

LDST 102: Social Foundations of Leadership

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Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond

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Section 1: Jepson Hall 102

Tu/Th 12:00 - 1:15 PM

Section 2: Jepson Hall 102

Tu/Th 1:30 - 2:45 PM

Office Hours: We 3:00 - 5:00 PM and by appointment

Office: Jepson Hall 233

Course Description

A Jepson education investigates leadership not only as a position but also as a process and a relationship among people.

Jepson School of Leadership Studies' website

The quotation above suggests that leadership is a phenomenon that transcends individual leaders. Broadly understood, leadership is about how groups of people come together to make collective decisions. This process often, though not always, involves certain individuals stepping into leadership roles. Sometimes decisions on behalf of a group are imposed, while at other times they are reached voluntarily. However decisions are made, leadership remains at the heart of the collective human experience. In this sense, leadership is also a profound puzzle. If individual interests and motivations so often collide, how do people manage to act as a collective at all? There are many possible answers and a central aim of this class is to explore the leading explanations. We will seek to understand why different solutions to the puzzle of leadership emerge in different circumstances and consider the consequences that each type of solution produces. To do this, we will examine diverse settings, from populist politics and international relations to rural villages in sub-Saharan Africa. In the spirit of the liberal arts, our ultimate goal is to understand the phenomenon of leadership in a way that allows us to generate a positive impact beyond the classroom.

Course Goals

- Students will gain knowledge about core concepts concerning collective action as viewed through the lens of social science.
- Students will become familiar with broad empirical patterns of leadership, including traditional leadership, charismatic leadership, and rational-legal leadership.
- Students will acquire knowledge of the most common approaches to the empirical study of collective action and leadership.
- Students will become familiar with the methods and evidentiary standards in academic literature on leadership and related social phenomena.

My Teaching Philosophy

When teaching in the undergraduate classroom, I proceed with three overarching goals in mind. The first and most fundamental is to cultivate a life-long passion for learning in my students. My philosophy is that a great teacher lights a spark of curiosity that is innate to all human beings. The second objective of my approach to undergraduate teaching is to give students the tools and cognitive habits that allow them to critically evaluate arguments and consider alternative explanations to claims they encounter. Finally, I seek to equip students with an ability to articulate their own ideas in clear language, whether spoken or written. Together, these principles coalesce to prepare my students for a life of curiosity, respectful yet critical appraisal of differing views, and a measure of comfort with sharing and defending their own ideas.

Course Materials

I will make most of the course materials available to students on the course website. Students are required to use university libraries to obtain the rest. There are no required texts to purchase.

Assignments and Grading

Reading Quizzes (10%)

Before every class, students will complete an online reading quiz on the course website. The quiz will pose several rudimentary questions that will be closely related to the readings assigned for a given class session. The questions will probe students' understanding of the main arguments, facts, and conclusions encountered in the materials. Most students should find the questions easy as long as they complete the assigned readings on time. The goal of these quizzes is to ensure that students read attentively. Questions will become available at the end of previous class and close five minutes before the class session for which readings were assigned. Students will have ten minutes to complete a quiz in one attempt but they can finish it at any point between two class sessions. The lowest quiz score will be dropped and students' overall quiz

grade will be an average of the remaining quizzes. Because the lowest score will be dropped, there will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, even for excused absences.

Midterm Exam (20%)

Students will complete one midterm exam on October 9. The exam will draw from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions through week 6. The exam will be a mixture of multiple-choice questions (four answer options, one correct answer), short-answer questions, and a short essay. Students will have the entire class period (75 minutes) to write the exam. The exam will be closed-book.

Final Exam (25%)

Students will complete one final exam on December 4. The exam will draw from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions from weeks 8-14. It will consist of several short essay questions and students will have 75 minutes to complete it. The exam will be closed-book.

