



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

EXEC-GP 1194 MPA Seminar: Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations Fall 2021

Instructor Information

- Shifra Bronznick
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Course Meeting Information

- In-person Class Meeting Times (all times are in Eastern Time):
 - Thursday and Friday, August 26th and 27th, and Sunday and Monday, August 29th and 30th, 9:00 am - 5:30 pm (schedule includes a lunch break)
 - Class Location TBD
 - Students must be in attendance and actively participating during all sessions and team activities.
- Virtual Capstone Session for Change Strategy Team Presentations
 - Thursday, October 7, 5:00pm - 8:30pm via ZOOM
 - Students must be in attendance and actively participating during team presentations

Course Description

Strategic Leadership is an intensive leadership course designed to equip mid-career students with the tools, perspectives, and frameworks for executing high-impact strategy within mission-driven organizations. Student performance in this course is evaluated and graded on the basis of class participation, written assignments and team presentations. The course requires significant reading, in-depth small group work, intensive classroom participation, rigorous thought and analysis, and well-constructed reflection papers.

Course topics are organized around four themes:

- 1) cultivating purposeful leadership,
- 2) analyzing conditions for articulating and achieving a desired future state
- 3) mobilizing commitment to change, and
- 4) achieving change.

Within this four-part model we explore conceptual frameworks for understanding high impact organizations and the role of strategic leadership; analytical tools for developing and assessing strategy; approaches to working with stakeholders to mobilize commitment; and methods for leading change. We explore a wide range of sources including established approaches to strategic planning as well as more emergent practices around innovation. We draw on the experience students bring to the classroom through small group work and discussion.

The course is co-taught by Shifra Bronznick and Maritza Hall.

Shifra is a seasoned organizational consultant, author and social sector strategist whose work focuses on helping organizations, networks and movements advance systemic change, and supports emerging and established leaders in expanding their capacity for impact and influence.

Maritza is an organizational development consultant and executive coach with over 20 years of experience in strategic leadership roles at prominent institutions in higher education, healthcare and non-profit organizations. She works with organization leaders on strategic issues including change management, diversity and inclusion, process improvement and strategic planning.

The course combines scholarly readings, case studies, and a range of experiential activities to support application. We recognize that EMPA students are adult professionals who learn best when they are responsible for their own learning and are given opportunity for application. In this intensive course, we will delve into the roles and tasks of strategic leaders and the contribution of strategy to building organizations that achieve lasting impact.

Course and Learning Objectives

The purpose of this course is to develop in the EMPA students an understanding of and an enhanced capacity to enact the roles and tasks of strategic leadership in the service of building a mission-driven organization with deep and lasting impact. Specifically, by the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Identify the elements of effective leadership for 21st century public challenges;
2. Apply a set of analytical tools to develop and assess effective strategy;
3. Work with others to mobilize the commitment required to deliver on a strategy; and
4. Employ a wide range of approaches to lead change initiatives.

Learning Assessment Table

| Course Learning Objective Covered | Corresponding Assignment Title |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Learning Objective #1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Takeaways from Readings • Individual Leadership Challenge |
| Learning Objective #2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Strategy Presentation |
| Learning Objective #3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective Essay on Leadership Theories • Public Narrative • Change Strategy Presentation |
| Learning Objective #4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective Essay on Leadership Theories • Individual Leadership Challenge • Change Strategy Presentation |

Course Requirements

Pre-Course Readings and Other Materials

Please note course materials include books, articles, videos and other online resources listed below, which may require that you purchase and read/watch before the start of the course:

- Ancona, Deborah, [Leading in a World of Uncertainty](#) (video, approx. 1 hr.)
- Ancona, Deborah et al., **In Praise of the Incomplete Leader**. Harvard Business Review, 2008.
- Collins, Jim, **Good to Great and the Social Sectors**. HarperCollins, 2005.
- Ganz, Marshall, **Public Narrative Workbook**. (available on Brightspace)
- Heifetz, Ronald, Grashow, Alexander and Linsky, Marty, **The Practice of Adaptive Leadership**. Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA, 2009.
- Hill, Linda, [How to Manage for Collective Creativity](#) (video, approx. 17 min.)
- La Piana, David. **The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid-Response World**, 2018 edition.
- Scott, MacKenzie. **Seeding by Ceding**. Medium, June 15, 2021. (available on Brightspace)
- Case Study: [Habitat for Humanity Egypt](#), Harvard Business School. (Note: You must purchase this case study).

