Instructor Information

- Professor Sonia Ospina
- Email: sonia.ospina@nyu.edu
- Office Address: Puck Building, Rm 3075
- Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4-6 pm or by appointment.

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Wednesdays, 6:45 – 8:45pm
- Location: 194 Mercer Room 304

Course Prerequisites

- CORE-GP 1022, Introduction to Public Policy or CORE-GP 1020, Management and Leadership

Course Description

This course aims to engage students in a transformative learning experience that contributes to challenge, deconstruct and reconstruct their understanding of social change leadership; this, with the purpose of reflecting on the implications for enacting their own leadership, as they engage in work that addresses some aspect of social inequality and exclusion. The course draws on research insights and practical lessons from leadership in social change organizations that want to transform existing thinking, policies and structures by pursuing democratic systemic solutions to problems associated with their communities’ experience of exclusion. The course is available to students in all Wagner specializations—management, policy, finance, SI3 and Advocacy—and all programs—International, PNP, Health and Urban Planning.

The course challenges a traditional–single, heroic– approach to leadership that emphasizes the “leader-follower” relationship. Instead, it is grounded on a leadership perspective that fosters a collaborative mindset, a bottom-up participatory approach and relational principles to engaging the world, namely, collective leadership. In this perspective, leadership happens as members of a group make meaning together to act towards achieving a shared purpose. The group creates the conditions to find the direction required to transform individual efforts into collective results.
Because of the emphasis on inequality, the approach highlights the contested arenas where addressing these problems is a negotiated responsibility distributed among participants with differential access to resources and power.

While the conceptual emphasis is on action at the organizational level, connections to the individual and policy levels are considered. The course aims to sensitize participants to the self in relation to others, and to the constellation of relationships, structures, processes and institutional dynamics that shape leadership and may support or derail change efforts embedded within larger systems.

Students will use frameworks –of leadership and of social change– to challenge their leader-centered understanding and reflect on how to implement their own leadership as effective change agents in their spheres of influence. Depending on their professional interests, students are invited to draw on insights from social change organizations to explore other public service institutional contexts; and to assess the pitfalls and promises of engaging in social change leadership. Students will also explore the practical implications of developing collective leadership capabilities as part of their leadership repertoire.

• Course and Learning Objectives

By the end of the course you will:

1. Recognize your own mental models and assumptions about leadership and social transformation; and use these to identify key personal strengths, gaps and strategies to develop leadership capabilities as an effective social change agent.

2. Be able to contrast a perspective of leadership (emphasizing its collective dimensions) with traditional perspectives (emphasizing its individual dimensions); and articulate the benefits and challenges of a collective perspective to produce effective social change.

3. Assess examples of leadership practices in social change organizations to see how they help individual efforts become collective achievements; and appreciate the power of leadership work that weaves individual, organizational and policy levels of action.

4. Apply insights about collective leadership for social transformation in a team project that proposes and develops a social change activity or tool to support broader organized, collective efforts to address an intractable problem associated with inequality or exclusion in a particular policy domain of their interest.

5. Articulate and share lessons drawn from the process and product of the projects by engaging in deep conversations and team work with peers who share the passion for addressing shared concerns around some aspect of social inequality.
Course Requirements and Assessment

Class expectations

The course is structured as a seminar/workshop. Classes are a mix of mini-lectures, group discussions of cases and exemplars, in-depth plenary conversations, and guest speakers. It is, therefore, very important to prepare both readings AND social media content prior to class and to participate actively in the discussions. Reading guides for each session highlight key concepts and ideas for class discussion and exercises. All required assignments are available electronically via NYU’s and Wagner’s online electronic services, primarily Brightspace.

