

EDUC 5913 CI01: Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership

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Syllabus - web page

Course Overview

Education 5913 is a 3-credit hour online course focusing on the theory and practice of leadership, with an overarching emphasis on critical, distributed, and humanizing approaches to leadership in educational organizations. The course is offered in six modules:

- **M1** Stage: Dialogues on leadership
- **M2** Context: School structures and cultures
- **M3** Breadth: Collaborative and distributive leadership
- **M4** Emphasis: Leadership for learning
- **M5** Inclusion: Leadership for justice and dignity
- **M6** Vital: Impactful leadership

Traditional approaches to leadership focus on the attainment of organizational goals, utilizing both task- and people-oriented leadership actions. Critical approaches to leadership adopt a different focus: democratic action, social justice, and human dignity. While these do not dismiss the need for a focus on goals, critical leadership gives primary attention to moral and ethical questions and the social and personal implications of leadership action.

Following from this, the primary purpose of the course is to engage participants in a critical dialogue on the multiple facets of leadership as revealed through the modules, online dialogue, and course assignments.

Instructor

David MacKinnon is a part-time Professor and former Director of the School of Education. He taught in the areas of human sexuality and secondary teaching methods at the undergraduate level, as well as graduate courses in leadership, organizational theory and culture, research design, and qualitative research methodology. He is also a former Dean of Research & Graduate Studies at Acadia, serving in that capacity for nine years. In additional, he was Acting Director of Open Acadia for one year. Aside from his academic positions, he has been closely associated with the Educational Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia, an organization that offers professional development modules and workshops for practicing and prospective administrators and school leaders. He co-developed and often facilitated a three-day module entitled *Schooling and Social Justice*.



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Course Materials

Required Books

Grogan, Margaret, editor. *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership*. 3rd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2013. **ISBN-13:** 978-1118456217

Fullan, Michael. *Indelible Leadership*. Corwin (Sage), 2017. **ISBN-13:** 978-1506323626

About the Texts

There are numerous books available on leadership. Not surprisingly, no one text provides either the appropriate breadth of coverage or suitable thrust to leadership in education that we explore in this course. Consequently, I have opted for two texts: (1) a leadership reader which offers an excellent collection of scholarly articles by leading scholars and (2) a short but commanding work that illuminates leadership for deep change.

The edited collection by Margaret Grogan, *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership* (2013), is an excellent compilation of articles by many of the field's key scholars. Four of its five sections highlight important issues that we will be discussing in the course. While some of the chapters are from older articles, they have been selected by the editor for their continuing relevance.

The text by Michael Fullan, *Indelible Leadership* (2017), is a brief but powerful work on lasting and impactful leadership. As Canada's foremost expert on educational change, Fullan brings extensive knowledge and experience to bear on how schools operate and ways to lead for deep change.

Additional Readings and Videos

In addition to these two texts, you have access to a collection of readings, videos, and other instructional materials that will contribute to our work together. These will be employed in a variety of ways that require you to demonstrate your understanding of core concepts and applications to practice.

Virtues

Each module concludes with a short video where I offer thoughts on a virtue that is central to leadership.

M1: Humanity

M2: Courage

M3: Temperance

M4: Tolerance

M5: Justice

M6: Wisdom

These are adapted from two sources:

- Comte-Sponville, A. (1996). *A small treatise on the great virtues*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.
- Pigliucci, M. (2017). *How to be a Stoic: Using ancient philosophy to live a modern life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

See the [student handbook](#) for ordering information.

To access Library Articles and Journals from off-campus use [VPN](#) web service link for direct access.

Assignments

1. Position Paper (15%) * **NOTE:** The position paper is to be done before all other assignments.

A position paper asks you to take a position on an issue, for or against. This is meant as an “inner” exercise, i.e., one in which you describe and support your view, but without reference to the literature or other external sources. What is important is how you justify your position, not the particular position you have taken. Any of these statements could conceivably be argued for or against. Two questions should serve to guide your short essay: (1) do I support or oppose the position as stated?, and (2) why have I adopted this position? It is the quality of your thinking, the coherence of your argument, and your conceptual clarity that forms the basis of the assessment.

