

SPCOM 227: Leadership

Speech Communication, Faculty of Arts, Winter 2020: Wednesday 2:30-5:20 in ML-117

Professor Robert Danisch

Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description:

Leadership is one of the most overused and least understood concepts circulating through our cultural moment. An overwhelming number of books, essays, and articles offer to explain leadership and teach you how to be a better leader. It is presumptuous to teach a course on such a huge, complex, and vaguely understood topic. As part of the curriculum in a communication program, we will approach leadership as mostly a matter of communicative competence. In this course students will become familiar with different ways of exercising leadership through communication practices. You will learn and apply leadership skills in a hands-on practical way that encourages you to challenge your own beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes leadership and in a theoretical and sophisticated manner that allows you to understand the underlying evidence, assumptions, and approaches to leadership prevalent in the Western intellectual tradition. The emphasis is on application of concepts in actual leadership settings and situations. Through a process of readings, self-discovery, group observations, and case studies, you will identify, observe, analyze, and apply new leadership behaviors. This course is based on the premise that each student will face a variety of leadership challenges in life. How these challenges are met, whether as a formal leader or a member of a team, can have a significant impact on an organization, on one's career, and on one's personal life. Learning more about leadership will help every student meet their leadership challenges. The methodology followed by this course will be one of knowledge acquisition, practice, and reflection. The learning objectives are designed to give you insights into leadership theory and how it applies in real world contexts.

Course Objectives:

- Students should become familiar with some of the varied intellectual traditions and theories of leadership.
- Students should gain a sense of the central philosophical and intellectual questions concerning the relationship between leadership and communication.
- Students should have a working vocabulary of key theories of leadership (working vocabulary means that you will have the ability to use these theories in practical ways as explanatory or interpretive tools).
- Students should develop, practice, and master some tools for becoming a better leader.
- Students should develop the capacity to think theoretically and critically. That is, students should be able to explain particular phenomena by appeals to general ways of understanding and figure out how to explore ideas and the meaning of objects or events in a sustained, substantive, sophisticated, and insightful manner.

- Students will be introduced to and expected to read very difficult texts. Thus, students will be expected to improve their reading comprehension skills.
- Students will be expected to turn in polished, elegant writing that demonstrates a clear command of the readings, a distinct authorial voice, and a capacity for thoughtful reflection on complex ideas.
- Students will be expected to develop the ability to think critically, clearly and analytically. This means understanding the ideas and concepts raised throughout the course, their origins, strengths, weaknesses, and their relationship to larger themes in this class, in your education, and in your view of the world.
- Students will be expected to improve their abilities to read and listen critically, to respond reflectively and reasonably to others, and to distinguish successful and unsuccessful arguments.
- Most importantly, students should leave this class better prepared to take on a variety of leadership roles and succeed as leaders in a variety of contexts.

Course Policies and Procedures:

- *In the Classroom* – This is a hybrid lecture/seminar/workshop class. At various points during the semester or during individual course meetings, I will deliver a lecture on the topics outlined on the course schedule. However, that does not mean I expect you to be passive consumers. At times I will be asking you questions and I will expect you to ask me questions. In addition, I will ask you to provide examples of concepts we talk about in class, and so participation in lectures will be encouraged in a variety of ways. We will also try to turn lectures into seminars. One of the main objectives of the class is for a small group of students to engage in intense study and conversation about leadership. Seminars are characterized by high degrees of interactivity between students and between professor and student. Finally, we may, at times, engage in practical exercises designed to improve leadership communication practices. At these moments, seminars or lectures will transform into a workshop designed to improve students' communication skills. In order to make the lectures, seminars and workshops run effectively, I ask all students to please turn off all ringing electronic devices when entering the classroom. The sound of a cell phone (or any other device) is extremely distracting to your professor, and I assume to your fellow classmates, and it is rude and offensive.
- *Attendance* – Your presence in class is mandatory. However, I will not be taking attendance, and there will be no way for me to be absolutely certain that you are attending regularly. But you should be aware that the best way to do well in this course is to show up to every class, prepared and attentive. Inevitably, at the end of the semester, students who missed classes do poorly, while students who show up consistently do well. I do not post lecture notes on the Internet, nor do I respond to emails that say “what did we talk about in class on Thursday.” We cover lots of material in class and for that reason it is critical that you attend in order to do well. Attendance also means refraining from playing with your cell phone, reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, using other electronic devices or doing other coursework while in the classroom. If I notice you engaged in some activity that does not pertain to what is happening in the class, I will ask you to leave. This course is designed for courteous, motivated students who attend each class, do all the reading, and ask questions when they

don't understand something. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting materials we covered from a classmate. Students who fail to meet these basic and reasonable expectations can assume that their performance on assignments will suffer.

