Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service  
New York University  

Fall 2017  
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: Wednesdays, 3:00-5:00 pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course explores collective leadership as a tool for advancing social change in the context of democratic governance. Students use frameworks – of leadership and of social change– to challenge their traditional understanding of leadership and 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 and a new approach to being in the world. In this view, leadership happens as members of a group produce collective achievements towards making real a shared vision. This requires awareness of the self in relation to others, complemented by awareness of the constellation of relationships, structures, processes and institutional dynamics that shape leadership and may produce or derail change efforts within the larger system. It is these where individuals are embedded, and where leadership emerges to create the conditions for members in a group to find the direction, commitment and alignment needed to transform their individual efforts into collective achievements.

The course explores the role of leadership in organizational efforts aimed at changing thinking, systems, and policies, in the 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 in 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, leadership development personal experience are
urged to consider other leadership courses aimed at directly practicing leadership skills and competencies.

**Course objectives and requirements**

**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 leadership capabilities 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 through public service.
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 one organization (and will be exposed to others through your team work) that addresses a public problem in a particular policy arena of your choice; you will assess its approach—and use of leadership practices—toward advancing social transformation, thus applying key course concepts in the world of practice.
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 and expectations**

The course is structured as a seminar. Classes are a mix of brief lectures, case studies and exemplars, in-depth discussion based on readings and written assignments, and a few guest speakers. **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.

All required readings (journal articles, case studies/applications, links for required review) are available electronically via NYU’s and Wagner’s online electronic services per NYU student library privileges.

You will be graded based on:

- Your class participation, grounded on the readings; **PLEASE FIND READING GUIDES FOR EACH CLASS, with instructions on what to focus when reading each article, IN NYUCLASSES’ Class tabs.**
• Four sets of journal entries where you discuss your reactions to the readings from two classes each (for a total of 8 classes);
• An individual mid-term report where you reflect on your capabilities (personal reflection);
• A brief team memo describing the team’s fieldwork plan;
• A final team report of what you learned about collective leadership from your fieldwork and the team project.

Assignments build cumulatively. Please refer to NYU Classes Instructions for Assignments, under the RESOURCES tab. You will find there the complete instructions, expectations and grading criteria for each assignment. It is your responsibility to study these documents as part of your preparation for the course.

Summary of assignments

<table>
<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>
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<tr>
<td>Journal entries</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6 points x 4 entries (8 classes)+1 free point, due 09-13, 09-29, 10-11 and 11-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual mid-term report</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Friday, October 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Memo</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Friday, November 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team final report</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Wednesday, December 20</td>
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Absenteeism, punctuality, and in-class conduct

You are expected to attend all classes, and arrive on time. If you miss a class due to unavoidable circumstances, please send a message in advance and contact another member of the class to get what was covered in class. Missing more than two classes without excuse will affect your class participation grade. Systematic tardiness, disruptive behavior (including unrelated side conversations, use of cell phone or computer for information withdrawal that is not related to class) is unacceptable and will also negatively impact your grade.
Overview of Course Contents

I. New vistas on Leadership: from individual to collective

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (September 6)
2. From leaders to leadership: implications of new thinking (September 13)
   - First set of journal entries for classes 1 & 2, due on September 13

II. Collective Leadership And Systemic Change

3. Systems thinking, leadership and social transformation (September 20)
4. The nature of social change and the work of leadership (September 27)
   - Second set of journal entries for classes 3 & 4, due on September 27
5. The social change leadership framework (October 4)
6. Leadership development in social change contexts (October 11)
   - Third set of journal entries for classes 5 & 6 due on October 11

III. Social change leadership: from individual efforts to collective achievements

7. Mechanisms and leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (October 18)
   - Individual midterm report due on Friday October 20
8. Mechanisms and leadership practices 2: Bridging difference (October 25)
9. Mechanisms and leadership practices 3: Unleashing human energies (November 1)
10. Mobilizing collective capacity for social change: integrating concepts (November 8)
11. Preparing for fieldwork (November 15)
    - Team Memo: Plan for fieldwork due on Friday, November 18

November 22 (NYU Official Thanksgiving Recess Starts – no classes scheduled)

12. Hosting: a practical tool to develop collective leadership (November 29)
    - Fourth set of journal entries for classes 11 & 12 due November 29

