Although leadership is one of the most familiar terms in political discussions, its meaning and significance are widely disputed. Who are political leaders? Are they merely possessors of power? Can they be moral actors? How does leadership vary depending on the political system? On the arena of political action, from local to international? What are important limits on what leaders can accomplish? Multiple and often rival theories have considered questions such as these from ancient times to our own day.

In this seminar we will examine a wide array of theories and read a large number of authors concerned with understanding political leadership. The objective of the course is to explore the terrain of political leadership, not to promote any particular theory or approach.

The course will be taught as a seminar; it will not be a lecture course, but a conversation in which students are expected to participate actively and thoughtfully. There will not be any exams in this course. Rather, your work and your grade will involve seminar participation and writing papers.

You should purchase the following books:

Plato, *Gorgias* (Oxford University Press)

Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, eds., *The Portable Machiavelli* (Penguin Books)

James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (Grove Press)


Additional readings for the course will be on Blackboard (abbreviated as BB)
COURSE OUTLINE

Aug. 26  Introduction to the course

    Part I – Classics

Aug. 28  Plato’s Gorgias and the Idealist Approach

    Read: Plato, Gorgias, pp. 3-62

Sept. 2   Read: Gorgias, pp. 62-135

Sept. 4   Machiavelli and the Realist Approach

    Read: The Portable Machiavelli, pp. 66-71, 77-126

Sept. 9   Read: The Portable Machiavelli, pp. 126-166


Sept. 16  Read: The Portable Machiavelli, pp. 430-479

Sept. 18  Max Weber and the Two Ethics of Leadership

    Read: Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” (BB)

Sept. 23  Michael Walzer and the Instrument of Violence

    Read: Michael Walzer, “The Problem of Dirty Hands” (BB)

Sept. 30  First Paper Due

Sept. 30  James MacGregor Burns and Contemporary Leadership Theory

    Read: James MacGregor Burns, Transforming Leadership, pp. 1-29

Oct. 2    Read: Transforming Leadership, pp. 33-97

Oct. 7    Read: Transforming Leadership, pp. 98-151

Oct. 9    Read: Transforming Leadership, pp. 152-198

Oct. 14   Read: Transforming Leadership, pp. 201-240
Part II – Leadership Themes

Oct.  16  Politicians as Leaders?


Oct.  28  Leadership and Individual Psychology
Read:  Harold D. Lasswell, “The Development of Political Man” and Fred Greenstein, “Personality and Politics” (BB)

Oct.  30  Gender and Leadership
Read:  Nannerl Keohane, “Does Gender Make a Difference” (BB)

Nov.  4  Second Paper Due

Nov.  4  Moral Leadership
Read:  John Kane, “Aung San Suu Kyi” (BB)

Nov.  6  Dissenting Leadership
Read:  Bruce Miroff, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Dissenting Leadership and Feminist Vision” (BB)

Nov.  11 Read:  Bruce Miroff, “Martin Luther King, Jr.: Dissenting Leadership and Democratic Redemption” (BB)

Nov.  13  The Community Organizer as Leader
Read:  Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father* (selections on BB)

Nov.  18  Leadership in a Constitutional Democracy
Read:  John Kane and Haig Patapan, *The Democratic Leader* (selections on BB)
Nov. 20  Democratic Leadership and Civic Education
Read: Bruce Miroff, “Civic Education and Its Discontents” (BB)

Nov. 25  Autocratic Leadership
Read: articles on V. Putin (BB)

Dec. 2  Collaboration between Rival Leaders: The Case of South Africa
Read: James Read and Ian Shapiro, “Transforming Power Relationships: Leadership, Risk, and Hope” (BB)

Dec. 4  Limits on Leadership
Read: Bruce Miroff, “Presidents and Economic Royalists” (BB)

Dec. 9  Comparing Approaches to Leadership: A Conversation

Dec. 15  Final Paper Due

Grades for the course are on an A-E basis, but the course can be taken on an S-U basis. Grades will be based on seminar participation (including required email themes), two short papers (5 pages each) based on assigned readings, and a final paper (10 pages) that will apply ideas from the course about leadership to Abraham Lincoln and slavery. (For this paper, you must read Eric Foner, The Fiery Trial.)

As a seminar, your attendance and active participation are essential. Excessive and unexcused absences will detract from your grade, as will the failure to speak up. Students are reminded that all work handed in must be their own. Plagiarism on papers will be severely punished.

My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays right after class (11:45-12:45) in Humanities 16. If you wish to see me on the downtown campus, let me know in advance. My email is bmiroff@albany.edu