- *Academic Integrity* – I expect that the work you complete for this course will be your own, which is to say that cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any written assignment that borrows from other sources without giving proper credit or that is plagiarized in whole or in part from another source (including other student's work) is grounds for an "F" on the assignment, or depending on the severity of the crime, is grounds for an "F" in the course.

Required Texts and Readings:

I like books - I like buying them, I like reading them, I like keeping them on my bookshelf, I like talking to people about them. Reading makes you smarter. You should read a lot. Reading carefully, critically, and analytically is essential for your success. This is a humanities course, and, therefore, it requires careful reading of complex and sophisticated texts. BUT. This course represents the least amount of reading I've ever used in my career. I've found lately that students read less. This is troubling but I'm adjusting. I've tried to use a series of podcast episodes from a podcast that I host as mini-lectures to get you ready for class. These are substitutes for more robust readings. I expect you to listen to the episodes before coming to class. Some weeks do require some reading, but I've tried to choose things that are accessible so you don't have much trouble. Students are not required to purchase texts for the class. Instead, I will make a dropbox folder for the class (outside of Learn), and I will invite you all to the folder and put electronic pdf copies of readings in the folder for all of you to access. I expect everyone to have done all of the readings before coming to class and to have the readings accessible (either as a book, printed out, or on an electronic device) for classroom conversation.

Assignments:

- 1) **External Leadership Communication Audit** – A communication audit critically assesses the specific communication practices of a particular person, team, or organization. The purpose of the audit you will do for this class is to show specifically where and how a person or group can improve leadership communication competencies. You will design a tool for auditing a leader by measuring specific communication competencies, and then you will ask four people that you know to use that tool to evaluate your own leadership communication competencies. In other words, you will design a system for measuring leaders abilities in communication, and then get others to evaluate you with that system. I'll provide more details in class. This assignment will be worth 20% of your final grade and it will be due on April 1st.
- 2) **Independent Research and Analysis Paper** - As individuals, each of you will be asked to choose a particular problem, issue, example, or concept related to concerns about Leadership. You will then write a 4-6 page paper (including footnotes and references) that summarizes and analyzes current research into this problem, concept,

etc. and demonstrates an individual critical engagement with the course content. Each of the Research and Analysis papers will be related to current issues in leadership studies. I'll have more details in class. This assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-100 and will be worth 20% of your final grade. The paper will be due on February 5th.

- 3) **Detailed Biography of Leadership in Action** – In this assignment you'll be asked to choose a particular leader, with whom you have either first hand-experience or sufficient evidence or access to evidence, and write a biography of this person's leadership abilities based on the course content and your own research into leadership studies. The purpose of this paper, 4-6 pages, is to get you to explain what makes this person an effective or ineffective leader. I'll have more details in class. This assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-100, and will be due on March 11th. This assignment will be worth 20% of your final grade.
- 4) **Experiential Tasks and In-Class Exercises** – Each student will be asked to complete five experiential tasks, either in class or outside of class. Experiential tasks are designed to help you practice what you have learned from class in real or simulated settings. The hope is to get students to become reflective practitioners of key aspects of leadership, or at the least to critically reflect on the ways in which concepts or practices from the class work in real life settings. Essentially, you are being asked to use the material you have learned to do something in the world and/or to reflect on the ways in which the concepts from class work in the world. These will be randomly assigned in class. At the end of the semester, the five experiential tasks will be worth a total of 20% of your final grade.
- 5) **Take-home Quiz** - At the end of the semester, I will hand out a take-home quiz with some conceptual and practical questions about the material that we covered during the semester. You'll have a week to complete the take-home quiz, and it will be due on April 10th at 12:00pm. The take-home quiz will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Grades:

- *Is this Class Going to be Easy?* - The students in this class represent some of the best and most capable young people in the province. Accordingly, I will expect a lot from you. You will not automatically be given an A because you have made an effort or because you are accustomed to getting high marks. C is an average grade, and in order to do better than that, you will have to produce better than average work. This means that you will go the extra distance, do the extra reading, prepare for classes by taking notes and formulating questions, make thoughtful interventions in class, submit careful and polished assignments free from careless errors, etc. There are no easy A's and this is not an easy class.
- *How are Grades Calculated?* - For each of the four assignments you will receive a score out of 100 points. I will then average the marks based on the percentage weights listed above. I do not like giving students numerical marks and I think it is an inferior system of grading.

