Ethical Leadership

MGST 453 L01 | Bachelor of Commerce | Spring 2025

Naor Cohen · Haskayne School of Business · University of Calgary

Public course overview adapted from the Spring 2025 course outline. This historical overview introduces the course to website visitors; it is not a current student syllabus.

Course Description

Students will develop skill in applying a variety of different leadership frameworks to problems and an understanding of when various frameworks are most applicable. Critical thinking skills will be honed using film, short cases, readings, class discussions, and written opinion. Students will be able to identify components of leadership behaviours in self and others. Students will witness, experience, and "consume" leadership as it progresses from individual to team to organizational to community levels. Note: This class will be interactive.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. Apply and critically analyse concepts of leadership in different contexts by reading and thinking about published academic research;
2. Reflect critically on their own and leadership experiences of others to enhance their own effectiveness as leaders;
3. Examine how leadership development happens through education, training, and experience by reading and seeing narratives of leaders;
4. Produce an analysis of the practice and development of leadership by a close reading and interpretation of a leader's biography;
5. Assess the ethical consequences of leadership practice in the form of social influence tactics.

Learning and Assessment

The course uses readings, film, discussions, cases, business simulations and reflective writing to explore ethical leadership. No textbook is required.

Class contribution

15% · Critical reflections and active engagement

Students prepare for and contribute to discussions, actively listen to peers, and engage with cases, questions and other class activities in small groups. Critical reflections on class activities integrate students' own insights and critiques with the content and discussions.

Exam

35% · Closed book assessment

The exam assesses course material from the first part of the course, through the first five class sessions. No external materials are permitted.

Leading with AI

25% · Group analysis

This assignment challenges you to explore how GPT can help — and potentially mislead — leaders facing ethical decisions. You'll use GPT as a thinking partner, but also as an object of critical analysis. Your job is not to get "the right answer," but to investigate how AI can shape, distort, or support ethical leadership thinking.

Groups work on the same leadership scenario, collaborating to prepare an analysis during an in-class activity.

Leadership philosophy

25% · Personal reflection

This assignment invites you to clarify and articulate your perspective on leadership as it has evolved throughout the course. The purpose is to help you reflect deeply on your values, beliefs, and assumptions, and explore how they translate into your practice as a leader. Your final submission should express a clear and personal leadership philosophy grounded in your lived experiences, insights from the course, and your ongoing personal and professional growth.

Generative AI

Ethical use of generative AI is permitted within assessment guidelines and must be transparent and cited. AI supports students' own thinking rather than replacing individual work. Students remain responsible for fact checking and for understanding bias, privacy and security risks. Others' work must not be uploaded without explicit consent; the instructor likewise will not upload student work without consent. Use outside assessment guidelines or without citation constitutes academic misconduct.

Course Schedule

This schedule reflects the intensive Spring 2025 offering, with two sessions per week over six weeks. Its timeline differs from a regular-semester offering.

Session	Topics and activities	Preparation and readings
Week 1 Session 1	Course introduction What do we know about ethical leadership?	Course overview. Fryer, B. (2007, March). The ethical mind. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(3), 51–56. Watch: Chapter 1: Introduction.
Week 1 Session 2	Social construction and romance of leadership Does leadership matter? Challenges and failures of leadership	Wong, L., & Gerras, S. (2017, February 15). Beware the romance of leadership. *War on the Rocks*. Collinson, D., Smolović Jones, O., & Grint, K. (2018). "No more heroes": Critical perspectives on leadership romanticism. *Organization Studies, 39*(11), 1625–1647. Bazerman, M. H., & Tenbrunsel, A. E. (2011, April). Ethical breakdowns. *Harvard Business Review, 89*(4), 58–65. Watch: What does the social construction of reality mean? A supplementary introductory video on social construction; Chapter 8: Transformational leadership. Listen: Freakonomics, Why are there so many bad bosses?
Week 2 Session 1	Ethical reasoning Character, conduct, fear and love	Bazerman, M. H. (2020, September–October). A new model for ethical leadership. *Harvard Business Review, 98*(5), 90–97. Watch: Chapter 13: Leadership ethics. Case: Defining Moments: Personnel Problems.
Week 2 Session 2	Power and charisma The psychology of social influence	Grant, A. (2021, March–April). Persuading the unpersuadable. *Harvard Business Review, 99*(2), 131–135. Cliffe, S. (2013, July–August). The uses (and abuses) of influence. *Harvard Business Review, 91*(7–8), 76–81. Watch: How to influence others. Listen: Freakonomics, How to get anyone to do anything.

Optional course text: Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. SAGE Publications.

Course Schedule Continued

Session	Topics and activities	Preparation and readings
Week 3 Session 1	Guest speaker Backup activity if the guest session is rescheduled or cancelled: Ethical reasoning—Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?	Keltner, D. (2016, October). Don't let power corrupt you. *Harvard Business Review, 94*(10), 112–115. Listen: Kirby, J. (Host). (2010, June 17). Telling the truth about power [Audio podcast episode]. In HBR IdeaCast. Harvard Business Review. Backup case: Calgary Integrity and Ethics Office: Who watches the watchdog? Kellerman, B. (2006, April). When should a leader apologize—and when not? *Harvard Business Review, 84*(4), 72–81.
Week 3 Session 2	Exam Leveraging networks simulation	Ibarra, H., & Hunter, M. (2007, January). How leaders create and use networks. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(1), 40–47. Feloni, R. (2015, October 27). A master networker shares his top 20 networking tips. *Business Insider*.
Week 4 Session 1	Mount Everest simulation Simulation debrief	Team simulation and debrief.
Week 4 Session 2	Power and charisma Storytelling activity	Antonakis, J., Fenley, M., & Liechti, S. (2012, June). Learning charisma. *Harvard Business Review, 90*(6), 127–130. Watch: Let's face it: Charisma matters.
Week 5 Session 1	The Real Deal panel Guest lecture	
Week 5 Session 2	Preparatory case study	Case discussion in preparation for the Leading with AI activity.
Week 6 Session 1	Leading with AI activity	Group analysis of a leadership scenario.
Week 6 Session 2	Wrap up	Work on the leadership philosophy assignment.