Museum Visit Reflection Paper (5%)

Students will visit one of the following two off-campus sites in Richmond before the end of the semester: The Virginia Holocaust Museum or the Virginia State Capitol. Admission is to both places is free for students. Visits should be completed independently, at any point before the last class meeting of the semester. After the visit, students will write a reflection paper responding to the appropriate prompt below:

- **Virginia Holocaust Museum:** Nazi leaders organized and carried out the biggest crime in history by securing the cooperation—whether through passive acceptance, inaction, indifference, or active participation—of people who were neither committed Nazis nor direct victims. Based on your visit, explain how the Nazis were able to enlist or compel others to help carry out their objectives. Use specific examples from the exhibits to support your answer.
- **Virginia State Capitol:** The State Capitol is the center of political power in Virginia. Based on your visit, reflect on what type of leadership (charismatic, traditional, or rational-legal) leaders working at the Capitol exhibit in order to govern the state's population.

Reflections will be evaluated on how thoughtfully and directly they address the prompt, the use of specific examples from the visit, and the clarity of writing. All submissions should meet the following requirements:

- **Length:** Between 2 and 3 double-spaced pages.
- **Margins:** 1 inch or less on all sides.
- **Font:** 12-point maximum size.

Final Paper (25%)

Students will finish the course by writing an original essay that will engage the ideas and examples introduced in class. Specifically, students will select one example of leadership or collective action (broadly construed) from the real world and try to explain it with the help of one of the theories covered in this class. For example, a successful paper might use a theory of presidential narcissism to explain a particular president's foreign policy behavior. In the course of the essay, students will also address at least one alternative explanation (another theory that provides a plausible explanation) and indicate why it falls short of providing a satisfactory argument. Students may choose examples of leadership not mentioned in class as long as they can discuss them by engaging with theories covered in the course. Students must submit the first attempt of their paper by November 25. This is not a rough draft or an outline. It is the best first attempt students are capable of and it should be within the page limit listed below. The first attempt will not be graded. However, students who fail to submit it will lose five points from the final paper grade. After submitting the first attempt, students will receive feedback from the instructor and from one other student in the class. The final version will then be graded, with emphasis placed on how much the paper improved between versions. All submissions should meet the following requirements:

- **Length:** Between 5 and 6 double-spaced pages (excluding references).
- **Margins:** 1 inch or less on all sides.
- **Font:** 12-point maximum size.
- **Citations:** All sources must be properly cited using either in-text citations or footnotes.
- **References:** A complete list of references is required at the end of the essay (not counted toward the page limit).

Peer Feedback (5%)

As part of the final paper process, students will participate in a peer feedback exercise designed to help improve each other's work. Before submitting the first attempt of the final paper, each student will be assigned one classmate's draft to review. Reviews must be thoughtful, constructive, and focused on helping the author strengthen their argument, organization, use of evidence, and clarity of writing. The expectations for peer feedback are as follows:

- Identify the paper's main argument and assess whether it is clearly stated and well-supported.
- Comment on the use of theory and how effectively it is applied to the chosen example.
- Point out at least one strength of the paper.
- Suggest at least two specific areas for improvement.
- Ensure that comments are respectful, specific, and actionable.

Participation (10%)

Students' participation grade will be based on three components:

1. **Office Hours Visit (2%)** – Each student must visit the instructor's office hours at least once during the semester. The purpose of this visit is for students to become better acquainted with their instructor and to have an opportunity to discuss course material, assignments, or any academic questions they may have. Students who complete this visit earn full credit. Those who do not will receive zero points for this component.
2. **Discussion Leadership (3%)** – Starting in week 4, most class sessions will include a discussion section that will be introduced by one or two student discussants. The goal of the discussants is to provide a concise summary of the assigned readings, focusing on the main questions, arguments, and empirical approaches that appear in them. In addition, discussants should identify the strengths and weaknesses of each reading, paving the way for a deeper conversation in which all class participants will subsequently engage. Student discussants should also prepare two or three questions for their classmates. Student discussants should plan to speak for about five to ten minutes during their remarks. A sign-up sheet will be circulated well ahead of time to allow several weeks for preparation. Discussion leadership will be graded as follows:
 - 0 – did not complete the assignment
 - 1 – minimal preparation or unclear presentation
 - 2 – adequate preparation with some strengths but also notable gaps
 - 3 – excellent preparation, providing a strong foundation for class discussion
3. **Ongoing In-Class Participation (5%)** – Throughout the semester, I will make notes on student participation. Participation will be graded on the following scale:
 - 0 – attends class irregularly or never participates
 - 1 – contributes meaningfully only a few times a semester
 - 2 – contributes meaningfully less than every two weeks
 - 3 – contributes meaningfully at least once every two weeks
 - 4 – contributes meaningfully at least once a week
 - 5 – contributes meaningfully every class

