Leadership and Social Transformation
Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service
New York University
Fall, 2009

Professor: Sonia Ospina
sonia.ospina@nyu.edu, The Puck Building, 3075, Ext. 87478
Class: Fridays, 12:30 – 2:30 pm
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4 – 6 pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course is available to students in all specializations—management, policy and finance—and all programs—International, PNP, Health and Urban Planning—who are interested in the role that leadership plays in advancing social innovation and social change in the context of democratic governance.

The course explores the role of leadership in organizational efforts to change thinking, systems, and policies—taking into consideration the contested process by which the responsibility of addressing intractable problems is distributed among key diverse actors in a shared-power world. Traditional approaches to leadership defined by single heroic individuals who influence followers are contrasted with new perspectives—consistent with the demands of today’s complex problems—particularly when we aspire to inclusive, transparent and democratic solutions. Emergent perspectives reveal leadership as the collective achievement of members of a group who share a vision, and who must navigate the constellation of relationships, structures, processes and institutional dynamics within the larger system in which they are embedded.

The course will focus primarily on the organizational level of action, but connections to the individual and policy levels will also be explored. An opportunity to apply course concepts in the context of a particular organization of the student’s choice (with instructor approval) will deepen and personalize the student’s understanding of the interconnections between the three levels of action, and challenge assumptions about leadership and social change and their implications for practice.

This course is structured as a seminar. Classes will be a mix of brief lectures and in-depth discussion based on readings and written assignments, complemented with some guest speakers and case studies that will illustrate practical dimensions of the topics covered. It is, therefore, very important to prepare the reading assignments prior to class. While we will use real examples and draw practical lessons, the class will offer new frameworks and key leadership practices for social change leaders working in the field; demonstrate how participants in public service organizations have successfully engaged in leadership work for social change; and analyze the pitfalls and promises of their leadership. Students searching for hands-on practice of leadership skills to improve their own leadership work are urged to consider a complementary leadership course aimed at accessing and enhancing their repertoire of skills and competencies.
**Course objectives**

By the end of the course you will:

- Articulate and explore your own mental models and assumptions about leadership and social transformation and their implications for future practice.

- Articulate the reasons for a new perspective on leadership that can address public problems from the organizational and policy levels of action, and contrast it with more traditional perspectives that emphasize the individual level of action.

- Have an understanding of key frameworks and practices of effective leadership for social change, considering organizations as the perspective of reference.

- Have applied new learning to a particular organization that addresses a public problem in a particular policy arena, and identified the challenges of engaging in purposeful social change through the work of leadership.

**Requirements**

No textbook will be required. Journal articles, case studies and book chapters are available electronically via NYU’s online electronic journal service per NYU student privileges, and at the NYU Bobst Library Course Reserves. Expect more instructions in class.

**Graded requirements** - Students must complete the reading before class and engage actively in the discussions. Students must also satisfy the following requirements:

- **Course Project:** Leadership case (assigned to student pairs) (5 deliverables, 10% each = 50%)
  - One-pager: What organization and why? (Oct 2 – Friday)
  - Memo 1: Insights about “Reframing discourse” (Nov 2-Monday)
  - Memo 2: Insights about “Bridging difference” (Nov 16-Monday)
  - Memo 3: Insights about “Unleashing human potential” (Dec 7 – Monday)
  - Memo 4: Recommendations of actions to enhance the organization’s capacity for social transformation (Dec 14 – Monday)

- **Journal entries** (4 points per class readings, for 10 classes chosen from Class 2 to Class 12 = 40%) (Four sets due Sept 25, Oct 16, Nov 6 and Dec 4)

- **Class participation** (10%)

For instructions on assignments, please see **Overview** hand-out and consult Course documents in Blackboard for more details.
Overview of Course Contents

I. Thinking about leadership

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (Sept 11)
2. From leaders to leadership: old and new paradigms (September 18)
3. Leadership for the common good and the nature of good leadership (Sept 25)
   -First set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Sept 25-

II. Leadership and transformation: thinking about social change

4. On leading change: social entrepreneurship, policy entrepreneurship and social change leadership (Oct 2) (Guest Speaker)
   -One pager due on FRIDAY Oct
5. Systemic approaches to change (Oct 9)
6. The work of leadership and social change organizations (Oct 16)
   -Second set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Oct 16

III. The work of social change leadership: linking visions, practices and outcomes

7. Leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (Oct 23)
8. Case study/Applications (Oct 30) (Guest Speaker)
   -Memo 1 due on MONDAY Nov 2
9. Leadership practices 2: Bridging difference (Nov 6)
   -Third set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Nov 6
10. Case study/Applications (Nov 13) (Guest Speaker)
    -Memo 2 due on MONDAY Nov 16
11. Leadership practices 3: Unleashing human potential (Nov 20) (Guest Speaker)

THANKSGIVING BREAK – Nov 27

12. Case study/Applications (Dec 4) (Guest Speaker)
    -Fourth set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Dec 4
    -Memo 3 due on MONDAY Dec 7

IV. Conclusion: reframing leadership

13. & 14. The pitfalls and promises of collective leadership for social transformation (Dec 11)
    -Memo 4 due on MONDAY Dec 14
Schedule of Assignments

I. Thinking about Leadership

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (Sept 11)


Supplement:


2. From leaders to leadership: old and new paradigms (September 18)

Supplement:


3. Leadership for the common good and the nature of good leadership (Sept 25)

- Crosby, B. and J. Bryson. 2005. Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared Power World. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Chapters 1 (When no one is in charge) and intro of Ch. 2 (p. 3-34) and Chapter 5 (Policy Entrepreneurship and the Common Good), (p. 156-193).


