Leadership & Social Justice

Being the change you want to see: Healing ourselves and all of our relationships

Professor: Jessica Srikanthia, PhD
jhpieper@gmu.edu
Office: Arlington Campus, Founder’s Hall, Room 663
Office hours: Wednesday 1-2pm & by appointment
Telephone: 703-993-2272
Class Location: Founders Hall 475
Class Dates: https://schar.gmu.edu/sites/default/files/prospective-students/Masters-Programs/ODKM-Spring-2019-Schedule_Revised.pdf

OVERVIEW

In a time of climate change, water pollution and depletion, and the inauguration of the first period of mass extinction to be caused by humankind, we are challenged to adapt our ways of being, perceiving, living, connecting and organizing to align with life itself. Frankl describes moments of challenge as requiring us to shift from asking what we expect from life, to asking what life expects from us. In each aspect and dimension of your life, what does it mean and look like for you to rise to life’s challenges? How do you know when you are doing so? What relationships do you find between inner and outer transformation? This course challenges participants not just to theorize leadership but to inhabit it, while honoring thoroughgoing multiplicity of meaning and practice. In keeping with the core values of the field of Organization Development, leadership is viewed with an orientation to holistic wellbeing and mutual flourishing. The course distinguishes several sites for reflective understanding and practice: inner journeys, interpersonal relationships, organizations, and large scale systems. All of these sites are vital to full development as Organization Development practitioners. In our complex and globalized world, outward leadership requires not just an understanding of one’s immediate actions but also the ability to understand how one’s actions are sourced from, embedded in and refracted through the interrelated systems in which we live and affect each other. At the same time, outward leadership itself is an expression of inner ‘being’, and the course will devote attention to leadership as a transformed way of being. Participants will be encouraged to find their own leadership philosophy and personal practice by engaging with all four pillars of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, concrete experience, active experimentation). This is a process of finding your own center, leading your own learning, and developing capacities to understand both your proximate world and its distal interactions and effects.

LEARNING PROCESS

This course invites each participant to choose to lead their own learning and their own experience in and through the course. Through reflective engagement with direct experiences unfolding for each participant in the context of the course, participants can undertake and reflect on leadership at multiple levels simultaneously. At the same time, the collective class time provides opportunity for a leadership based on mutual flourishing and an ethic of care for each other as well as appreciation for diverse paradigms of and approaches to leadership.

According to John Haugeland, we can only have authentic knowledge to the extent that we also take authentic responsibility, even in ostensibly ‘objective’ contexts such as science. Haugeland tells scientists that authentic responsibility “is personal – one’s own – responsibility for the science as a whole” (Note that this is not just responsibility for one’s own piece of the science; Haugeland 2002, “Authentic Intentionality”, p. 173). In the same vein, let’s co-create a
learning environment that supports each person, as well as all of us together as a group, in taking 'authentic responsibility' for our own learning, rather than replicating society’s rampant command/control systems in the conduct of the classroom.

At an individual level, this means that you can design your own education, with my assignments as requirements – subject to three requirements. First, please stay in meaningful communication and dialogue with me – include me in your choices as a coach (where you can choose to keep whatever input works for you and to discard what doesn’t), and in advance. Second, I request that your choices and their outpourings be out of positive commitment and not out of apathy or complacency – though if you do find yourself in apathy and you share this fact with me, together we can make even this into a rich and transformative dynamic and process. Third, as you make your choices, please check that you’re using the freedom to blossom, grow and stretch, rather than to avoid or close down (for example, please do explore some areas and perspectives with which you would not normally engage).

At a group level, let’s take authentic ‘collective’ responsibility to ensure a respectful and generative learning environment (and we can also collectively choose our collective guiding principles). If you see ways we can improve how we do things, speak up. If we aren’t dancing through class let’s each and all take responsibility for turning on some music (or for re-framing the chatter or the silences as opportunities for personal and collective growth). To adapt Stanley Fish’s famous essay, *There is no teacher in this class* (or rather, we’re all teachers and learners, leaders and followers). And as we all teach, learn, lead and follow, let’s commit to standing in a genuine appreciation and respect for, and affiliation with, each and every person and her/his journey.