Extra Credit

Students may earn extra credit by creating a short podcast (no longer than ten minutes) about a real-world example of leadership or collective action of their choice. Like the final paper, the podcast should critically apply a theoretical perspective discussed in class to the selected case and explain why the theory is especially well suited to explain it. Creativity is encouraged, and students may use a variety of sounds and voices, provided that the final product respects copyright laws. The Weinstein Learning Center on campus has an audio/video editing space available and students are encouraged to use its resources (wlc.richmond.edu). The podcast will

be graded on a scale of 1 to 5 points, which students may add to one of the following graded assignments: reading quizzes, midterm exam, final exam, museum visit reflection paper, peer feedback, and final paper. Podcasts must be submitted by the last day of class along with a clear indication of which assignment the credit should be applied to. Students may use the same case for both the podcast and their final paper if they wish.

Letter grades for student performance will be assigned based on the following percentages:

Grade	Range	Grade	Range	Grade	Range
A	94-100	B-	81-83	D+	68-70
A-	91-93	C+	78-80	D	60-67
B+	88-90	C	74-77	F	0-60
B	84-87	C-	71-73		

Important Dates

1. **Midterm exam:** October 9.
2. **Final exam:** December 4.
3. **Final paper due date (first attempt):** November 25.
4. **Peer feedback due date:** December 1.
5. **Museum visit reflection paper due date:** December 12.
6. **Final paper due date (final version):** December 12.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is both expected and absolutely crucial for student success in this course. Many of the assignments (particularly the midterm and final exams) will be partially based on lectures and in-class discussions and students will miss important information if they choose not to attend regularly. It will be hard for students who do not come to class to pass the course. Students can expect me to be prepared and organized, and to deliver lectures and answer questions. In turn, I expect students to have read *all* of the assigned readings and to come with questions and requests for clarification.

During Class

Because a number of recent studies (e.g., [this one](#)) suggest that the use of laptops in classrooms is negatively correlated with student learning, students may not use computers while in class (except in cases of documented disability). Phones are prohibited unless explicitly permitted for class activities. Tablets are allowed only if used exclusively for note-taking. Eating and drinking are allowed in class but students are asked to ensure that it does not interfere with their learning or the class in general. Students should try not to eat their lunch in class as classes are typically active and require full attention.

Re-grading

I will do my best to grade papers and exams fairly, accurately, and quickly. However, mistakes can occur. If students have a concern about their grade, they can write a description of the mistake as they see it and send it to me within one week of receiving their grade. Please note that the entire exam or paper will be re-graded, and it is thus possible that students' final grade will go up or down.

Make-Up Exams and Late Assignments

The exams must be taken when scheduled except for the following reasons:

- documented attendance at a university-sanctioned event
- death in the family
- observation of a religious holiday
- illness or injury

If an exam is missed due to an *excused* absence, a make-up exam will be scheduled in consultation with the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process and to provide the necessary documentation. Exams missed due to an *unexcused* absence will receive a grade of 0 and cannot be made up. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized by a full letter grade for each 24-hour period by which the assignment is late.

Emails

The classroom is the best place to raise questions that are relevant to every student in the class. Office hours should be dedicated to discussing deeper questions related to class material as well as assignments. Students should be sure to exhaust all other sources (especially the syllabus) that might help answer their questions and consider direct emails as a last resort. Students should include the title of the class in the subject line when writing an email.