Select **one (1)** of the following statements and provide a description (the “what”) and analysis (the “why”) of your position:

Statement 1:

Among all leadership traits, the most necessary is a strong internal locus of control. Those in leadership positions lacking this trait are unlikely to be consistently effective leaders.

Statement 2:

A bureaucratized educational system requires those in formal positions of leadership to essentially “toe the line.” This, in turn, severely restricts the range of leadership actions leaders such as school principals can exhibit.

Statement 3:

The most visionary school leaders exhibit strong moral purpose. Its absence is likely to result in a school that is seemingly directionless and lacking in consistent community support.

The paper is to be a **maximum of five (5) pages** in length.

2. Module Engagement (35%)

There are six modules in the course:

- Module 1.** Stage: Dialogues on Leadership
- Module 2.** Context: School Structures and Cultures
- Module 3.** Breadth: Collaborative and Distributive Leadership
- Module 4.** Emphasis: Leadership for Learning
- Module 5.** Inclusion: Leadership for Justice and Dignity
- Module 6.** Vital: Impactful Leadership

Each module has assigned readings and most include a video clip and/or a PowerPoint presentations. The readings include selections from the two texts as well as articles from academic journals. As a guiding principle, all assigned text readings are required, whereas there is choice among the articles (usually two or three). In two instances - Modules 3 and 5 - there are also mandatory articles beyond the elective ones.

What are you asked to do?

As a guide, each module should have two submissions: (1) a longer one containing your responses to all questions pertaining to the chapter selections, articles, and video and PPT, if included; (2) a short one containing your response to the module's virtue.

Each reading, both mandatory and elective, has questions relating to it. You are required to respond to all questions pertaining to the mandatory readings. For the questions related to the articles, respond only to the ones you've selected. These responses are not intended to be lengthy, but neither are they one- nor two-sentence replies. I will look carefully for evidence that (a) you understand the reading, especially its central concepts, and for (b) the clarity of your analysis.

You can choose to respond to the questions in **traditional written format**, or you may also opt to submit responses by **audio or video clip**. Questions on the readings are included at the end of each module.

3. The Virtues (15%)

The leadership literature is replete with debates about what constitutes leadership. Is it primarily to be found in certain traits or attributes, such as honesty or charisma? Or is it more centered on behaviours such as task focus or relationship building? This assignment departs somewhat from those debates to focus instead on virtues, i.e., human qualities that we look for in leaders but infrequently articulate. The six I have chosen are:

M1: Humanity

M2: Courage

M3: Temperance

M4: Tolerance

M5: Justice

M6: Wisdom

What are you asked to do?

I pose questions after each videotaped virtue. These are general in nature and thereby call for a general but thoughtful response on your part. For example, at the end of the taped segment on courage, I ask, "how might this [courage] factor into educational leadership?" In responding to this, you are asked not to simply consider what you know about courage and how it can be manifest in leadership, but rather to focus on the points I have raised in the videotape and respond to one or more of them. If possible, providing examples or structuring your response around actual events will help to illuminate your understanding of the virtue and how it applies, or does not apply, to educational leadership.

Once again, what I am looking for is not the "right" answer, but rather a thoughtful response that clearly demonstrates your understanding of the virtue and its relevance to leadership.

You can choose to respond to the questions in traditional written format, or you may also opt to submit responses by audio or video clip. There is no specified length to your response. Clarity of thought rather than quantity of words should serve as your guiding principle. But value succinctness over verbosity.

4. Culminating assignment (35%)

EITHER: Construct a leader profile

OR: Research and write a traditional academic paper

a) Leader Profile

EDUC 5913 has been organized around 6 modules. Except for Module # 1, which focuses on debates and different ways of thinking about leadership, each of the others has a general area of focus:

M2 On school structures and cultures

M3 On collaborative and distributive leadership

M4 On leadership for learning

M5 On leadership for justice and dignity

M6 On impactful leadership

What are you asked to do?

