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Leadership and Spirituality – Leading Lives of Courage, Compassion and Commitment to the Common Good

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“Exercising leadership is an experience of your aliveness – your creativity and daring, your curiosity and eagerness, your compassion and love for people...”
-from Leadership on the Line, Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading
Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky

Course Description

This course focuses on leadership as a spiritual activity, reclaiming the notion that authentic leadership comes from within, inspired by our unique passions and talents, and guided by our deepest beliefs and most cherished values. We will consider the spiritual roots of authentic leadership through exploration of an individual’s own experience of leadership and spirituality, informed by recent research and readings from authorities in the fields of leadership studies, spirituality, psychology, sociology, and theology.

Instructional Objectives and Methodology

1. Explore contemporary understandings of the nature of spirituality and leadership through course readings.
2. Uncover and critique personal beliefs and assumptions about what it means to live and lead with spirit, through both practical exercises and reflection papers.
3. Examine the relationship of spirituality and leadership in our class discussions and integrate personal insights and experiences in weekly journal assignments.
4. Research the life of a world leader who exemplifies courage, compassion and commitment; reflect on that person’s example, their impact on the world, and their influence upon one’s personal practice of leadership and spirituality; and present findings to the class.
5. Apply theoretical learning to one’s own spiritual journey and practice of leadership through a final formative synthesis.

Proposed Materials and Texts for the Course

- Jay Alden Conger and contributors, Spirit at Work: Discovering the Spirituality in Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994)
- Laurent A. Parks Daloz, Cheryl H. Keen, James P. Keen, and Sharon Daloz Parks, Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996)

Note: Permissions to use this material must be obtained directly from the author.

- Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002)
- Brian J. Mahan, Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose: Vocation and the Ethics of Ambition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002)
- Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000)

Additional assigned readings will be provided throughout the course (see course reader and outline below).

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Outline of Course Content

Week 1: Introductions

- Preview of course themes
- Review of course requirements and methodology
- Who are we? What are we looking for ... at least, in this course?

Assignments

“Spirituality Today” by Michael Downey in Understanding Christian Spirituality, (New York: Paulist Press, 1997)

“Introduction: Our Search for Spiritual Community” by Jay Conger in Spirit at Work Introduction, The Heart of Danger, and The Faces of Danger in Leadership on the Line

First journal entry - Write the most recent chapter of your spiritual biography.

Week 2: Leading from Within: Leadership as a Spiritual Practice

- Defining terms: What is leadership? What is spirituality?
- Spirituality and Religion: What’s the difference?
- Beginning to explore some intersections of leadership and spirituality

Assignments

What’s On the Line and *Sacred Heart* in Leadership on the Line

“Leading from Within” by Parker Palmer in Spirit at Work

Foreword, Preface, and Ask Me What I am Living for in Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose

Second journal entry - Reflect upon your personal experience of the spiritual practice: “Ask me what I am living for”(in Mahan).

Week 3: Discernment: Responding to the Call from Within

- The art of discernment
- Discovering unique passions and talents
- Why lead?

Assignments

“What is Discernment?” by David Lonsdale, S.J. in Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1992)

“Partnering with God: Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership” in Groups by Brian O. McDermott, S.J. in Spirit at Work

Listening to Life and *Now, I Become Myself* in Let Your Life Speak

Review list of potential virtual mentors.

Third journal entry – How have you experienced leadership as a call from within; as a commission from a group; or as a place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need?

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Week 4: Defining the Challenge of Leading with Spirit

- Contemporary North American culture and the ethic of ambition
- Societal impact upon the formation of our shared values
- Living with courage in the “new commons”

Assignments

“We Live Through Institutions” by Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, et al. in The Good Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1992)

“Transforming American Culture” by Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, et al. in Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 1996)

Connection and Complexity: The Challenge of the New Commons in Common Fire Failing at Success in Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose

Select and submit your proposed virtual mentor.

Fourth journal entry - Reflect upon your personal experience of the practices: “Remembering to Forget Ourselves” and “Finding Yourself by Losing Yourself” (in Mahan).

Week 5: First Interlude: Lives of Courage

- Introducing “virtual mentors”
- Courage as core value for authentic leadership
- Lives of courage: Martin Luther King, Jr., Katherine Drexel, and Oscar Romero

Assignments

Brief biographies of Martin Luther King, Jr., Katherine Drexel, and Oscar Romero

Courage: A Responsible Imagination in Common Fire

“A Leader’s Conscience: The Integrity and Spirituality of Vaclav Havel” by John C. Haughey, S.J. in Spirit at Work

“Service: The Call of Compassion” by Laurence G. Boldt, in How to Find the Work You Love (London: Penguin Books, Ltd, 2004)

Fifth journal entry - Submit a brief bibliography for study on the life of your “virtual mentor”.

Week 6: Facing the Challenge: Leading with Courage

- Courage as a choice to lead with heart
- Obstacles to leading with courage – social, political, and personal
- Informed conscience as guide in the midst of complexity

Assignments

Manage Your Hungers in Leadership on the Line

Ivan Ilyich, John Dean, and I: How We Deceive Ourselves and If I’m Really Something, You Must Be Nothing Much in Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose

Sixth journal entry – Comment on “Three Lies in Spiritual Indirection” and “Rationalization: A User’s Guide”. Reflect upon your personal experience of the practice “Mirroring Ambition”(in Mahan, 119-125).

