Linsky”*](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/prologue-the-balcony-and-the-dance-floor-with-marty-linsky/id1565264740?i=1000522325680)

Black Woman Leading, “[Black Women’s Work Past, Present, and Future with Dr. Crystal Moten](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/black-woman-leading/id1561551317?i=1000542338782)”

Stepping Into the Truth, [Shawn Ginwright and the Four Pivots](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/shawn-ginwright-and-the-four-pivots/id1399794075?i=1000561886640)

WorkLife, [The Daily Show's Secret to Creativity](https://www.ted.com/talks/worklife_with_adam_grant_the_daily_show_s_secret_to_creativity/transcript)

**Additional resources (optional):**

Heumann, J. and Joiner, K. Being Huemann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist Penguin Random House, 2020

Truss, Joe [What happened when my school started to dismantle white supremacy culture](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-what-happened-when-my-school-started-to-dismantle-white-supremacy-culture/2019/07). Ed Week 2018

Ancona, Deborah, **Leading in a World of Uncertainty** (video, approx. 1 hr.)

# Assignments

Student performance in this course is evaluated and graded on the basis of class participation, written assignments and team presentations. The course requires reading, small group work, classroom participation and reflection papers.

**Grading Table**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Graded Assignments** | **Value** |
| Reading Reflections | 20% |
| Failure Case Study | 20% |
| Team Project | 20% |
| Final Paper | 20% |
| Class Participation | 20% |

**Reading Reflections (due Friday, August 16 & Friday, August 23)** – Write a paper of up to 750 words that engages with the course material assigned for:

* Sessions I & II due by 8/16
* Sessions III & IV due by 8/23

Please title your document with your last name and the words “Reading Reflections” when posting on Brightspace.

Reading Reflections will be evaluated using this 10 point rubric:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Item** | **Explanation** |
| **5** | Comprehension | Student demonstrates an understanding of the essential issues raised in the course material |
| **5** | Analysis | Student provides insights into the issues presented by the course material along with select past and present professional experiences, and is able to apply it |

**Failure Case Study (due Wednesday, August 21)** - Using a structured and facilitated process, each student will have the opportunity to receive peer feedback in a small group setting on a past instance when they (literally) failed in a professional or personal context that involved an adaptive challenge. Write a one-page description of your personal Failure Case Study using the protocol posted on Brightspace.

Please title your document with your last name and the words “Failure Case Study” and send via email to both instructors. Bring 10 printed copies of your Failure Case Study to Session II.

Failure Case Studies will be evaluated using this 20 point rubric:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Item** | **Explanation** |
| **10** | Authenticity | Student presented a genuine instance of personal or professional failure |
| **10** | Relevance | The issues raised by the Failure Case Study implicated an adaptive challenge that was clearly laid out as such |

**Team Presentations (due Thursday, October 24)** – Small group teams begin their project at the conclusion of Session IV, bringing their newly acquired knowledge and work/life experience to bear on real-time adaptive challenges based in an organization of their choosing.

Each team prepares a 15-minute presentation on the adaptive leadership challenge they’ve identified within an organization on the evening of Thursday, October 24.

Students are encouraged to create presentations that clearly communicate their understanding of the adaptive challenges present, along with their suggestions for how to effectively address them. Presentations should incorporate visual aids such as slides, video clips, and/or handouts, and teams are encouraged to approach the presentation from a creative and/or interactive perspective.

Each team will be graded by the instructors on their presentation.

In advance of the presentations, each team will each have the opportunity for a 30-minute consultation with the instructors during which they will receive feedback on their proposed Adaptive Leadership challenge.

Team Presentations will be evaluated using this 20 point rubric:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Item** | **Explanation** |
| **10** | Communication | Students expressed their ideas clearly and persuasively |
| **10** | Relevance | The issues raised by the Team Project implicated an adaptive challenge |

**Final Paper (due Monday November 4th )** – Write a 1,250 word paper which synthesizes key lessons learned in the course and which analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the Adaptive Leadership framework.

Critical points to include:

* lessons learned about the applications of the theory from the course about the practice of leadership in public service organizations or in your personal life;
* the differences between technical and adaptive challenges;
* cite relevant course reading, videos, films, discussions, and team presentations.
* reflections on their fellow team members’ participation in the group project;
* noticings about the adaptive leadership dynamics present in the course

Final papers will be evaluated based on this 20 point rubric:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Item** | **Notes** |
| **5** | Writing | Student is able to express their thinking clearly and persuasively |
| **5** | Comprehension | Student demonstrates an understanding of the content of the course |
| **10** | Analysis | Student provides insights into the lessons learned, and is able to apply them |

**Class Participation** – Attendance and meaningful participation in all 4 class sessions is mandatory and extremely important for the success of this fast paced and highly interactive course. Students will be able to earn up to 5 points for each of the 4 regular class meetings. The components of the points are:

* Attendance
* Frequency of participation;
* Quality of participation (meaningful contributions that push the thinking of the group)

# Course Schedule

The corresponding pre-work and readings for each class session are listed below and in Brightspace. Please complete the assigned readings and viewings for each session in advance of class.