Please ensure that you have full access to all readings throughout the course.

Assignments

NOTE THE DUE DATES FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT. **TWO** OF THE ASSIGNMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE **DUE PRIOR TO** THE START OF THE COURSE. ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO BOTH INSTRUCTORS USING THE ADDRESSES ON THE FIRST PAGE OF THIS SYLLABUS, AS WELL AS ON THE BRIGHTSPACE FALL 2021 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP CLASS SITE.

1. **Key Takeaways from Readings (due no later than Thursday, August 19, 2021)** – Identify and briefly describe 2-3 critical points from **each** of the leadership theory readings listed below. (Full citations can be found in the list of readings above and in each session description below). List 2-3 questions that surface for you, from **each** reading, about the practice of leadership in the social sector. This can be submitted as an outline or a bulleted list of notes. Please title your document with your last name and the words “Takeaways and Questions”. Post on Brightspace and send via email to both instructors on or before Thursday, August 19th with “Takeaways and Questions” in the subject. The instructors will review your notes to ascertain your comprehension of the readings, however you will not receive written feedback or grades for this assignment. Please come to class ready to discuss all readings.
 - a. The Practice of Adaptive Leadership
 - b. In Praise of the Incomplete Leader
 - c. Good to Great and the Social Sectors
2. **Individual Leadership Challenge for Peer-to-Peer Consultation (due no later than Friday, August 13, 2021)** - Using a structured and facilitated process, each student will have the opportunity to receive peer feedback on a public service leadership challenge they want to tackle in a professional or volunteer context. Choose a challenge that **you** have a role in tackling. Write a one-page description of your Leadership Challenge using the protocol posted on Brightspace. Please title your document with your last name and the words “Leadership Challenge” and send via email to both instructors on or before Friday, August 13th with “Leadership Challenge” in the subject. Also please post your submission on Brightspace. Please bring 5 hard copies of your Leadership Challenge on the first day of the course.
3. **Public Narrative exercise (due Sunday, August 29, 2021)** – Read the Public Narrative Workbook posted on Brightspace and, using the workbook as a guide, draft a ‘story of self’. Come prepared to further develop your draft with help from your peers and faculty, and to share your story in class on Sunday, August 29th.
4. **Change Strategy Team Presentations (due Thursday, October 7, 2021)** – Using one or more of the frameworks from class, develop a change strategy for a real-world organizational issue you are currently facing (There is an in-class process for choosing which of the organizations will be featured). Each student will be assigned to a change strategy team that will work together to create, submit electronically, and deliver a 15-

minute presentation on a change strategy on the evening of Thursday, October 7th. The team will be graded by the instructors on their presentation, and each person will assess their fellow team members' participation.

Details about the team presentation:

Teams begin their project at the conclusion of the one-week intensive, bringing their newly acquired knowledge and work/life experience to bear on real-world challenges. At the conclusion of their work together, each team prepares a presentation for their classmates and instructors that includes insightful and valuable recommendations for appropriate courses of action by the featured organization. Presentations must include the following:

- a. Background & Brief History of the Organization Issue/Case Study - Include the organization's mission, vision, values, and strategies as appropriate and relevant and define the change challenge currently faced.
 - b. Field/Sector Analysis - Analyze the most important strategic trends in the field or sector within which the organization operates, including economic and competitive characteristics of the sector.
 - c. Organization Analysis - Specify how the organization's current strengths and weaknesses as well as trends in its operating environment might impact its ability to achieve its mission.
 - d. Change Strategy - Develop a set of recommended strategies that address the organization's weaknesses, build on its strengths, and respond strategically to its external environment, in order to overcome the change challenge and achieve results.
 - e. Vision - Articulate a vision for this organization that could be achieved by advancing these strategies.
 - f. Implementation Steps and Concerns - Recommend a set of next steps to implement the strategies proposed. Identify potential roadblocks to implementation and outline a set of metrics to determine if your strategy solutions are working.
 - g. Stakeholders - Identify various stakeholders who will need to be engaged and mobilized in order to make the strategies successful and discuss how to work with each group.
5. **Reflective essay on leadership theories (due Thursday October 21st, 2021.)** Please write a polished 5–6-page essay (not an outline or bulleted list of notes), which synthesizes key lessons learned in the course and which analyzes the commonalities and differences displayed by the leadership theorists we studied. Critical points to include: your learnings and applications from the course about the practice of leadership in public service organizations; the differences between technical and adaptive challenges; the strategies and tools that are most effective in advancing change; and the shift in mindset you are cultivating as you enhance your capacity as a leader. Please make sure to cite relevant course reading, videos, discussions, and team presentations. Please title your document and email with your last name and the words "Reflective

Essay” and send via email to both instructors on or before **Thursday October 21st, 2021** for grading.