Summary of Assignments and Associated Learning Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Course Objective Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In class conversations</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Throughout the course</td>
<td>#2, #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assigned mini-reports</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Sept 16; Sept 30; Oct 14; Nov 18 OR Nov 24</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten journal entries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Your journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Classes 2 through 11</td>
<td>#1, #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Your comments to others’ journals</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Classes 2 through 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual organizational analysis assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Verbal report</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Thu Oct 14 or Fri 15</td>
<td>#1, #2, #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final version</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Mon Oct 18; Interim2 Mon Nov 15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team final report</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Interim reports</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Interim1 Mon Oct 18; Interim2 Mon Nov 15</td>
<td>#3, #4, #5</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final presentation</td>
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<td>Final Wed Dec 8</td>
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- **Class participation**, grounded on prepared assignments: meaningful participation in ongoing conversations and brief group report-outs of selected video material per instructions.
- **10 journal entries**: before class you post your reactions to the readings in Brightspace; after class you scan your fellow students’ reactions and reply to a few (credit given for your journal and for replies to colleagues after class).
- An individual **organizational analysis report**; assessed in two stages: first, a verbal report of your tentative findings presented (by zoom) during assigned office hours, when other students doing the same organization will also report and engage in conversation; and second, an individual written report of your findings and implications for your own leadership.
• A term **team project** to create a product that contributes to a real social justice oriented-change process in a real organization or movement
  o Two brief team interim reports: a) when teams are formed; b) the team’s work plan and progress.
  o A final verbal team report of what you accomplished and what you learned about collective leadership from the team project.

Assignments build cumulatively. Please refer to **Brightspace Instructions tab** for detailed descriptions, expectations and grading criteria for each assignment. **It is your responsibility to study these documents as part of your preparation for the course.** Your performance will be assessed during the semester, and there will be no formal mid-term or final exam.

* Please see **Appendix** at the end of the syllabus for information on how letter grades are assigned.

**Absenteeism, punctuality, and in-class conduct**

You are expected to attend all classes, and arrive on time. If you need to miss a class due to unavoidable circumstances, please send the professor a message in advance and contact another member of the class to get what was covered in class. A follow-up during office hours is highly recommended if you miss a class. Missing more than two classes without excuse will affect your class participation grade. Systematic tardiness, disruptive behavior (including missing parts of the class, engaging in activities not related to class) is unacceptable and will also negatively impact your grade.

**Academic Integrity.** I expect strict adherence to University guidelines for academic integrity. You are responsible to know these guidelines and to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is very likely to result in a failing grade for the course. 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.**

**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 the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosecsd@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.
Overview of Course Contents

1. **Introduction**: exploring our assumptions and commitments (Sept. 8)

**Part I: Grounding Social Change Leadership: Systemic Change and Systems Leadership**

2. New Vistas On Leadership: From Individual To Collective (Sept. 15; Journal 1; mini-report by group)
3. Systems thinking and systems leadership (Sept. 22; Journal 2)
4. Social transformation: variations in the meaning of social change (Sept. 29; journal 3; mini-report by group)
   - Verbal preliminary report of Organizational Analysis due Oct 14 and/or 15 (during meeting)

**Part II: Leadership Practices: Leveraging power for Social Change**

5. The social change leadership framework: Collective leadership in action (Oct. 6; Journal 4)
6. Reframing discourse (Oct. 13; Journal 5; mini-report by group)
   - Interim team report 1 (group formation) due Monday October 18
7. Bridging difference (Oct. 20; Journal 6)
8. Unleashing human energies (Oct. 27; Journal 7)

**Part III: Selected Strategies and Tools for Mobilizing Collective Capacity**

9. Learning and Organizing: Tools of the mind and of the heart (Nov 3)
   - Final Version of written Organizational Analysis due Monday November 1
10. Leadership Development in complex contexts (Nov 10); Journal 9 – Guest Speakers: Steadman Harrison and Chuck Palus, 6:45-7:45 pm
   - Interim team report 2 (project plan & progress) due on Monday, Nov. 15
11. Facilitating deep engagement for organizational problem-solving (Nov 17); Journal 10; mini-report by group – Guest Speakers: Kelly McGowan and Rich Rivera, 6:45-7:45 pm
12. Structuring the work for organizational problem-solving (Nov 24); mini-report by group.

**Part IV: Lessons and Reflections about Social Change Leadership**

13. Integration and applications (Dec. 1) Guest Speaker: Ericka Stallings (6:45-7:45 pm)
14. Sharing learning from your team projects and Concluding reflections (Dec. 8)
   - Sharing the product of your team projects
Course Contents

Class 1. Introduction: Exploring our assumptions (Sept. 8)

Required Readings and E-materials (See "Reading Guide" In Brightspace):

- Watch the video:
  o Sasquatch music festival 2009: Guy starts dance party (3 minutes)
- Drath, Bill (Wilfred). (Document # 1): Two notes on relational leadership.
- Case example: Milewski, Jennifer. 2007. Quantum Leadership: The Power of Community in Motion.

Part I: Grounding Social Change Leadership: Systemic Change and Systems Leadership

Class 2. New Vistas On Leadership: From Individual To Collective (Sept. 15)

Assignment: First journal entry in the Brightspace discussion platform.

Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- Overview of leadership theories (Pre-lecture video/powerpoint by Prof Ospina: 35 minutes) - This is required for class and may count as a “reading” for your journal.
- Overview of leadership theories (reading and short video)
  o Sorenson G. and G. Goethals. 2004. Leadership Theories: Overview. Read ONLY the following sections: Introduction; Trait, behavior and Situational or Contingency Approaches; Theories of Transformational Leadership; Cognitive and Constructivist Theories; The Future.
  o Watch video: Ten Leadership Theories in Five Minutes
- Collective leadership: a relational approach to leadership (core ideas)
- Adaptive leadership: Heifetz, Ronald A. 2010. Leadership. Read all 13 pages, but see instructions on what to focus on in Brightspace.
  o Please watch the 9 minute video from Heifetz.

Assigned mini-report (selected students read- see instructions in Brightspace):
• Watch the video: Wayfinding Leadership: Wisdom for Developing Potential | (19:20 minutes).

Suggested:

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

Class 3. Systems thinking and systems leadership (Sept. 22)

Assignments: Second journal entry in the Brightspace discussion platform.

Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

• View the short video: The Value of Systems Thinking
• Read the blog: Living Systems Leadership.
  o Complement this reading with the Handout: “Habits of a Systems Thinker” one-pager posted in Brightspace. Once reviewed, please follow the instructions posted below the handout.
• SSIR Editors. Leading Systems.

Suggested:

• If you are really curious about systems theory applications for social interventions, you can also read:
Class 4. Social transformation: variations in the meaning of social change (Sept. 29)

Assignment: Third journal entry in the Brightspace discussion platform.

Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

• Background: On the nature of social change
  o View the short video: How does social change happen?
  o HANDOUT: Abraham, T. What we’re really saying when we talk about social change Generocity, 2016
• Existential dilemmas & challenges
  o Kivel, P. 2007. “Social service or social change?”
• Case examples of social change in organizations and neighborhoods:
  o Case example # 1:
    ▪ Brotherhood/Sister Soul: Watch the Video (9 minutes)
    ▪ Browse the organization’s webpage
  o Case examples #2 & 3: CHOOSE ONE TO READ:
    ▪ Option 2: “Keeping industrial polluters out of Austin’s Latino and African American Communities. PODER.

Assigned mini-report (selected students read- see instructions in Brightspace):

• Listen to the webinar: The Six Conditions of Systems Change (70 minutes) FSG website (see reference below, in suggested readings, for accompanying text).

Suggested:

• If you are really curious about a step-by-step description of the nature of social change and its applications to the social sector and social partnerships, here is a how-to guide you can read:
• If you are really curious about different understandings of progressive social change, you can read:

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Part II: Leadership Practices: Leveraging power for Social Change

Class 5. The social change leadership framework: collective leadership in action (Oct. 6)

Assignment: Fourth journal entry in the Brightspace discussion platform.

Required Readings (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- Overview of the framework and the leadership practices:
  - Parés et al, 2017. Democratic leadership: the work of leadership for social change. READ ONLY from page 76 (start on section 4.3.1) to page 79 (stop before 4.4) AND pages 85 (start at 4.5) to 88 (stop before 4.6) (you will read more next week).
  - Watch Video Professor Ospina: Leading Collectively (15 minutes)
- For the focus on community engagement:
  - Minieri et al, 2005, “From Constituents to Stakeholders”. Research Center for Leadership in Action, NYU/Wagner (see reading instructions in Brightspace)
- For incorporating power into the analysis: (see readings in next week’s class)

Suggested:

- For a discussion of stakeholder engagement in nonprofits, with excellent examples from the health and education sectors, you can also read:

Class 6. Reframing discourse (Oct. 13)

Assignments: Fifth journal entry in Brightspace; verbal preliminary report of Organizational Analysis (due Oct 14 and/or Oct 15 during programmed ZOOM meeting).

HEADS-UP: Interim Team Report 1: due on Monday October 18 (one report per team). Please upload by midnight.

Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- Continued from last week: For incorporating power into the analysis:
Research and Inquiry.  *Attention: Portions of this reading will be assigned to different students; see students' portions in Brightspace.*

- Brief definition of Reframing Discourse: Parés et al.  CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…document.  **READ ONLY** *Reframing Discourse* section (4.4.1) on pages 80-81.
- Listen to the video The **Role of Narrative Change in Collective Action** (60 minutes)
- Case Example: Reframing immigrant reality– Casa of Maryland: Creating “Co-Authors of Justice”.

Assigned **mini-report** (selected students read- see instructions in Brightspace):

- Listen to the webinar: **Shifting Mental Models to Advance Systems Change** (61 minutes).

Suggested:

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

**Class 7. Bridging difference (Oct. 20)**

Assignment: Sixth journal entry in Brightspace.

**Required Readings (See “Reading Guides” in Brightspace):**

- Brief definition of Bridging Difference: Parés et al.  CHAPTER 4: Democratic leadership…document.  **READ ONLY** *Bridging difference* section (4.4.2) on pp. 81-83.
- Wei-Skillern, J, D. Ehrlichman and D. Sawyer. 2015. The Most Impactful Leaders you’ve Never Heard of. (4 pages)

Suggested:

- If you are really curious about inter-organizational collaboration, you can also read
Class 8. Unleashing human energies (Oct. 28)

Assignment: Seventh journal entry in Brightspace; final written individual Organizational Analysis due Monday November 1; Please upload by midnight.

Required Readings (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- Cooker-Sather, A. 2003. Movements of Mind: The Matrix, Metaphors and Reimagining Education. Read pages 946-952; then read only one of the two metaphors presented in pages 952-958; then read 959-963.

Please go to CLASS 5 in Brightspace and locate the 35 minute video assigned for that day (this was the start of Part 2 of the course). As we move to the third part of the course, and time permitting, I will make in class a brief closing statement about the second part, and it will make a lot more sense for you if you review a 10 minute portion of this video, which goes from minute 5:35 to minute 14-15; I describe there the three leadership practices, using as example The Young Women's Freedom Center.

Suggested:

- 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
  - Theodore, Nick. 2009. When Workers Take the Lead. RCLA, New York University, NY.

Part III: Selected Strategies and Tools for Mobilizing Collective Capacity

Class 9. Learning and Organizing: Tools of the mind and of the heart (Nov 3)

- Assignments: Eighth journal entry in Brightspace.
Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

Part 1: Participatory Action Research

- Explore the Research for Organizing Toolkit. See specific instructions in Brightspace. You will focus on the following sections:
  - Overview of Participatory Action Research
  - Designing your research
  - Getting your data

- Case example: In the same webpage, on the right side, click on the link to Case Studies and choose one from the three cases presented and be prepared to discuss it.

Part 2: Story-telling for learning

- Listen to portions of the following Video: (it is 60 minutes, but you must only listen to about 30 minutes–if you prefer):
  - https://www.globalacademy.media/video/marshall-ganz-power-storytelling/#2428
    - The entire interview is great, but if you are short of time, start at minute 17:00 to 34:30 and then again from 40:28 to 49:40 and finally 59:54 to 1:03, which is a total of about 30 minutes.

- Case examples:
  - Read the following Practice Note, keeping in mind that we will try to apply this method as an exercise in class:
    - RCLA. 2008. Story Circle Method (4 pages)
  - Explore various tabs of the Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide in the website Working Narratives; be prepared to discuss an insight in class.

Suggested:

- If you are really curious about the underlying assumptions of action research, this Encyclopedia entry offers a good introduction

- For an earlier but excellent conceptualization of the role of story-telling:

Class 10. Leadership development in complex contexts (November 10)

Assignments: Nineth journal entry in Brightspace; interim Team Report 2: Monday November 15 (one report per team). Please upload by midnight.
We will hear about leadership development initiatives that take a collective leadership perspective, from a practitioner perspective, to illustrate how the underlying assumptions frame and shape the design, practices, strategies and tools.

- Guest Speakers: Steadman Harrison, CEO, GOInnovation and Chuck Palus, Emeritus, Center for Creative Leadership. See bios & organizations in Brightspace.

Required Readings (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):


Suggested:

- If you want to explore a proposal of leadership capabilities for the social sector:
- If you want to see an exemplar of leadership development programs that apply collective leadership principles to design and implementation:

**Class 11. Facilitating deep engagement for organizational problem-solving (Nov 17)**

Assignment: Tenth journal entry in Brightspace.

We will explore a tradition called The Art of Hosting, which demonstrates the importance of facilitation skills to create spaces for engagement and participation around social problem solving.

**Guest Speakers:** Kelly McGowan, Executive Director, Going Up-Stream and Richard Rivera, President of RR Consulting & Associates (see bios in Brightspace).
Required Readings and E-materials (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- For the Art of Hosting
  - Study/browse The Art of Hosting webpage; Watch a 3 minute video on the World Café
- Watch the video Changing the Way We Change the World (17:35 minutes); (this will be the basis for the mini-report your colleagues will present today, and you should be familiar with the content to address their presentation)

Assigned mini-report (selected students read- see instructions in Brightspace):

- Organization Unbound. Changing the Way we Change the World.
  - Watch the video Changing the Way We Change the World (17:35 minutes)
  - Study the four self-guided workshops and draw on them for your mini-report to illustrate the approach supporting the video.

Suggested:

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

Class 12. Structuring the work for organizational problem-solving (Nov 24)

Required Readings (See “Reading Guides” In Brightspace):

- Organizations that Embrace Interdependence (in Rau & Kock-Gonzalez, 2018) (Excerpt)

- Please choose one of these two readings and be prepared to discuss in class:

- Read the Handout: **Synergos Adopts Co-Executive Director Model.** Be prepared to discuss in class.

Assigned **mini-report** (selected students read- see instructions in Brightspace):

- Watch the Video: **Shifting How We Work to Reach Transformational Change.**

**Part IV: Lessons and Reflections about Social Change Leadership**

**Class 13. Integration and applications (Dec. 1)**

- **PART 1**

  **Guest Speaker: Ericka Stallings,** Co-Executive Director of the Leadership Learning Community (see bio in Brightspace).

- **PART 2:** Course closure (some final reflections and learnings)

Required Readings (See "Reading Guides" In Brightspace):

- Ashford, MW. 2004. “Staying the Course."

**Class 14. Sharing learning from your team projects and Concluding reflections (Dec. 9)**

Assignment: Sharing the products of your team projects. Be prepared to present!

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**Appendix. Explanation of Letter Grades and Criteria**

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.0 points</td>
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</table>

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.
- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in "good standing."
- (C/-/+ Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.
- (F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.

Syllabus updated: 10/01/2021