**Session I: Tuesday, August 20**

Historically, how has leadership been defined? How do you define leadership? What is the relationship between *leadership* and *authority*? What are the Platonic concepts of leadership? What are the uses and limits of these conceptions? How is leadership experienced by those of all identities within an organization, and why does that matter? How does identity, power and marginalization impact our understanding of leadership?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, **Chapters 1 through 6**

Stone, Douglas; Patton, Bruce; Heen, Sheila Difficult Conversations**,** Penguin Books, 2010, all

Sanders, Black Magic, all

*Shane*, Paramount, 1953

[Former Away employees describe a toxic work environment at the luggage company - The Verge](https://www.theverge.com/2019/12/5/20995453/away-luggage-ceo-steph-korey-toxic-work-environment-travel-inclusion)

Harvard Business Review, [**5 Harmful Ways Women Must Adapt in the Workplace**](https://hbr.org/2022/10/5-harmful-ways-women-feel-they-must-adapt-in-corporate-america)

**Session II: Wednesday, August 21**

Understanding the difference between technical and adaptive leadership challenges. Why is the distinction important in thinking about the work of leadership? How can issues present as both technical and adaptive challenges? What happens when the work of leadership feels “messy”? How has white supremacy culture influenced individuals, notions of leadership, and organizations…and how can it be disrupted?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapters 7 through 12

Coco-Net: White Supremacy Culture in Organizations [website](https://coco-net.org/white-supremacy-culture-in-organizations/) and [PDF](https://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf) (all)

*The Wire*, Season 3, Episode 4, “Hamsterdam”, Episode 9, “Slapstick”

[**Deepa** Iyer Workshop on mapping social roles in a change ecosystem](https://solidarityis.org/our-work/tools-resources/principles-of-transformative-solidarity-practice/capacity/)

**Session III: Tuesday, August 27**

What are the tools an adaptive leader can deploy? How does an adaptive leader go about orchestrating conflict towards a productive end? What does it mean to give the work back to the group? What might success look like for adaptive leaders and the groups they lead? How and why do groups conspire to neutralize adaptive leaders? Discussion of literal and figurative examples of leader “assassination”. What is possible when we expand our notions of “who a leader is”?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapters 13 through 18

Collins, Jim. Good to Great and the Social Sectors. HarperCollins, 2005.

*The Times of Harvey Milk,* Criterion Films, 1984

[*Crip Camp A Disability Revolution*](https://youtu.be/OFS8SpwioZ4) *Netflix, 2020*

Ancona, Deborah et. al., “In Praise of the Incomplete Leader”, Harvard Business Review, 2005.

**Session IV: Wednesday, August 28**

Understanding the systems that thwart attempts to resolve adaptive challenges. Exploring how systemic challenges and barriers are reflected within organizations, and within our placements in movements for change. What are the uses of the metaphor of “Getting on the Balcony” and what is meant by the admonition to “Think Politically” when it comes to adaptive leadership?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapters 19 through 24

[*S2E2: Black Women’s Work Past, Present, and Future with Dr. Crystal Moten Black Woman Leading*](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/black-woman-leading/id1561551317?i=1000542338782)

[Mr. Bates vs the Post Office](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/shows/mr-bates-vs-the-post-office/), Episode 1 (available via Amazon, Hulu, PBS)

Gray, Asya [The Bias of Professionalism Standards](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_bias_of_professionalism_standards) Stanford Social

Meyerson, Debra E., Radical Change the Quiet Way, Harvard Business Review, October 2001. (available on Brightspace)

**70 over 70** podcast, *“Prologue: The Balcony and the Dance Floor with Marty Linsky”*

[Mapping our roles in the social change ecosystem](https://solidarityis.org/our-work/tools-resources/principles-of-transformative-solidarity-practice/capacity/)- recording

Raelin, J. A. (2005). We the leaders: In order to form a leaderful organization. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *12*(2), 18-30.

Stepping Into the Truth, [Shawn Ginwright and the Four Pivots](https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/shawn-ginwright-and-the-four-pivots/id1399794075?i=1000561886640)

WorkLife, [The Daily Show's Secret to Creativity](https://www.ted.com/talks/worklife_with_adam_grant_the_daily_show_s_secret_to_creativity/transcript)

# Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by Wagner’s Academic Code. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner Academic Oath. Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you are welcome to consult with either one of the instructors at any time.

# Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click on Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

# NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.