Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service
New York University

Spring 2015
Leadership and Social Transformation, PADM-GP 2186-001

Professor: Sonia Ospina, sonia.ospina@nyu.edu, The Puck Building, 3075, Ext. 87478
Class: Wednesday, 6:45 – 8:45 pm
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30–5:30 pm and by appointment

Course Description

In this course we explore the notion of collective leadership and its role in advancing social change in the context of democratic governance. Students use this to reflect on their own leadership potential and capabilities as effective change agents. The course is available to students in all Wagner specializations—management, policy and finance—and programs—International, PNP, Health and Urban Planning.

Traditional approaches to leadership define it in reference to single heroic individuals who influence followers. The course introduces a new perspective, more consistent with the demands of today’s complex problems—collective leadership, which fosters a collaborative mindset. In this view, leadership happens as members of a group produce collective achievements towards making real a shared vision. This requires awareness of the constellation of relationships, structures, processes and institutional dynamics within the larger system in which individuals are embedded, to create the conditions so that all members in a group find the direction, commitment and alignment needed to transform their individual efforts into collective achievements.

The course explores the role leadership plays in organizational efforts aimed at changing thinking, systems, and policies, as participants search for inclusive, transparent and democratic solutions to today's intractable social problems. This approach takes into consideration the contested arenas where the responsibility to address these problems is negotiated and distributed among social actors with differential access to resources and power. The primary focus is on the organizational level of action, but connections to the individual and policy levels are also considered.

Using real examples from the US and around the world, the course is firmly anchored on frameworks and key concepts around the constructs of leadership and systemic social change. Students will also explore the practical implications of developing collective leadership capabilities as part of their leadership repertoire and assess the pitfalls and promises of enacting this type of leadership in public service institutional contexts. However, those searching for a hands-on, experiential, developmental experience are urged to consider other leadership courses aimed at directly practicing their skills and competencies.
Course objectives

By the end of the course:

1. You will recognize your own mental models and assumptions about leadership and social transformation; and, having clarified their implications for practice, you will identify key personal strengths, gaps and strategies to develop your leadership capacity as an effective social change agent.

2. You will be able to articulate how a new perspective of leadership (emphasizing its collective dimensions) contrasts with more traditional perspectives (emphasizing its individual dimensions); and you will clarify the contributing benefits and challenges of this perspective to produce effective social change.

3. You will identify examples of the leadership practices that help individual efforts become collective achievements in organizations committed to social change; and you will appreciate the power of leadership work that weaves individual, organizational and policy levels of action.

4. You will have explored a particular organization that addresses a public problem in a particular policy arena of your choice, to assess its approach—and use of leadership practices—toward advancing social transformation.

5. You will have engaged in teamwork with a small group of peers who share the passion for a similar policy problem, to develop a joint understanding of the practice of collective leadership through sharing insights from the study of your organizations of choice.

Course requirements

The course is structured as a seminar. Classes are a mix of brief lectures and in-depth discussion based on readings and written assignments, and a few guest speakers and case studies. It is, therefore, very important to prepare the reading assignments prior to class and to participate actively in the discussions. Reading guides for each session highlight key concepts and ideas for class discussion.

Most readings (journal articles and case studies) are available electronically via NYU’s and Wagner’s online electronic services per NYU student privileges. A few readings that require copyright permission will be on sale via a link to the NYU Bookstore. You will also read through the semester a good portion of the following book, available at the NYU Bookstore and on-line:


Assignments build cumulatively. Below are the steps to develop your thinking as you prepare for three types of assignments: journal entries, a first (two-page) individual
memorandum, a second (5-7-page) team memorandum and a final (3-4 page) individual personal reflection essay. For instructions on each assignment, please see NYU Classes.

