

**COM 433: Seminar in Leadership Communication: Theory and Practice
Spring 2026**

Class: Section 1 T 6:30 to 9:15 FEL 275A
Instructor: Lance R. Lippert
Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:00; T & Th 2:00-3:00; and by appointment
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“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor” (Max DePree).

“Leadership is primarily viewed as a vitally important skill to obtain commitment and motivation and to energize people to accept the worthwhileness of a new strategy or other major change. But in organizations with highly interdependent and dynamic parts, all of which are in flux, accomplishment takes more than commitment. It is not that commitment is unimportant; rather, it too is dependent on the leader’s ability to build a system worth committing to” (Sayles, 1993, p. 227).

Required texts and readings:

- Northouse, P. G. (2022). *Leadership: Theory and practice 9thEd.*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - Available in paperback, on-line, and on reserve at Milner.
- Additional readings include journal articles and popular press.
- Case studies and Activities.

Course Description:

The focus of this seminar is on leadership communication, how leadership communication influences organizational change, and the role of leadership communication in creating organizational and individual readiness for change. Although grounded in relevant leadership and organizational theory, the goal of the course is to blend theory with practical application in various organizational contexts and processes. Primarily, the basic areas of the course include contemporary theory and research, developing strategies for influencing organizational culture and climate through leadership communication, global and inclusive leadership, and application of theory and strategies in pertinent interest areas. Students will be responsible for several short reflection papers, leading an instructional discussion, and an applied project or research proposal for the semester project.

Instructional Strategies: Instructional strategies include: (1) textbook and professional journal readings, (2) discussions, case studies, and interviews with relevant organizational leaders, (3) semester research project which will apply relevant literature and theory to practical organizational contexts, and (4) assessment in the form of several short position papers, a mid-term exam, and several reports.

Course Objectives:

1. To study traditional and emergent theories/approaches of leadership and their relevance to organizational, team, and interpersonal communication.
2. To study the role and power of communication in the informal and formal leadership process.
3. To recognize the relationship between leadership and followership.

4. To ascertain those communication competencies essential for effective leadership in adaptation in multiple settings.
5. To equate conceptual and theoretical frameworks with applicable contexts.
6. To translate concepts and theories into operational and applied spheres of communication behavior (*translation specialist*).
7. To reflect on how to identify and improve self-leadership as well as assist others in leadership development during challenging social times.

Course Requirements:

Your grade for this course will depend on how many points you earn from each of the following:

Short Papers (100 points):

Framework Paper (50 pts.). For your Framework paper (2-4 pages), you need to describe your conceptualization of leadership and provide an example of how you have seen leadership applied/exhibited/demonstrated in your life (personal, professional, or para-social or mediated). Basically, at this point in the semester, I want you to describe how you operationalize the concept of “leadership.” This means you need to come up with your definition of the concept and provide a relevant example. This requires thoughtful analysis of how you would apply appropriate/effective leadership (how “it” was done or should/could be done) and the theoretical framework you rely on to support your interpretation. As needed, you can refer to relevant literature to support your analysis but don’t need any citations. Just make sure to provide sufficient internal citations. This paper is meant to be reflective of personal interest, knowledge, beliefs, and personal experiences. I am looking for 1) clear and concise writing, 2) sound analysis, 3) supportive rationale, 4) effective translation, and 5) reasoned conclusions.

Interview Paper (50 pts.). The interview paper is just that: A paper summarizing and analyzing an interview (conversation) with an identified leader or someone you view as a leader. What does leadership look like? You will be given more specific instructions later in the semester, but in the meantime, be thinking about this project while doing the readings and during our class discussion. The questions you will ask this person will be derived from the readings and class discussions. You may interview someone in your social network or contact someone else. You’ll turn in a 2–4-page synopsis and partial transcript of the interview. Interview papers will be discussed in class on the day they are due.

Podcast or Book Report (100 points): Pick a podcast or a popular press book from office or another one that seems interesting to you. I want to approve of your choice. This report (2-4 pages) should summarize and evaluate a “popular” book or podcast about some topic in leadership communication. Your evaluation should include a summary of the content and assessment of the quality of the advice or subject matter dealing with an aspect of leadership communication. Your focus could include such things as: Is it useful? Is it realistic? Is it consistent with what we know from the scholarly literature? Where is the linkage between theory and application? Does it translate?