You are asked to *interview* a leader you know, or know of, and construct a profile of this individual in relation to one or more of the module areas. For example, you may know of someone who has been particularly successful in creating a positive school culture, perhaps one who is enabling and encourages risk-taking and, based on the interview, construct a profile of how he or she has done this.

Possible approaches to the interview will be done in consultation with the instructor. I can assist with guiding questions, but you will need to spend time considering what important areas need to be covered, while also being open to probing and exploring in the midst of the interview. If the focus of your interview connects with the topics of one of our modules, a good strategy would be to revisit materials from the module to help you identify relevant issues and thereby create pertinent questions to include during the interview. The assignment should include the following: (1) a brief description of the person, the position she or he occupies, and why this individual was selected to be interviewed; (2) a description of the interview situation, i.e., where it took place, how long, and any other important contextual details; (3) a description of the interviewee's response to the interview questions (insert relevant quotations from the interviewee to reinforce the points you wish to make); and (4) your analysis of the interviewee's perspectives and actions in relation to the particular focus you have taken in the assignment. ***Please give careful attention to the latter by citing specific readings and/or concepts explored through the course.***

NOTE: The modules are not mutually exclusive. To use the example given earlier, building a culture that is enabling and encourages risk-taking may itself be focused on justice and human dignity. That's okay. The difference may be in the details of how you focus: are you particularly interested in leadership that focuses on culture-building, or leadership that focuses on justice and human dignity? The questions you ask and the avenues you explore in the interview will differ somewhat depending on the focus.

b) Academic paper

This assignment asks you to write an academic paper focused on leadership. This is intended to provide a deeper exploration of a leadership topic than provided in the course. In this sense, you could:

EITHER: Select one of the subject areas identified by the modules and explore it considerably further than done through course readings and activities. While you can draw on articles provided in the course, the expectation is that you will read more extensively within the academic literature. The articles you cite should derive from scholarly journals, such as the ones represented through course readings, and not from opinion pieces that lack systematic investigation or rigorous thought.

OR: Select a subject area not covered in the course, in consultation with the instructor, and explore it in the manner described in above.

In either case, the paper must:

- be focused on leadership;
- be both descriptive and analytical ¹
- be a minimum of 10 pages in length;
- include at least 10 references **beyond course readings**;
- use a consistent formatting style, preferably APA (American Psychological Association)

1. Descriptive content does just that; it describes what authors in the literature say about a topic. The analytical component is your attempt to make sense of it overall through synthesis, discussion of findings in relation to the literature, and application to your own circumstances or those with which you are familiar.

Evaluation

Position Paper	15%
Module Engagement	35%
The Virtues	15%
Leader Profile or Academic Paper	35%

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes on Acorn. Please remember to put your name, student number, course number, and assignment number on the assignment and keep a copy in the event the original is lost.

Note files must be readable by Excel 2007 or Word 2007.

Student Handbook

You are responsible for becoming familiar with the contents of the Student Handbook. It contains important information about scheduling examinations (if applicable), applying for extensions, withdrawing from your course, ordering books, and computer and library services available to you. If you have questions about the policies outlined in the handbook (<https://courseware.acadiau.ca/openacadia/studenthandbook.html>), contact:

Open Acadia

- 21 University Avenue (Rhodes Hall)
- Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
- Phone: 1-800-565-6568
- Fax: 1-902-585-1068
- Email: openacadia@acadiau.ca

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism. A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute cheating or plagiarism should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved.

- Cheating is copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise
- Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. Students are required to acknowledge and document the sources of ideas that they use in their written work.
- Self plagiarism is also a form of plagiarism. It is the presentation of the same work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved.
- A student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty.
- Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of the relevant infraction. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the university.

Course Schedule

You have 6 months to complete this course. You may set your own schedule, but if you intend to complete the course in less than 3 months, you should let me know so that we can arrange a schedule.

Please do not leave all of your course work until a few weeks before your completion date. Although I will make every effort to accommodate your schedule within reason, I need time to read and assess assignments.

Possible Schedule

Month 1	Module 1
Month 2	Module 2
Month 3	Module 3
etc..	

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