This course recognizes and honors the important distinction between understanding/knowledge that is borrowed from others’ experiences (through conversations, texts, etc.) and the understanding/knowledge that comes from bringing a deep engagement and awareness to one’s own experience. Both kinds of experience are of value, but the emphasis in this class is on learning from and for oneself, with the experiences of others as sources of inspiration in our journey through what they bring up for us (whether joyous or painful, encouraging or frightening).

As a result, each person will have their own unique journey. While there will be opportunities for participants to initiate discussions they find important, not all readings will necessarily be discussed in class (except where participants choose to make this happen). However, this actually opens up a space and opportunity for participants to examine their own relationship to their learning, their fears and assumptions about themselves as learners, and their own capacities and power to lead their own learning and to do so in ways that respect and are mindful of each of the other students and the group as a whole.

Learning will thus be taking place at nested levels for each participant: Within oneself, collectively in the class/cohort/group, in one’s organizational context, and in beginning to see, feel and interact with broader and broadest level systems and background features of our lived realities that so thoroughly pervade our experiences and realities that they are often as invisible to us as the air we breathe. These distinctions can be helpful so that we remember to validate each site as an authentic space and context for learning with its own unique characteristics. Moreover, since each participant is inextricably present in and part of the collective and wider experiences and dynamics, some aspects of even the broadest level systems are likely to find their way into our own personal and direct experience – albeit with partiality and from our own lenses and situatedness and limitations. By bringing together a deep listening for others’ experiences and a deep examination of our own experiences, we can begin to find the both/and of existence. This ‘both/and’, which contrasts with our deeply conditioned tendency to listen through the frame of right/wrong or true/false or agree/disagree, opens up tremendous opportunities for transforming ourselves, our relationships and our capacity to see and inhabit inspired possibilities.

Finally, I invite all of us to relate to our classroom as a sacred space and to each person in the class as a sacred being. At minimum let’s consider how this listening and relating transforms the quality and nature of what we create together and individually. I am grateful to each one of you for the shared journey.
Learning Outcomes

I. Knowledge and Understanding
- Recognizing leadership in diverse forms and paradigms
- Examining complex realities at multiple levels (inner; interpersonal; group; organizational; societal; inter-societal; planetary, etc.) and from diverse perspectives and standpoints
- Realizing possibilities of transformation from a variety of sources and locations
- Examining one’s own influence and role in the dynamics of interactions, realities, and systems in which one participates

II. Qualitative and Quantitative Skills
- Systems and complexity thinking
- Self-directed learning
- Seeing situations from multiple perspectives and worldviews
- Seeing our own effects on complex systems and relationships

III. Professional Development and Leadership
- Developing insight into your personal leadership style and assumptions
- Developing and leading your own personal growth and development
- Bringing reflective awareness to seeing one’s own ‘being’
- Developing the ability to move beyond advocacy to inquiry, and beyond zero-sum games of right/wrong, agree/disagree, into incorporating the possibility of simultaneous yet divergent truths and realities
- Learning to accept and work with the other people in one’s life (work, home, school) in ways that support and encourage the best from all participants, including oneself.

READINGS:

1. **Books** (feel free to purchase any editions/used, digital versions, or use library resources):

   - Kegan & Lahey (2001). *How the way we talk can change the way we work: Seven languages for transformation*

   The class will divide into groups, with each group reading one of the following books:
   - Block, P. *Community: The structure of belonging*
   - Macy, J. & Johnstone, C. *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy*

   Note: In the first class period we can discuss additional options for some additional groups

   **In addition to these books, please choose a book from the list posted on BBd.** Choose a book on inner awareness/transformation that resonates with you. If there is a book not on the list that you have not already read but wish to choose, please discuss with me by February 8.