In my mind, I often think in terms of a letter grade. So that you know, your number out of 100 points translates into the following letter grades:

90-100 = A+	73-76 = B	60-62 = C-	0-50 = F
85-89 = A	70-72 = B-	57-59 = D+	
80-84 = A-	67-69 = C+	53-56 = D	
77-79 = B+	63-66 = C	50-52 = D-	

- What do the Grades Mean?* – Loosely translated the letter grades mean the following: an A+ is truly outstanding and spectacular work that goes well above and beyond the normal expectations of an assignment and demonstrates a complete mastery of the subject matter. An A or an A- is excellent and exceptional work. A grade in the B range is good to very good work that demonstrates a solid grasp of the material. A grade in the C range is average work that demonstrates a satisfactory but incomplete grasp of the course material. A grade in the D range is unsatisfactory work of poor quality. And an F is failing work that does not meet the minimum requirements for the course. Because grades in the A range are exceptional and grades in the C range are average, A grades are rare and difficult to obtain. I'm telling you this so that you know that if you earn a 75 on an assignment it means that I think the assignment is good not excellent. If you earn a 95, it means it's one of the best pieces of work I've have ever seen for this kind of class.
- Extensions* – There are no extensions for any assignment. Assignments are announced well in advance of due dates. If you know in advance that you cannot make a due date for an assignment, please discuss it with me beforehand. Requests for extensions after a due date has passed will only be granted in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and must include (a) one typed, double-spaced page explaining the reason for missing the deadline, and (b) relevant documentation such as an official doctor's note. The written request for an extension must be in my hands within one week after the scheduled due date. I am under no obligation to accept late assignments; assignments that are accepted may suffer a significant penalty (5 points for each day late).
- Negotiations and Missed Assignments* - I do not haggle with students over grades, nor do I listen to declarations about why a student deserves an extra point here or there. You and I will not be negotiating your grade for the class – you will be earning a grade based on criteria that are explicitly stated in class. In addition, after the final grades are posted for the semester I will not re-mark or re-consider any grade from earlier in the semester. If you do not understand why you got a particular grade or why you lost points on a given assignment, you should come to my office hours or make an appointment to see me and I will explain your grade.

University Policies:

- Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#) for more information.

- **Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check [the Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).
- **Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.
- **Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under [Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals](#).
- **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with [AccessAbility Services](#) at the beginning of each academic term.
- **Mental Health Support:** All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

On Campus

Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655

[MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services

Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7

[Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454

Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 ext. 6880

[Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247

[OK2BME](#): set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#)

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

- **Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo:** Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), “The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, 'academic freedom' refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.” This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

Course Schedule:

Week #1 – Wednesday, January 8th – Introduction to the Course: What is Leadership? And What Does it Have to Do with Communication?

Conceptual Problem: What is communication?

Practical Problem: How do I get better at communication?

Listen to: Episode 001 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-001>

Week #2 – Wednesday, January 15th – Your Professor Provides an Evidence-Based Model for Effective Leadership

Conceptual Problem: What are the constitutive features of effective leadership communication?

Practical Problem: Evaluate yourself. Are you any good at leadership communication?

Listen to: Episodes 062, 063, and 072 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-062-what-makes-an-effective-leader>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-063-why-we-should-balance-warmth-and-directness>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-072-the-4-essential-communication-tasks-for-anyone-in-a-managerial-or-supervisory-role>

Week #3 – Wednesday, January 22nd – Relational Communication and Emotional Intelligence

Conceptual Problem: What is resonance, and how do our emotions influence and bias our communication?

Practical Problem: How do I improve my relational communication competencies?

Read:

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013): 3-32 and 91-112.

Week #4 – Wednesday, January 29th – Rhetorical Leadership and the Art of Framing

Conceptual Problem: How does word choice construct and map the world for us?