Overview of process to develop your assignments

- **Step 1**: (first two weeks of classes) - Choose a social problem in a policy area representing an "arena" where you could become (or already are) an engaged change agent.
- **Step 2**: (weeks 1 through 6 and again, 12-13) - Use that "arena" as the reference to process the readings, to react to their content in your journal entries, to prepare for class discussions, and for your memos.
- **Step 3**: (weeks 3-5) - Identify an organization (within your chosen arena) where you could see yourself contributing to fight the social problem it is tackling. Study its webpage and other documentation and identify contacts to guarantee access. Use the organization as the reference to write your first (individual) memo, and for conversations with your team to explore social change leadership in a given arena. Insights from your organization will be the input to write the second (team) memo. Step 3 ends with a **first (individual) memo** (2 pages) at the end of week 5, reporting on your key insights about leadership and describing your "arena" and organization, and why you chose them to explore collective leadership. During class on week 5, teams will form, based on common ground around the "arenas".
- **Step 4**: (weeks 6-11) – Develop a team workplan. Continue to study your organization and share what you learn with the team members. Schedule at least one interview with someone from the organization between April 2 and 10. Develop a team interview questionnaire, drawing from classes 7, 8 and 9 and customize it to your organization. Analyze the data collected to find evidence of leadership practices around each of the three mechanisms discussed in class and share with your team. Draw conclusions by comparing the evidence from the three organizations. Be prepared to present your insights in Class 11. Write a team report that integrates insights from the three organizations. Step 4 ends with this team report—the **second (5-7 page) memo**, due at the beginning of week 12.
- **Step 5**: (through the course, but to be finalized on weeks 12-14) – Draw from course experience to write a final personal reflection (**3-4 page essay**). Include at least three relevant areas of growth to support your leadership work within a social change organization in your arena of influence. You should offer specific ways in which you plan to address these.

Summary of assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT?</th>
<th>CREDIT</th>
<th>WHEN?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Through-out the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal entries</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6.25 x 4 entries (8 classes), due 02-4, 02-18, 03-4 and 04-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Memo (individual)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Friday February 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Memo (team)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Monday April 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal reflection (individual)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Wednesday May 13</td>
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Overview of Course Contents

I. New vistas on Leadership: from individual to collective

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (January 28)
2. From leaders to leadership: implications of new thinking (February 4)
   - First set of journal entries for classes 1 & 2, due on Wednesday Feb 4

II. Leadership and social change

3. Leadership and systemic approaches to transformative change (February 11)
4. The nature of social change and the work of leadership (February 18)
   - Second set of journal entries for classes 3 & 4, due on Wednesday Feb 18
5. Doing leadership work in a shared-power world: applications to a case study
   (February 25)
   - Memo 1 (individual) due on Friday February 27

III. The work of leadership for social transformation: from individual efforts to collective achievements

6. Organizationally driven social change and the work of leadership (March 4)
   - Third set of journal entries due on Wednesday March 4
7. Mechanisms and leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (March 11)

   SPRING BREAK March 16-20

8. Mechanisms and leadership practices 2: Bridging difference (March 25)
9. Mechanisms and leadership practices 3: Unleashing human energies (April 1)
10. Fostering collective leadership (April 8)
11. Class crowdsourcing exercise: collective leadership in practice (April 15)
    - Memo 2 (team) due on Monday April 20

IV. Conclusion: reframing leadership, becoming a leader

12. New leader/leadership development programs for a new type of leadership? (April 22). Panel of practitioners will visit.
13. Hosting: a practical tool to develop collective leadership (April 29)
   - Fourth set of journal entries for classes 12 & 13 due on Wednesday April 29
14. Becoming a social change leader (May 6)
    - Final paper (individual) due on Wednesday May 13, in lieu of final exam
Schedule of Assignments

I. New vistas on Leadership: from individual to collective

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (January 28)

   • Watch the following video:
     http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIA8z7f7a2Pk&feature=related (3 minutes)

   • Case example:
     o 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).