Semester Project (200 points): You can work on the semester project with a partner or individually. I would like that we do some type of applied communication research such Action Based Research that works with a community partner. We need to decide by next week which project we want to complete. The goal is to produce a product acceptable for presentation or submission. You would need an IRB if you chose to do actual research.

Research Summary. A research summary is an essay, incorporating an original way of summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting a body or topic area of research literature. This is a review of literature.

Rather than being a mere descriptive survey, it goes beyond developing insights and providing evaluations which can be the basis for subsequent research. Research summaries for purposes of this class should contain a) a review of literature, b) evaluation of literature, c) issues for further inquiry and research directions, and d) practical and/or theoretical implications.

Research Proposal. A research proposal is the first step in the research process in which you (a) identify an idea, problem, question, or hypothesis, (b) describe the purpose of the study, (c) provide a rationale for the study question(s), (d) define all key concepts/terms in the research question(s), (e) review previous research directly relevant to your study question, and (f) describe proposed methods, including participants, measurement instruments or procedures, location(s), time frame, and a rationale for your choices.

On average, 15-20 pages is a reasonable length. Papers should be written using APA (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association) guidelines as this is the style accepted by our discipline. Writing in a clear and concise manner is an ongoing, learning process that all of us constantly work to perfect. Hopefully this course will challenge us to become better writers and provide an opportunity to improve our writing styles. Feel free to consult with me on your papers prior to grading.

C. Class Participation (100 points): There are two components of professional engagement.

- A. Self-Reflection and Evaluation (25 points): This includes your weekly “journaling” about your in and out of class engagement. You keep track of how you think you participate in this class. Your final self-evaluation in short, narrative form is due at the end of semester.
- B. Instructor Evaluation (75 points): Class sessions will incorporate discussions and some structured activities. Class sessions will often move beyond the assigned readings to issue analysis, theory application, and communication skill development (including guest presenters, case studies, discussion questions, and “learning conversations”). You are expected to discuss the readings and your ideas informally each session. Because this course is a seminar, not a lecture class, your own involvement and active engagement are imperative. In order for our discussions to be productive you will need to: (1) show knowledge of readings and have given thought to what you have read, (2) provide discussion questions or points for discussion from each of the readings, (3) articulate your ideas clearly and argue effectively for your position, (4) contribute to a lively interchange of ideas, (5) synthesize ideas across various readings, (6) respond thoughtfully to the comments of others. Failure to contribute to class discussion, in a meaningful way, will negatively affect your participation grade. Physical presence is necessary, but not enough for participation. I will evaluate student participation at the end of each class. This will also include weekly contributions to the artifact/network page, self-reflections, current events, postings on the discussion board, in-class activities, and interaction with and reactions to **guest speakers**. Failure to engage with and contribute to class discussion, in a meaningful way, will negatively affect your participation grade. Physical presence is necessary, but not sufficient for participation. **I will make participation notes after every class.**

Summary of Grading:

Short Papers	100 points
Semester Project & presentation	200 points
Professional Points	100 points
<u>Podcast or Book Report</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total	500 points

The final letter grade for the course (and grades for the other assignments) will be based on a standard scale (90-100%=A; 80-89%=B; 70-79%=C; 60-69%=D; 0-59%=F)

NOTE: Failure to meet any of the course requirements may result in failure of the course.

Course Policies and Requirements:

Preparation & Participation. By definition, a graduate seminar requires extensive preparation and participation from all participants. You are obliged to be prepared for intelligent class discussions. The quality of this seminar depends ultimately upon the willingness of each participant to engage the materials, issues, and discussions constructively and creatively. Do the assigned readings. Take time prior to class to reflect upon your assignments and your participation. If something is unclear, particularly interesting, or you have some insight into it, contact me, or make a note of it and you're your question during class.