13. Class crowdsourcing exercise: sharing learning from your research (December 6)
14. An integrative case and concluding reflections (December 13)
    - Final team report due on Wednesday, December 20, in lieu of final exam
Schedule of Assignments

I. New vistas on Leadership: from individual to collective

1. Introduction: exploring our assumptions (September 6)

- Watch the following video:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA8z7f7a2Pk&feature=related
  (3 minutes)


- Watch the following video:
  http://www.ted.com/talks/linda_hill_how_to_manage_for_collective_creativity
  (17:16 minutes)

- Case example:
  - Watch the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsg65PnymnE for further background (5:32 minutes)

Suggested:

- If you are really curious about the case example, you can also read
2. From leaders to leadership: implications of new thinking (September 13)

Due today: First set of journal entries for classes 1 & 2

- Overview of leadership theories:

- Key ideas grounding the notion of collective leadership:
  - Watch: Heifetz on adaptive leadership (link is too long, go to NYU Classes)
  - Drath, Bill (Wilfred). (Document # 1): Two notes on relational leadership. Document shared by the author.

- Case example:
Suggested:

- If you are really curious about the theoretical assumptions of the DAC model, you can also read
  

- If you are really curious about other collective approaches, you can also read
  
  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).

II. Collective Leadership And Systemic Change

3. Systems thinking, leadership and social transformation (September 20)


- Habits of a systems thinker. Review each of the dimensions presented in the following chart: http://watersfoundation.org/systems-thinking/habits-of-a-systems-thinker/ (link also available at NYUClasses). Be prepared to discuss.

- Case examples:
  
  o From: Wheatley, Margaret and Deborah Frieze. 2011. Walk out, walk on: A learning journey into communities daring to live the future now. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc: Please read:
  
    - “Our invitation for how to read this book”, pp. xiv-xvii (you will need this brief intro to understand the “tone” of the chapter below;
you might want to open the book from the beginning as it has a very beautiful outlook and design).

- “Joubert Park: South Africa: From Problem to Place”, pp. 75-100.


Suggested:

- If you are really curious about systems theory applications for social interventions, you can also read


4. The nature of social change and the work of leadership (September 27)

Due today: Second set of journal entries for classes 3 & 4

The readings for this class can be clustered in the following three categories (in the reading guide I ask you to read them in the opposite order, starting from the last):

- Macro dynamics


- Existential dilemmas

  - 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:
  o Read and compare the approaches to change in these two stories:
    ▪ 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)
  o The Kony Story - Follow the instructions on NYUClasses document of this name (please leave time, the video –30 minutes long– plus the readings will require a couple of hours to process).

Suggested:

• If you are really curious about a social science view on change, you can also read

• If you are really curious about how to bring a social change orientation to a social service organization, you can also read
  o “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

5. The social change leadership framework (October 4)

  o Intended to offer an overview of the framework, READ ONLY pages 10-12 and 24; and
o Connecting the framework to democracy, READ ONLY pages 19-22 (until before Conclusion)


- Case examples focusing on beneficiary engagement in various contexts:
  
o Choose one of the following and be prepared to discuss at least two examples of developing constituents/recipient from the chosen reading:
    - Rogal, Maria. Read together:
      - Context: Design for Development (2005)

Suggested:

- If you are really curious about a variation of the framework with much resonance, you can also read

- If you are really curious about stakeholder engagement in the context of philanthropy, you can also read

6. Leadership development in social change contexts (October 11)

Due today: Third set of journal entries for classes 5 & 6

Panel of practitioners to explore collective leadership and leadership development issues today, from a practitioner perspective, and to distill the underlying assumptions about leadership that frame and shape the existing practices.


Strongly suggested:

- If you want to see a very well developed initiative with applications of leadership development with a collective lens:

III. Social change leadership: from individual efforts to collective achievements

**ATTENTION: Individual midterm report due on Friday October 20 by midnight**

7. Mechanisms and leadership practices 1: Reframing discourse (October 18)

- CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…document
  - Intended to remind you of what this practice is about, READ ONLY Reframing Discourse section in pages 14-15.


