Leadership Capstone

LEAD 501 | Bachelor of Commerce | Winter 2025

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Public course overview adapted from the Winter 2025 course outline. This historical overview introduces the course to website visitors; the approved course outline governs enrolled students.

Course Description

Through critical reading, discussion-based learning, lectures, and critical reflection, students will develop an understanding of leadership practices. Students will consistently make connections between leadership research, lived experience, and leadership development practices.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course,

1. Students will become familiar with key leadership principles of Western philosophers
2. Students will evaluate the relevancy and effectiveness of philosophical conceptions of leadership
3. Students will critically interrogate power and social construction of leadership
4. Students will critically reflect on their leadership identity, efficacy, and purpose using the theoretical frameworks discussed in class
5. Students will contribute meaningfully to diverse course learning activities

Learning and Assessment

The course is a reading-based seminar combining critical reading, lectures, discussion and reflection. Students connect philosophical accounts of leadership with their own experience and take an active role in facilitating learning with their peers.

Class contribution

40% · Seminar participation

In this seminar class, active participation is not just encouraged but integral to the learning experience. The nature of a seminar format places a strong emphasis on interactive discussions, critical thinking, and the exchange of ideas among peers. Therefore, class participation includes regularly contributing to class discussions, thoughtfully engaging with the readings and materials, demonstrating a willingness to explore different perspectives, and actively listening and responding to fellow classmates' viewpoints. This dynamic participation is essential in fostering a rich learning environment where diverse ideas and critical analysis thrive.

Collaborative leadership presentation

20% · Small group presentation and discussion

Students will work in small groups to take an active role in leading the class by preparing a presentation and facilitating a meaningful discussion with peers based on that week’s assigned reading. The goal of these presentations is not only to summarize the topic but also to demonstrate how it applies to various leadership contexts and its relevance to leadership practices.

Final paper

40% · Staged seminar paper

Students will undertake a comprehensive seminar paper, divided into progressive stages, each contributing to the final grade. This structured approach not only deepens understanding but also hones research and writing skills, culminating in a scholarly paper that reflects critical analysis and engagement with the course themes.

Generative AI

Ethical use of generative AI is permitted within the guidelines for each assessment. Its use must be transparent and cited. AI should support students’ own thinking, not replace individual work. Students remain responsible for checking generated statements and for understanding bias, privacy and security risks.

Students must not upload other people’s work to AI tools without their explicit consent, including for peer feedback. The instructor will not upload student work without explicit consent. Use outside assessment guidelines or without citation constitutes academic misconduct.

Course Schedule

Week	Topics and discussion	Preparation and readings
1	Introduction and course overview. Leadership philosophy or the philosophy of leadership?	Course overview.
2	How canonical texts shape our understanding of leadership	Joseph and his brothers: Genesis 37; 41:55–57; 42–45 (New American Bible, Revised Edition).
3	Setting the stage: Aristotle and the purpose of life	Aristotle. (2002). *Nicomachean ethics* (J. Sachs, Trans.). Focus Publishing. Book I.
4	Moral virtue as a leadership competency	*Nicomachean ethics*: Book II.
5	Habituation and character development	*Nicomachean ethics*: Book III.
7	Friendship, reciprocity and leadership	*Nicomachean ethics*: Books VIII–IX.
8	Setting the stage: modernity and the anatomy of ambition	Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*. Dedication and chapters 1–5.
9	The foundations of power: Virtù and Fortuna	*The Prince*: Chapters 6–8.
10	Power by the people or the elite?	*The Prince*: Chapters 9–14.
11	The leader's dilemma: On perception, fear and love	*The Prince*: Chapters 15, 17–18.
12	Beyond the infamy: Shaping one's destiny — the true essence of *The Prince*	*The Prince*: Chapter 25.
13	Wrap-up and concluding thoughts. The leader as an actor in civic life: Lessons from Aristotle and Machiavelli	—