Professional Courtesy. RESPECT! As this is a graduate seminar and during a unique time of remote learning, I feel it is unnecessary to emphasize issues such as respect for the class (attendance, turning assignments in on time, etc.) and the members of the seminar (respecting others' opinions, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition). I do, however, want to be clear about my expectations. I believe graduate school is an experience designed to bring professional individuals together to increase and expand knowledge. Thus, I will expect your behaviors and attitudes towards this course to reflect professional courtesy. If I believe a student does not meet my expectations (e.g., excessive absences, inadequate work, disrespect for others, etc.), I will notify you immediately and a decision will be made concerning your need to drop the course.

Deadlines. All assignments must be completed on schedule and must be handed in when due. No make-up or extensions will be permitted unless the student contacts the instructor prior to the due date and has a verifiable excuse. One letter grade will be deducted for each day that any assignment is late.

Attendance Policy. Please be prepared to discuss the daily readings. Be engaged. Perfect attendance is expected, because by enrolling in this course you have made a commitment to being present during all class meetings. Being absent deprives you of valuable discussions and information. Historically, there has been a strong correlation between absences and grades; the more class time that students miss, the lower the grades they tend to earn. Missing more than 2 class periods will result in a 5% deduction from your overall course grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Late Work and Incomplete Grade Policy. All assignments are expected at the beginning of class on the due date. An automatic 10% of the points possible will be deducted from late assignments, with an additional 10% deducted for each 24 hours the assignment is late. If these penalties seem steep, please consider that in eight more weeks you will likely be in a position where late work is not accepted at all. In the case of documented university excused absences, assignments should be completed prior to the absence. As a rule, incomplete grades will not be given.

Academic Development: There is a great place on campus if you need some assistance with study skills and writing. For workshops, tutoring, or coaching, check out <http://ucollege.illinoisstate.edu>.

Academic Misconduct: Academic dishonesty involves cheating or plagiarizing. All University Policies concerning academic misconduct will be upheld in this course. Refer to the I.S.U. Code of

Conduct at Community Rights and Responsibilities

(<http://www.deanofstudents.ilstu.edu/downloads/crr/code-of-student-conduct.pdf>). Of particular concern in a course with written assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Webster (1989) defines plagiarism as "the appropriations or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (p. 1100). **In other words, plagiarism is stealing.** You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. I will not tolerate such misconduct, and it may result in a failing grade. Please remember

1) You cannot simply copy material from a source (including classmates) and present it as your own original material, 2) You cannot download a paper from any sort of online outlet and present it as original work, and 3) You cannot hand in a paper for my class that you wrote for another class.

Mental Health Resources: Life at college can get very complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help.

Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors.

Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at counseling.illinoisstate.edu or by calling (309) 438-3655.

Student Access and Accommodation Services: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, Video Phone (309) 319-7682, or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.

COM 433: Seminar in Leadership Communication

(Tentative Schedule)

[Readings will be added or replaced with advance notice. This schedule coincides with “Pages” on Canvas]

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READING</u>
Wk #1 JAN. 13	Grounding & self-reflection, syllabus review, Book selection, MLK video ASSIGN: Framework paper.	
Wk #2 JAN. 20	What is leadership? Ch. 1 Leadership Defined & Described	<p>Ward, S. (2024). What Is Leadership? The Balance. Retrieved on January 13, 2025. Retrieved from https://www.thebalancemoney.com/leadership-definition-2948275</p> <p>Jackson, J. (2020). Do You Have A Leadership Strategy? Forbes. Retrieved on January 13, 2025. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jarretjackson/2020/08/05/do-you-have-a-leadership-strategy/?sh=6480e83b1ab3</p> <p>Short, T. (2012), "The importance of balance in leadership development: Lessons from a study of railways in Australia", <i>Human Resource Management International Digest</i>, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 36-39. https://doi.org/10.1108/09670731211233357</p>
Wk #3 JAN. 27	Leadership & Communication Barge textbook-chapter 1 - Leadership Communication Schein book - chapter 1 - Leadership and Culture Schein book – chapter 2 - Leadership and Culture	<p>Berim, R. (2014). Systems theory and systems approach to leadership. <i>ILIRIA International Review</i>, 1(1),59-76 DOI:10.21113/iir.v4i1.53</p> <p>Wyman, O. (2003). Congruence model: Roadmap for understanding organizational performance. <i>Delta Organization and Leadership</i>.</p> <p>Hutcheson, S. (2025.) 5 ways leaders can build a high-performance organizational climate. Forbes. Retrieved January 13, 2025.</p>
Wk #4 FEB. 3	Ch. 2 Trait Approach Novruzoy, S. (2024). Vladimir Putin’s Leadership: Charisma, Power Dynamics, and Influence through the Lens of Leadership Traits and Theoretical Perspectives. <i>Open Journal of Leadership</i> , 13(30).	