Academic Integrity

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance

during the completion of this work.” Integrity is expected of every student in all academic work. Plagiarism, which means intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own, is a serious and egregious violation and the perpetrator will be subject to any one or a combination of the following sections: report to the Honor Council, loss of credit for the work involved; reduction in grade; or a failing grade in the course. Visit studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/pdfs/statutes.pdf for more information.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of AI is not prohibited in this class. However, students should understand what they stand to lose by relying on it. Essays written primarily by AI are unlikely to receive high grades because the level of depth, nuance, and engagement required is typically not achieved through AI-generated text. Some assignments, such as reading quizzes, are intentionally crafted to mislead AI, so students who depend on it for these tasks will likely make unnecessary mistakes. At the end of the day, I am offering students an opportunity to develop crucial intellectual capacities. Whether they take advantage of this opportunity or undermine their own education is their choice.

Religious Observance

Students should notify me within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance. Visit registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/religious-observances.html for more information.

Disability Accommodations

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should let me know as soon as possible so that we may discuss arrangements for assignments and participation. Visit disability.richmond.edu for more information.

Additional Academic Support

Boatwright Library Research Librarians

Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide individual appointments, class library instruction, tutorials, and research guides. Students can contact an individual librarian (library.richmond.edu/help/liaison-librarians.html) or ask a librarian for help via email (library@richmond.edu), text (804-277-9ASK), or chat (library.richmond.edu/chat.html). Visit library.richmond.edu/help/ask for more information.

Career Services

Career Services can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR. Visit careerservices.richmond.edu for more information.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Students may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. Counseling and Psychological Services assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services. Visit caps.richmond.edu for more information.

Weinstein Learning Center

The Weinstein Learning Center is the go-to destination for academic support at the University of Richmond. Services include academic coaching, content tutoring, English language and intercultural learning, quantitative and programming resources, speech preparation and coaching, technology studio support, and writing assistance. Peer consultants and professional staff are available for appointments and drop-in sessions to help students develop essential academic skills. Visit wlc.richmond.edu for more information and to view service schedules and appointment times.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (August 26 & 28): Introduction

TUESDAY: Introduction to the Course and Syllabus

- familiarize yourself with the syllabus

THURSDAY: What Is Leadership and Why It Matters

- MacMillan, Margaret. “**Leadership at War: How Putin and Zelensky Have Defined the Ukrainian Conflict.**” *Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2022.
- Mearsheimer, John J. “**Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin.**” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.

Week 2 (September 2 & 4): What Is Social Science?

TUESDAY: Demarcating Social Science

- Holm, Andreas Beck. 2013. *Philosophy of Science: An Introduction for Future Knowledge Workers*. Frederiksberg, Den.: Samfundslitteratur. **Chapters 2 and 3.**
- “Karl Popper, Science, and Pseudoscience.” [YouTube video](#).

THURSDAY: Basic Concepts and Definitions

- Donovan, Todd & Kenneth Hoover. 2014. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning. **Chapter 2.**
- Chlouba, Vladimir. 2020. “A Guide to Academic Research Articles for the Casual Reader.”

Week 3 (September 9 & 11): The Puzzle of Leadership

TUESDAY: The Prisoner’s Dilemma

- Shepsle, Kenneth & Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. **Chapter 8.**
- “Prisoners’ dilemma and Nash equilibrium.” [YouTube video](#).

THURSDAY: Collective Action Problems

- Shepsle, Kenneth & Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. **Chapter 9.**
- “Rational Choice Theory: Collective Action Problems.” [YouTube video](#).

Week 4 (September 16 & 18): Traditional Leadership

TUESDAY: Defining Traditional Leadership

- Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. pp. 324-329 and pp. 341-358.
- Chlouba, Vladimir. 2025. "High-Coordination Governance."

THURSDAY: African Traditional Leaders and Collective Action

- Goist, Mitchell & Florian G. Kern. 2018. "Traditional institutions and social cooperation: Experimental evidence from the Buganda Kingdom." *Research and Politics*, 5(1): 1-9.