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Week 7: Equipping Ourselves to Lead with Courage

- Practices for tapping into spiritual resources
- Caring for our spiritual supply – sabbatical time
- Renewing our commitments

Assignments

“Spirited Connections: Learning to Tap the Spiritual Resources in Our Lives and Work”

by D. Susan Wisely and Elizabeth M. Lynn in Spirit at Work

Anchor Yourself in Leadership on the Line

Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose in Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose

Seventh Journal Entry - Reflect upon your personal experience of the practice:

“Days of Remembrance”(in Mahan).

Week 8: Second Interlude: Lives of Compassion

- Hearing and heeding our “virtual mentors”
- Compassion as core value for authentic leadership
- Lives of compassion: Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Oskar Schindler, and Dorothy Day

Assignments

Brief biographies of Mother Teresa, Oskar Schindler and Dorothy Day

Compassion: Living Within and Beyond Tribe in Common Fire

Prepare presentation of “virtual mentor”

Eighth journal entry – Reflect upon and describe a personal experience of a

“constructive encounter with otherness”.

Week 9: Considering the Possibility of Leading with Compassion

- Exploring our response to those outside of our tribe
- Obstacles to leading with compassion – social, political, and personal
- Alternative forms of leadership – the servant leader

Assignments

“The justification for a pedagogy of the oppressed” in Pedagogy of the Oppressed by

Paulo Freire (New York: Continuum International, 1970, 1993)

Confession: The Struggle with Fallibility in Common Fire

“The servant as leader” in Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate

Power and Greatness by Robert Greenleaf (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977, 1991)

Ninth journal entry – Reflect upon your own personal experience with “Saints,

Martyrs, and Hypocrites” as described in Common Fire.

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Outline of Course Content

Week 10: Defining the Challenge of Leading Lives of Compassion

- Exploring our contemporary context
- Examining our global distribution of resources and unmet human needs
- Alternate views on economic development

Assignments

Excerpts from the annual United Nations Human Development Report

“Buddhist Economics” and “Development” by E.F. Schumaker in Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered (New York: Harper and Row, revised 1989)

“Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy” by Edward DeBerri and James E. Hug in Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, revised 2003)

“Introduction: Getting Ready”, “Selling in Minnesota” and “Evaluation” by Barbara Ehrenreich in Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001)

Tenth Journal Entry – Reflect upon the statistics offered in the United Nations Human Development Report and give your personal response to the inequities revealed.

Week 11: Equipping Ourselves to Lead with Compassion

- Being fueled by our deepest passions
- Developing our unique talents
- Leading lives where “our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need”

Assignments

Conviction: Developing Critical Habits of Mind in Common Fire

“Heart Searching and Life Choices” by Wilkie Au, S.J. in By Way of the Heart: Toward a Holistic Christian Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989)

When the Way Closes and Leading From Within in Let Your Life Speak

Eleventh Journal Entry – Narrate a time in your life when your deep gladness connected with a deep need of the world.

Week 12: Final Interlude: Lives of Commitment

- Commitment as core value for authentic leadership
- Courage and compassion lead us to deep commitment to the common good
- Lives of commitment: Mahatma Gandhi, Mollie Rogers, Cesar Chavez

Assignments

Brief biographies of Mahatma Gandhi, Mollie Rogers, Cesar Chavez

Commitment: Where the Heart’s Deep Gladness Meets the World’s Deep Hunger in Common Fire

Final Journal Entry – Write a statement of life purpose answering the question: “For what am I willing to spend my one, precious life?”

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Week 13: Sustaining Our Commitment to Working for the Common Good

- Determining what we believe so we can live our deepest truths
- Grounding our work in shared values
- Choosing our commitments

Assignments

Community: Becoming at Home in the World in Common Fire

“What Leaders Cannot Do Without: The Spiritual Dimensions of Leadership” by

Rabindra N. Kanungo and Manuel Mandonca in Spirit at Work

The Meritocracy Machine in Forgetting Ourselves on Purpose

“Conclusion: Reuniting Spirituality and Work” by Jay Conger in Spirit at Work

Finish preparing and submit a written copy of the presentation of your “virtual mentor”.

Weeks 14 and 15: Student Presentations of their Virtual Mentors

Assignment

Work on final formative synthesis, due on the last day of class. See instructions below.

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Evaluation Methods

- 1. Class attendance is mandatory. Active class participation is essential to integrate and to explore as thoroughly as possible the topics covered. Each missed class will result in a reduction of one-half grade of the overall final grade, unless otherwise excused by the professor.**
- 2. Quality of course participation and preparation of assigned readings for class discussion will determine 25% of the final grade.**
- 3. Journal entries will determine 25% of the final grade.**
The course journal is intended to be an intellectual log of significant learning including: key insights from the readings and class discussion; affective learning; and reflection upon personal experiences of the spiritual exercises ventured throughout the course. A grading rubric will be provided at the beginning of the semester and students will receive a grade on each assignment to help gauge progress.
- 4. Research and class presentation of a student's virtual mentor will account for 25% of the final grade.**
- 5. The final formal synthesis will determine the last 25% of the final grade.**
An effective final formal synthesis is a comprehensive discussion of what you are taking with you, including:
 - a. An integrated summary of significant learning from each topic addressed in the course (see course outline)**
 - b. Possible avenues for future study answering the following questions: what would you like to learn more about; which questions require further reflection; and how do you propose to take some creative initiative on these unresolved matters?**
 - c. Applications of course related learning to your everyday practice of leadership and spirituality**

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