Bai, X., & Roberts, W. (2011). Taoism and its model of traits of successful leaders. *Journal of Management Development*, 30(7/8), 724-739. DOI 10.1108/02621711111150236

[8 Essential Qualities of Successful Leaders](#) Forbes

DUE: Project Proposal

Wk #5
FEB. 10

Ch. 3 Skills Approach
Ch. 4 Behavioral Approach
Leadership Communication Style Preferences Inventory

De Vries, R. E., Bakker-Pieper, A., & Oostenveld, W. (2010). Leadership = Communication? The Relations of Leaders' Communication Styles with Leadership Styles, Knowledge Sharing and Leadership Outcomes. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, 25(3), 367-380. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2912722/>

Czech, K. (2010). Leader Communication: Faculty Perceptions of the Department Chair. *Communication Quarterly*, 58(4), 431-457.

Wk #6
FEB. 17

Ch. 5 Situational Approach
Ch. 6 Path-Goal Theory

Add The Art of leadership: Seven lessons from Sun Tzu

Massod, S. A., Dani, S. S., Burns, N. D., & Backhouse, C. J. (2006). Transformational leadership and organizational culture: The situational strength perspective. *Proceedings of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers*, 220, 941-951.

Fabac, R., Kokot, K., & Bubalo, I. (2022). Path goal theory: Leadership styles and their changes during the covid-19 pandemic. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 20(4), 349-374. DOI [10.7906/indecs.20.4.4](https://doi.org/10.7906/indecs.20.4.4)

DUE: Framework Paper

Wk #7
FEB. 24

Ch. 7 Leader-Member Exchange Theory
Ch. 8 Transformational Leadership

Levine, K. J., Muenchen, R. A., & Brooks, A. M. (2010). Measuring Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: Why isn't Charisma Measured? *Communication Monographs*, 77(4), 576-591.

Levine, K. J., Muenchen, R. A., & Brooks, A. M. (2010). Measuring Transformational and Charismatic Leadership: Why isn't Charisma Measured? *Communication Monographs*, 77(4), 576-591.

Wk #8 MAR. 3	Ch. 9 Authentic Leadership Shamir, B., & Eilam, G. (2005) "What's your story?": A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. <i>Leadership Quarterly</i> , 16, 395-417.
Wk #9 MAR. 10	SPRING BREAK NO CLASS
Wk #10 MAR. 17	Ch. 10 Servant Leadership (Social Justice, EDIA, Institutional Bias, Corporate & Social Responsibility; Non-Profits, Civic Engagement) Ofosu-Anim, D. O., & Back, S. -H. (2021). Towards a Conceptual Framework for Political Leadership Theory and Practice: A Thematic Analysis of the Literature. <i>Open Journal of Leadership</i> , 10, 193-213. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojl.2021.103013
Wk #11 MAR. 24	Ch. 11 Adaptive Leadership and Mental Health
Wk #12 MAR. 31	Ch. 12 Inclusive Leadership
Wk #13 AP. 7	Ch. 13 Followership
Wk #14 AP. 14	Ch. 14 Gender and Leadership (on-line reading) CSCA
Wk #15 AP. 21	Ch. 15 Leadership Ethics Xuezhu Bai, x., & Morris, N. (2014). Leadership and Virtue Ethics A Daoist Approach. <i>Public Integrity</i> , 16(2), 173–186. DOI: 10.2753/PIN1099-9922160205
Wk #16 AP. 28	Ch. 16 Team Leadership
May 5	Final Exam Period (TUESDAY, May 5, 5:30-7:30 p.m.) Due: Semester Paper & Informal Presentations