• Listen to: The Next System Podcast (40 minutes)  **Ep. 2: Kate Raworth on "Doughnut Economics"**

• Story telling:
  - On the use of story-telling as a reframing tool:
    - Watch: Andy Goodman on story telling for nonprofits [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_x6i2RTZes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_x6i2RTZes)

• Case examples:
  - Reframing immigrant reality: Casa of Maryland: Creating “Co-Authors of Justice”. A leadership story from the LCW Program Research and Documentation Component, RCLA, NYU/Wagner.
  - Reframing indigeneity through the media:
    - Complement with: Geronimo E-KIA - A poem by the 1491s [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7vKu7X4aNA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7vKu7X4aNA)

Suggested:

• This is an interesting effort to reframe issues of race and racial equity:
  - Reframing Racial Equity: Center for Social Inclusion. “Let’s Talk about race” and “Talking about race toolkit”

• Here is an illustration of reframing happening through expressive activities:

- If you are really curious about organic and mechanic metaphors of social change, you can also read

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

- CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…
  - Intended to remind you of what this practice is about, READ ONLY
    *Bridging difference section in pages 15-16.*


- Case examples:
  - Bridging in public service (choose one of the following readings and be prepared to share)

Suggested:

If you are really curious about inter-organizational collaboration, you can also read


• An in-depth case of building coalitions:

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

• CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…
  o Intended to remind you of what this practice is about, READ ONLY Unleashing Human Energies section in pages 16 (bottom)-18 (top).


• Case examples:
  o Choose one of the following two:
    
    ▪ 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: Wheatley, Margaret and Deborah Frieze. 2011. Walk out, walk on: A learning journey into communities daring to live the future now. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc: Please read:
    ▪ Kuzunda Learning Village, Zimbabwe: From efficiency to resilience, pp. 103-128.
Suggested:

- If you are really curious about applications to a more traditional health care setting, you can also read
  

- If you are really curious about the theory of popular education and/or practical guidance to implement trainings based on the popular education approach, you can also read
  


10. Mobilizing collective capacity for social change: integrating concepts (Nov 8)

- CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…
  Intended to remind you of the concept of leadership capital and its connection to democracy, READ ONLY pages 18 (from second paragraph to end of page) and 19-20 (to mid page).

- Case examples (choose one of the following and be prepared to share):
  
  o The Electronic Hallway: Keeping industrial polluters out of Austin's Latino and African American Communities. PODER

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

- “Living the talk”: The Expressive side of social change work
  
  o An example in public administration: Joost Vos and Hendrik Wagenaar. 2014. The Munchhausen Movement: Improving the Coordination of


Suggested:

- If you are really curious about how organizational structure can be designed to promote collective leadership in nonprofits you can also read


### 11. Preparing for fieldwork (November 15)

Team work with feedback: Stepping back to prepare/share fieldwork observations, questionnaires and team memo.

  - Variations in Qualitative Interviewing (p. 341 – 348)
  - Question Options and Wording Questions (p. 348 – 365)
  - Ethical Issues Checklist (p. 408 – 409)

Assignment:

- Come prepared with draft questions and observation protocol to discuss with team members. By now you should have confirmed appointments for interviews between November 16 and December 6 (the latest).

**ATTENTION:** *Team Memo: Plan for fieldwork due on Friday November 18 (one memo per team). Please upload by midnight.*
12. Hosting: a practical tool to develop collective leadership (November 29)

Due today: Fourth set of journal entries for classes 10 & 12

- Wheatly M and D. Frieze. 2010. Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host. The Berkana Institute


- Check: http://www.artofhosting.org/home/ (art of hosting webpage)

- Please view the following short movies:
  https://vimeo.com/channels/393360 (world café, 3:38 minutes)
  https://vimeo.com/channels/393360 (four fold practice, 5:05 minutes)

- Case examples:

Suggested:

- If you are really curious about the Art of Hosting, you can also read

13. Class crowdsourcing exercise: sharing learning from your research (Dec 6)

Drawing from your research outside of class (including your interviews), we will use a ‘crowdsourcing’ exercise to develop collective insights in the classroom.
• To prepare, use further instructions in “Crowdsourcing preparation guide” in NYUClasses

14. An integrative case and concluding reflections (December 13)


• Hand-out: Wheatley, M. Core Practices of Life-Affirming Leaders

ATTENTION: Final team report due on Wed, December 20, in lieu of final exam