2. From leaders to leadership: implications of new thinking (February 4)

   • Overview of leadership theories:
• Showcasing collective perspectives on leadership in various institutional contexts:

  *First set of journal entries for classes 1 & 2, due on Wednesday February 4*

II. Leadership and social change

3. Leadership and systemic approaches to transformative change (February 11)


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

4. The nature of social change and the work of leadership (February 18)

In addition to the readings below, please spend no more than an hour conducting an image search on Google Image or Flikr for words that convey the idea of "social change," (e.g. “social change”, “social transformation”, “social justice," "social movements," etc) and choose ONE image that most meaningfully illustrates for you, what social change looks like. Print the image and bring it to class. Come prepared to discuss why you chose it and how it links to the class readings

[If interested, please find the tool that inspired this assignment in this link:]
http://www.buildingmovement.org/our_tools/detail/what_does_social_change_look_like


- 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).


- Case examples:
  - Electronic Hallway: “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)

-Second set of journal entries for classes 3 & 4, due on Wednesday Feb 18

5. Doing leadership work in a shared-power world: applications to a case study (February 25)

The case we will discuss at the core of this class:


Background readings (these will continue to deepen ideas about relational leadership and social change that can be applied to thinking about the framing of the case):


Case examples (these varied cases will give you ideas about how to approach the problem in the case):

- The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development & Kellogg Leadership for Community Change. 2008. Collective Leadership Works: Preparing Youth and Adults for Community Change. Toolkit. Michigan. (This is a long Guidebook, you will scan it and search for possible activities to propose for an action plan in reference to the case above; more instructions to come).

ATTENTION: Memo 1 due on FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27, send electronically to Shannon Deere Shannon.deere@nyu.edu by noon.
III. The work of leadership for social transformation: from individual efforts to collective achievements

6. Organizationally-driven social change and the work of leadership (March 4)


- Case examples:
  
    http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/reports/files/Fragments.pdf


  - “Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide” New York: Building Movement Project, 2006 [You will find many more resources on how to move from social service to social change here]:
    http://www.buildingmovement.org/blog/entry/140?news/entry/140

- Third set of journal entries due on Wednesday March 4

7. Mechanisms and leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (March 11)


• Case examples:
  
  o 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)
  
  o Casa of Maryland: Creating “Co-Authors of Justice”. A leadership story from the LCW Program Research and Documentation Component, RCLA, NYU/Wagner.

SPRING BREAK March 16-20

8. Mechanisms and leadership practices 2: Bridging difference (March 25)


• Case examples:
  
  o Listen to:
    ▪ Collaborative & Community Leadership CD. RCLA & the Mainstream Media Project. Listen in: Collaborative Leadership Disk: Track 3 (NYIC) (10:45 minutes).
  

9. Mechanisms and leadership practices 3: Unleashing human energies (April 1)


- Case examples:
  
o Listen to:

  o Electronic Hallway: Center for Young Women’s Development: How Young Women Ex-Offenders are Transforming Themselves. A leadership story from the LCW Program Research and Documentation Component, RCLA, NYU/Wagner.

  o From Constituents to Stakeholders”, Minieri et al, 2005, Research Center for Leadership in Action, NYU/Wagner.

10. Fostering collective leadership (April 8)


• Case examples:
  
  o Listen to:

  o The Electronic Hallway: Keeping industrial polluters out of Austin's Latino and African American Communities. PODER


11. Class crowdsourcing exercise: collective leadership in practice (April 15)

Drawing from your research outside of class (including your interviews), we will use a ‘crowdsourcing’ exercise to develop collective insights in the classroom. See further instructions in NYUClasses


ATTENTION: Memo 2 due on MONDAY APRIL 20, Please drop a hard copy at Shannon Deere’s desk at the Puck Building before 6 pm.
IV. Conclusion: reframing leadership, becoming a leader

12. New leader/leadership development programs for a new type of leadership? (April 22)

**Core activity:** Panel of practitioners to explore what leadership development looks like today, from a practitioner perspective, and to distill the underlying assumptions about leadership that frame and shape the existing practices.


13. Hosting: a practical tool to develop collective leadership (April 29)


- Case examples:

- Fourth set of journal entries for classes 12 & 13 due on Wednesday April 29
14. Becoming a social change leader (May 6)


**ATTENTION:** Final paper due on Wednesday May 13, in lieu of final exam