Practical Problem: How can I usefully and tactically frame and re-frame situations I enter?

Read:

Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr, *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 1996): pp. 1-126.

Listen to: Episode 022 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-022>

Week #5 – Wednesday, February 5th – Values not Facts - Why Answer Why First

Conceptual Problem: What's the difference between values and facts, and what's the difference between communication that focuses on values and communication that focuses on facts?

Practical Problem: How can I organize my messages around values? And how can I communicate in values-based ways?

Read:

Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (Penguin Books, 2009): 37-114 and 209-221.

***Research and Analysis Paper Due in Class.

Week #6 – Wednesday, February 12th – A Primer on Persuasion

Conceptual Problem: How central is persuasion to leadership? What are the central features of persuasive communication?

Practical Problem: How do I become more persuasive? How do I use semiotic tying, narrative, attention, repetition, and the other tools of persuasion to better effects?

Listen to: Episodes 054, 055, and 066 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-054-attention-is-persuasion>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-055-repetition-is-persuasion>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-066-masters-of-communication-control-the-chain-of-signification>

Week #7 – Wednesday, February 26th – Questions Are Often Better Than Assertions

Conceptual Problem: What's the difference between pull tactics of persuasion and push tactics? What can we accomplish with questions that we can't accomplish with assertions?

Practical Problem: How do I ask good questions? How can I become a better interlocutor and catalyze conversations through questions?

Read:

Edgar Schein, *Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013): 7-68.

Michael Marquardt, *Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask* (Jossey-Bass, 2014): 151-237.

Week #8 – Wednesday, March 4th – Trust and Transparency

Conceptual Problem: What is trust and what role does trust play in determining who leads?

Practical Problem: How do I get others to trust me? How can transparency help produce trust?

Read:

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2004): 119-186.

Listen to: Episode 057 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-057-trust-ethos-and-transparency>

Week #9 – Wednesday, March 11th – Living with, and in, Uncertainty

Conceptual Problem: What are the advantages of uncertainty and the disadvantages of certainty? How do we make ourselves prone to decision-making mistakes by assuming too much certainty?

Practical Problem: How do I get better at living with, and seeing, uncertainty? How can I stay attuned to uncertainty in order to make better decisions?

Read:

Jamie Holmes, *Nonsense: The Power of Not Knowing* (Penguin Random House, 2015): 19-61 and 130-154.

Listen to: Episode 060 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-060-leadership-uncertainty-and-closure>

***Detailed Biography of Leadership in Action Due in Class.

Week #10 – Wednesday, March 18th – Vision and Strategic Thinking

Conceptual Problem: Why is it important for leader's to have a vision? What does it mean to think and communicate strategically?

Practical Problem: How do I articulate my rhetorical vision? How do I become a more strategic thinker and communicator?

Read:

Ernest Bormann, "Rhetorical Vision," in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (Oxford University Press, 2001): 697-701.

Listen to: Episode 076 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-076-strategic-communication>

Week #11 – Wednesday, March 25th – Acknowledging, Affirming, Absorbing & Making Distinctions, Offering Reasons, Anticipating Objections (or how to balance emotional connection and decision-making)

Conceptual Problem: Effective leadership actually involves and requires two different, competing skill sets. We must, therefore, learn to balance these skill sets in order to lead. Why?

Practical Problem: How do I acknowledge others, affirm ideas, absorb emotions, make distinctions, offer reasons, anticipate objections, and generally balance emotional connection and effective decision-making?

Listen to: Episodes 058, 059, 071, and 074 of *Now We're Talking*, found here:

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-058-the-power-of-making-distinctions>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-059-the-power-of-acknowledging-and-affirming>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-071-repair-attempts-face-saving-and-de-escalation>

<https://soundcloud.com/rdanisch/episode-074-the-importance-of-absorbing-diffusing-and-suspending>

Week #12 – Wednesday, April 1st – Phronesis and Experience

Conceptual Problem: Leadership is not like mathematics, and can only be learned through reflective practice. How, then, can we educate a reflective practitioner that acquires experience and gains wisdom or judgment in the course of acquiring experience?

Practical Problem: How can you begin to engage in reflective practice so as to become a better leader? How might your experiences be used as a resource for continued improvement?

Read:

Donald Schon, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (Jossey-Bass, 1987): 22-40, 157-172, and 305-326.

***Communication Audit Due in Class.