First set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Sept 25

ATTENTION: One pager due NEXT WEEK, FRIDAY Oct 2:. The following reading will be helpful when you consider dimensions in choosing your organization. The questions suggested to diagnose an organization might help define what you are interested in knowing about it. You DO NOT have to answer these questions for the first assignment: just consider them an aid which might help you think about the issues.


II. Leadership and transformation: thinking about social change

4. On Leading Change: social entrepreneurship, policy entrepreneurship and social change leadership (Oct 2)

GUEST SPEAKER: Frances Kunreuther, Project Director, Building Movement Project, Demos http://www.buildingmovement.org/


• Kivel, P. 2007. “Social service or social change?” In INCITE (ed). The Revolution will not be funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex. (pp. 129-149).

• Electronic Hallway:
  o “Preventing Homelessness and Creating Lasting Solutions through Housing Development, Service Provision and Advocacy: Staying the Course for the Right Cause. The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless” (8 pages)

One-pager due Friday Oct 2

Supplement:


5. Systemic approaches to change (Oct 9)


• Kennedy School Case: “The Challenge of Participation: Drafting Mauritania’s PRSP” (A) (22 pages).

Suggestion: Review Bojer, M (see first class) for key features of a systemic approach.

6. The work of leadership and social change organizations (Oct 16)


• Chetkovich, C. and F. Kunreuther. 2006. *From the Ground up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*. Chapter 1 (Introduction: Approaches to Social change: a Framework) (pp. 1-27) and from Chapter 3 (Leadership) (pp. 52-68 note that this is not the entire chapter).


• For general background to complement Hufford & Miller, please read from the Supplement below: pages 2-mid 6 and 15-mid 23.

*Second set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Oct 16*

**Supplement:**

• Electronic Hallway Case: *Piecing Together the Fragments: An Ethnography of Leadership for Social Change in North Central Philadelphia 2004-2005. The Village of Arts and Humanities (VAH).*


**III. The work of social change leadership: linking visions, practices and outcomes**

**7. Leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (Oct 23)**


• Electronic Hallway – Preventing Drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge. The Gwich’in Tribes and Their role in the National Policy Debate. Rebirth of a Nation. Gwich’in Steering Committee (GSC)
8. Case study/Applications (Oct 30)

GUEST SPEAKER: Ana Maria Archila, Co-Executive Director, MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK  http://www.maketheroadny.org


*Memo 1 due on MONDAY Nov 2*

9. Leadership practices 2: Bridging difference (Nov 6)


- E-PARC Case. “Elusive community in South Park”, Part B. (8 pages)

*Third set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Nov 6*

10. Case study/Applications (Nov 13)

GUEST SPEAKER: Surita Sandosham, Senior Director Global Leaders Programs and Networks, The Synergos Institute  www.synergos.org


• Please listen to the received CD on The Maharashtra Change Lab (20 minutes) as part of your assignment for this week. [DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS]

Memo 2 due on MONDAY Nov 16

Supplement:

• REOS Partners. The U-Process: A Social Technology for Addressing Highly Complex Challenges.


11. Leadership practices 3: Unleashing human potential (Nov 20)


• Raelin, J. 2005. “We the Leaders: In order to form a Leaderful Organization”. In Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, Vol 12, No 2 (pp. 18-30).

• Chetkovich, C. and F. Kunreuther. 2006. From the Ground up: Grassroots organizations making social change. from Chapter 3 (Leadership) (pp. 68-82 note that this is the end of chapter you started reading earlier).

Supplement:


THANKSGIVING BREAK – Nov 27
12. Case study/Applications (Dec 4)

GUEST SPEAKER: Danny Burns, Professor of Social & Organisational Learning at the University of the West of England, Director, SOLAR [http://www.uwe.ac.uk/solar/]


Fourth set of journal entries due on FRIDAY Dec 4; Memo 3 due on MONDAY Dec 7

Supplement:


IV. Conclusion: reframing leadership

13. & 14. The pitfalls and promises of collective leadership for social transformation (Dec 11)


- LISTEN TO CD: Building Collaborative Leadership from the Ground Up. Audio Interviews from leaders on the ground. RCLA/The Mainstream Media Project (51 minutes) [DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS]

Memo 4 due on MONDAY Dec 14

Supplement: