



NYU

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

EXEC-GP 1194 MPA Seminar: Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations Fall 2022

Course Description

What does it mean to lead? This course is an exploration of both broad and specific notions of leadership. As a guiding framework, we will study ideas and theories developed at Harvard University by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky over the last 30 years about the work of leaders in mobilizing groups to act to solve complex and seemingly intractable problems. We will contrast Heifetz and Linsky's notion of leadership with more traditional theories of leadership. We will use personal stories and real-world examples of leadership in action to support students to gain clarity about the "big idea" of leadership, and what types of leaders they are and can be.

Strategic Leadership is an intensive leadership course designed to equip mid-career students with the tools, perspectives, and framework for executing high-impact strategy within mission driven organizations.

Course Meeting Information

Monday and Tuesday, August 22 and 23** 9:00am to 5:00pm

Monday and Tuesday, August 29 and 30** 9:00am to 5:00pm

**After the class meetings on the 23rd and 30th students are invited to an optional happy hour with the instructors from 5:30 to 6:30 at an outside location, a short distance from where the class meets.

August class Location: 60 Fifth Avenue, Room 265

Thursday, September 22 5:30pm to 6:30pm

This class session will meet via Zoom

Session for Adaptive Leadership Team Presentations

Thursday, October 20, 5:00pm - 8:30pm - location: TBD

Instructors

The course is being team-taught by Takiema Bunche-Smith and Michael Thomas Duffy.

Takiema Bunche-Smith

Takiema.Bunche.Smith@gmail.com

(347) 423-0573

Michael Thomas Duffy

MDuffy@GreatOaksCharter.org

(917) 239-3641

Takiema is the founder and president of Anahsa Consulting, whose mission is to create joyful and liberated early childhoods for all children through transformative personal and professional development. She is also the former executive director of the Center on Culture, Race and Equity at Bank Street College. Takiema has worked as an executive leader and coach, curriculum designer and facilitator, educator of preschoolers through adults, and parent activist for over two decades. Her personal mission is to support individuals to understand their identities and personal capacities to effect change in organizations and society at the intersections of theory, research, policy, and practice. She transforms the spaces she inhabits into places with strong cultures of anti-oppression and racial equity, with a focus on equity and joy for all. Takiema holds Master's degrees from Bank Street College of Education, the CUNY Graduate Center, and from NYU Wagner's School for Public Service EMPA program.

Michael is the president of the GO Foundation, which has a mission to provide students with access to a quality education through high dosage tutoring. Previously he worked at the NYC Department of Education, working for three years in the administration of Mayor Michael Bloomberg to expand the number of high-quality charter schools. Michael's efforts in education grew out of his work in the civil rights movement, having served as Chairman and Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' civil rights enforcement agency, a position he held for six years. He has also held leadership positions in the non-profit sector: he served on the Board of Directors of the Human Rights Campaign, for several years as its co-chair; two terms on the vestry of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Manhattan; and is currently chair of the board of the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts. Michael has a master's degree in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a degree in Economics from Trinity College in Connecticut.

Course and Learning Objectives

In this course, students will: (1) learn how to distinguish technical challenges from adaptive ones; (2) understand group dynamics and work avoidance when it comes to facing adaptive challenges; (3) consider how identity and the role of power in society impacts leadership; (4) explore the tactics of adaptive leadership, including pacing, forging partnerships, acting politically and distinguishing between the view from the 'balcony' and the 'dance floor'; (5) consider the risks to those who take on adaptive leadership challenges.

After taking the course, students will have a stronger sense of their own opportunity to lead, regardless of the formal authority that they may or may not possess. *Strategic Leadership for Public Service Organizations* will equip students with both a better understanding of how to approach threats that have resisted past attempts at resolution and a set of practical tools that they can employ in tackling those threats.

Course Materials

The following course materials include books, articles, videos and other online resources to purchase and review before the start of the course:

Books:

Collins, Jim, **Good to Great and the Social Sectors**. HarperCollins, 2005

Heifetz, Ronald, Grashow, Alexander and Linsky, Marty, [The Practice of Adaptive Leadership](#), Harvard Business Press, Cambridge, MA, 2009

Sanders, Chad, [Black Magic](#), Simon & Schuster, 2021

Stone, Douglas; Patton, Bruce; Heen, Sheila [Difficult Conversations](#), Penguin Books, 2010

Media:

Ancona, Deborah, [Leading in a World of Uncertainty](#) (video, approx. 1 hr.)