Grading Table

| Graded Assignments | Value |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Class Participation | 30% |
| Reflective Essay | 30% |
| Team Project | 20% |
| Peer and Self Assessments | 20% |

Consultation Sessions with Faculty

Change Strategy Teams will each have the opportunity for a 30-minute consultative meeting (dates TBD) with the professor(s), during which they will receive pragmatic evaluative feedback on their project. This feedback will encourage students to sharpen their analytical, problem-solving and team-building skills. Detailed instructions will be provided at the start of the course.

Course Schedule

The corresponding pre-work and readings for each class session are listed under the “Course Schedule” section of this syllabus and in Brightspace. Please complete all readings for each session in advance of the session.

Session One: Thursday, August 26, 2021, Cultivating Purposeful Leadership

Learning Objectives

- Deepen our shared understanding of one another to discover the aspirations, talents and experiences of the members of your cohort that can be applied to our inquiries into leadership challenges
- Analyze critical frameworks that shape the course and our understanding of strategic leadership in the public service field, including how best to create shared and collective leadership, how to exercise adaptive leadership and how to execute strategic leadership at every level from the individual to the organizational to the systemic.
- Develop a practice for creating and articulating purpose and vision in service of setting direction within public service organizations.
- Delve into the evolution of leaders and leadership from the heroic individual to shared leadership.
- Establish group norms that help cultivate effective leadership practices

Readings

- Ancona, Deborah et. al., “In Praise of the Incomplete Leader”, Harvard Business Review, 2005.
- Collins, Jim. Good to Great and the Social Sectors. HarperCollins, 2005.
- Heifetz, Ronald, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Harvard Business Press. 2009.
- Video: Ancona, Deborah, [Leading in a World of Uncertainty](#) (video, approx. 1 hr.)
- Scott, MacKenzie, “Seeding by Ceding,” Medium, June 15, 2021 (available on Brightspace)

Session Two: Friday, August 27, 2021, Analyzing Conditions to Build a Theory of Change

Learning Objectives

- Understand the dynamic nature of the environment in which public service organizations are operating today
- Examine how to make effective choices for an organization that align its resources with its priorities for growth and impact.
- Apply tools for assessing an organization and its environment and articulating and achieving a desired future state and intended impact.

Readings

- La Piana, David. *The Nonprofit Strategy Revolution: Real-Time Strategic Planning in a Rapid-Response World*. Fieldstone Alliance, 2018 edition
- Colby, Susan, Nan Stone and Paul Carttar, *Zeroing in on Impact*, Stanford Social Innovation Review Fall 2004. (available on Brightspace)

Session Three: Sunday, August 29, 2021 Mobilizing Commitment to Change

Learning Objectives

- Explore the nature of collective and distributed leadership and strategies for fostering it among public service organizations.
- Practice building commitment, through the creation of a story of self and a public narrative.
- Understand the role of competing commitments in inhibiting progress and explore strategies for overcoming those barriers to change.

Readings

- Ganz, Marshall, *Public Narrative Workbook*. (available on Brightspace)
- *Child Welfare Case Materials* (available on Brightspace)
- Meyerson, Debra E., *Radical Change the Quiet Way*, Harvard Business Review, October 2001. (available on Brightspace)

Session Four: Monday, August 30, 2021 Achieving Change

Learning Objectives

- Analyze a set of perspectives on how to lead change, including how to engage in cross-sector and collaborative change efforts, how to create change from outside a position of authority, and how to foster conditions for continuous innovation.

- Apply change models to cases from the world around us.
- Synthesize learning across the course to produce a final, shared set of critical components of high impact organizations and articulate the role of strategic leadership in building such organizations

Readings

- Habitat for Humanity Egypt Case Study from Harvard Business School. Note: You must purchase this case online here - <https://store.hbr.org/product/habitat-for-humanity-egypt/307001>
- Review: Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership. Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA.
- John Kania and Mark Kramer, Collective Impact in Stanford Social Innovation Review, WINTER 2011. (available on Brightspace)

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 should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for 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.