Week 5 (September 23 & 25): Charismatic Leadership

TUESDAY: Defining Charismatic Leadership

- Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. pp. 359-363.
- Willner, Ruth Ann. 1985. *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. **Chapter 2**.

THURSDAY: Case Study: Adolf Hitler

- "Hitler: The Rise of Evil." [Movie available via YouTube](#).

Week 6 (September 30 & October 2): Rational-Legal Leadership

TUESDAY: Defining Rational-Legal Leadership

- Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. pp. 329-341.

THURSDAY: Meritocracy

- Sandel, Michael J. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. **Chapter 5**.
- Wooldridge, Adrian. 2021. *The Aristocracy of Talent*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing. **Introduction**.

Week 7 (October 7 & 9): Midterm Review & Exam

TUESDAY: Midterm Exam Review

We will review concepts introduced in the first half of the course and thus facilitate preparation for the midterm exam. Students should come with questions and requests for clarification.

THURSDAY: Midterm Exam

Week 8 (October 16): Cultural Determinants of Leadership

TUESDAY: Culture as a Solution to the Puzzle of Leadership

- Nisbett, Richard. 2003. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why*. New York, NY: Free Press. **Chapter 3**.

Week 9 (October 21 & 23): Leadership in Autocracies

TUESDAY: How to Be a Dictator

- Frye, Timothy. 2021. *Weak Strongman: The Limits of Power in Putin's Russia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. **Chapters 2 and 3**.

THURSDAY: Wooing Followers

- Rees, Laurence. 2025. *The Nazi Mind*. New York, NY: Viking. **Introduction and Chapter 1**.

Week 10 (October 28 & 30): Leadership and Revolutions

TUESDAY: Self-Enforced Conformity

- Havel, Václav. 1978. "The Power of the Powerless." *International Center on Nonviolent Conflict*, 1-24.

THURSDAY: The Puzzle of Sudden Revolution

- Kuran, Timur. 1991. "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989." *World Politics*, 44(1): 7-48.

Week 11 (November 4 & 6): Populist Leadership

TUESDAY: The End of History?

- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. "The End of History." *The National Interest*, 16 (Summer): 3-18.
- Krastev, Ivan. 2018. "Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution." *Foreign Affairs*, 97: 49-56.

THURSDAY: Defining Populism

- Mounk, Yascha. 2018. *The People vs. Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Introduction**.

Week 12 (November 11 & 13): Sources of Populism

TUESDAY: Economic Drivers

- Mounk, Yascha. 2018. *The People vs. Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Chapters 4 and 5.**

THURSDAY: Cultural Drivers

- Carney, Timothy P. 2019. *Alienated America*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers. **Chapter 5.**
- Gelfand, Michele J. & Rebecca Lorente. 2021. "Threat, Tightness, and the Evolutionary Appeal of Populist Leaders." In Joseph P. Forgas, William D. Crano & Klaus Fiedler, eds. *The Psychology of Populism*. Milton Park, U.K.: Routledge, pp. 276-294.

Week 13 (November 18 & 20): Leadership in International Relations I

TUESDAY: Leader Psychology in International Affairs

- Harden, John P. 2021. "All the World's a Stage: US Presidential Narcissism and International Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly*, 65(3): 825-837.

TUESDAY: Munich 1938 (Background)

- Ladenburg, Thomas. 2007. *Munich: Anatomy of a Crisis*. Digital History.
- "How the West Betrayed Czechoslovakia to Hitler." [YouTube video](#).

Week 14 (November 25): Leadership in International Relations II

TUESDAY: Munich 1938: Simulation

- "Munich: The Edge of War." [Movie available via Netflix](#).

Week 15 (December 2 & 4): Final Review and Exam

TUESDAY: Final Exam Review

We will review concepts introduced in the second half of the course and thus facilitate preparation for the final exam. Students should come with questions and requests for clarification.

THURSDAY: Final Exam