[Deepa Iyer Workshop on mapping social roles in a change ecosystem](#)

Twelve O'Clock High, 20th Century Fox, 1949

[The Times of Harvey Milk](#), Criterion Films, 1984

[Crip Camp A Disability Revolution](#) Netflix, 2020

The Wire, Season 3, Episode 4, "Hamsterdam" & Episode 9, "Slapstick", HBO 2004 (Available on HBO Max)

Articles:

Ancona, Deborah et al., [In Praise of the Incomplete Leader](#) Harvard Business Review, 2008

Gray, Asya [The Bias of Professionalism Standards](#) Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2019

Meyerson, Debra E., Radical Change the Quiet Way, Harvard Business Review, October 2001. (available on Brightspace)

Truss, Joe [What happened when my school started to dismantle white supremacy culture](#). Ed Week 2018

Podcasts:

70 over 70, [“Prologue: The Balcony and the Dance Floor with Marty Linsky”](#)

Black Woman Leading, the Podcast S2E2: [“Black Women’s Work Past, Present, and Future with Dr. Crystal Moten”](#)

Additional resources (optional):

Heumann, J. and Joiner, K. [Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist](#) Penguin Random House, 2020

Assignments

Student performance in this course is evaluated and graded on the basis of class participation, written assignments and team presentations. The course requires reading, small group work, classroom participation and reflection papers.

Reading Reflections (due Friday, August 19 & Friday, August 26) – Write a paper of up to 750 words that engages with the course material assigned for Sessions I & II by 8/19 and Sessions III & IV by 8/26. Please title your document with your last name and the words “Reading Reflections”. Post on Brightspace and send via email to both instructors.

Failure Case Study (due Friday, August 19) - Using a structured and facilitated process, each student will have the opportunity to receive peer feedback in a small group setting on a past instance when they failed in a professional or personal context. Write a one-page description of your personal Failure Case Study using the protocol posted on Brightspace. Please title your document with your last name and the words “Failure Case Study” and send via email to both instructors. Bring 6 hard copies of your Failure Case Study on the first day of the course.

Adaptive Leadership Team Presentations (due Thursday, October 20) – Small group teams begin their project at the conclusion of Session IV, bringing their newly acquired knowledge and work/life experience to bear on real-time adaptive challenges. Each team prepares a 15-minute presentation on an adaptive leadership challenge on the evening of Thursday, October 20. The team will be graded by the instructors on their presentation, and each person will assess their fellow team members’ participation. Teams will each have the opportunity for a 30-minute consultation with the instructors, during which they will receive feedback on their proposed Adaptive Leadership challenge.

Final Paper (due Thursday November 3) – Write a 1,250 word paper which synthesizes key lessons learned in the course and which analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the Adaptive Leadership framework. Critical points to include: lessons learned about the applications of the theory from the course about the practice of leadership in public service organizations or in your personal life; the differences between technical and adaptive challenges. Cite relevant course reading, videos, films, discussions, and team presentations.

Grading Table

| Graded Assignments | Value |
|---------------------|-------|
| Reading Reflections | 20% |
| Case Study | 20% |
| Final Paper | 20% |
| Team Project | 20% |
| Class Participation | 20% |

Course Schedule

The corresponding pre-work and readings for each class session are listed below and in Brightspace. Please complete the assigned readings and viewing for each session in advance of class.

Session I: Monday, August 22

Historically, how has leadership been defined? How do you define leadership? What is the relationship between *leadership* and *authority*? What are the Platonic concepts of leadership? What are the uses and limits of these conceptions? How is leadership experienced by those within an organization, and why does that matter?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapters 1 through 6

Sanders, Black Magic, all

Twelve O'Clock High, 20th Century Fox, 1949

Session II: Tuesday, August 23

Understanding the difference between technical and adaptive leadership challenges. Why is the distinction important in thinking about the work of leadership? How can issues present as both technical and adaptive challenges? What happens when the work of leadership feels “messy”?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Chapters 7 through 12

Ancona, Deborah et. al., “In Praise of the Incomplete Leader”, Harvard Business Review, 2005.

Truss, Joe [What happened when my school started to dismantle white supremacy culture](#). Ed Week 2018

The Wire, Season 3, Episode 4, “Hamsterdam”, Episode 9, “Slapstick”

Session III: Monday, August 29

What are the tools an adaptive leader can deploy? How does an adaptive leader go about orchestrating conflict towards a productive end? What does it mean to give the work back to the group? What might success look like for adaptive leaders and the groups they lead? How and why do groups conspire to neutralize adaptive leaders? Discussion of literal and figurative examples of leader “assassination”. What is possible when we expand our notions of “who a leader is”?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, [The Practice of Adaptive Leadership](#), Chapters 13 through 18

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. HarperCollins, 2005.

The Times of Harvey Milk, Criterion Films, 1984

[Crip Camp A Disability Revolution](#) Netflix, 2020

Meyerson, Debra E., *Radical Change the Quiet Way*, Harvard Business Review, October 2001. (available on Brightspace)

Session IV: Tuesday, August 30

Understanding the systems that thwart attempts to resolve adaptive challenges. Exploring how systemic challenges and barriers are reflected within organizations. What are the uses of the metaphor of “Getting on the Balcony” and what is meant by the admonition to “Think Politically” when it comes to adaptive leadership?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, [The Practice of Adaptive Leadership](#), Chapters 19 through 24

[S2E2: Black Women’s Work Past, Present, and Future with Dr. Crystal Moten Black Woman Leading](#)

Gray, Asya [The Bias of Professionalism Standards](#) Stanford Social

70 over 70 podcast, “Prologue: The Balcony and the Dance Floor with Marty Linsky”

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 are welcome to consult with either one of the instructors at any time.

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.