   **Recommended:**

2. **Articles and book chapters are listed under the week in which they are assigned.**
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING (details on assignments to be provided in class)

1. Leading your own learning, being present (in the full sense), reading, exploring, engagement, personal growth, stretching yourself; engaging in, exploring and experimenting with your own leadership practice at multiple levels both within and outside of class (inner/personal; interpersonal; organizational; broad systems/cultural/societal levels): 10%

3. Class preparation/engagement and in-class individual and group presentations/creations (including in class 5): 20%

4. Midterm paper applying the Kegan & Lahey book (along with any additional course resources you choose to incorporate) to your life: 25%

5. Final presentation in Class 6: 20%

6. Individual Education Plan – not letter graded – a check-in. 5%

7. Final Reflection paper: 20%

Please note that in order to be fully present within oneself and to each other, I request that electronic devices are not to be used during class time – no computers, PDAs, etc…. The exception is for publicly acknowledged shared purposes to benefit group learning.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Full attendance for the duration of all class periods is an expectation of the course. Please note that in accordance with official ODKM policy, it is not possible to miss more than one class period and still get credit for the course. Rare exceptions are provided in truly exceptional circumstances and cannot be presumed. Depending on how much class time is missed, partial attendance of a class period is equivalent either to a missed day or to 50% attendance of which two such days are equivalent to one missed class period. If you anticipate having to miss class time, or if you have an emergency and miss class at the last minute, please communicate with me at the earliest possible opportunity.

CLASS SESSIONS, TOPICS, READINGS and ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Class #1: Friday, February 1, 2019
Co-creating our classroom
Leading ourselves
Levels/Contexts for Leadership theory and praxis throughout the course: Inner, interpersonal and group; organizational; intra and inter-systemic; community/societal/global
The power of connection, conversation and active, multidimensional listening
Diverse paradigms, cultures, contexts and visions of leadership

Readings and materials to complete prior to class 1:
Wheatley, M. “The New Story is Ours to Tell” and “Bringing Life to Organizational Change”
Note: These are chapter sub-sections in her book, Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time. ebook in GMU library.

Recommended for those interested in the history of leadership theories in management:
Class #2: Saturday, February 23, 2019

Polarities! Third-way thinking; from opposition to synergy; transformative use of polarities at all levels from individual, interpersonal, group/team, organizational, community, societal, global.

Honored Guest: Cliff Kayser, M.S. in O.D. and H.R., PCC.
Polarity Partnerships: Continuity and Transformation for Organizations, Teams, and Individuals

Readings:
- Read Kegan & Lahey (2001). How the way we talk can change the way we work: Seven languages for transformation.
  o We will discuss in class 4 but it will distribute the reading and enable you to start thinking about it and applying it. Please start working with your accountability partner and applying it in your life (see assignment for class 4). There will also be a short (2pp single spaced) on how you have been applying this, so it will be great to start now.

Class #3: Friday, March 8, 2019

Inner leadership; leadership in and through suffering/reclaiming meaning and dignity in suffering; transformational leadership; Nonviolent transformations of violence; Unfolding one’s personal transformation; Leadership through the power of ’being’ that transcends outer circumstances; Bureaucracy; Structure and agency;

Readings:
- A book of your choice from the list of options (Frankl is now added to the list of options)

Come to class with:
- What you want to share with your classmates about what you learned from and found most valuable in the personal growth book you chose, and how you have started applying it (3-5min presentations)

Recommended:
Manitonquat. Original Instructions, pp. 7-29

Class #4: Saturday, March 23, 2019

Language for transformation; Conflict transformation; Leading your language to lead your life; Finding your ‘calling’

Readings:
- Kegan & Lahey. How the way we talk can change the way we work.
- Wheatley, Margaret. Leadership in turbulent times is spiritual:
  http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/turbulenttimes.html

Assignment for this class: Pair up into accountability partners for speaking/listening – practice the lessons in the book during natural interactions where you are together, and/or reporting on incidents. Apply the book to your life and come prepared with stories and experiences.

Last part of class: Open space for group creation

Note: Since you read Kegan & Lahey for Class 2, you might want to get a jump start on reading Latham for class 6.
Class #5: Friday, April 5, 2018

Qualities of communities vs institutions, and possibilities for living community even in bureaucracy; Reclaiming our humanity from roles and structures; Forms of power; Beyond diversity and inclusion; Structural and systemic discrimination and possibilities for transformation; Recognizing and responding to local and global challenges with wisdom, heart and courage; Systems change; Aligning ourselves with Life: Theory U; Four levels of listening; Opening the mind, heart and will; Transforming conflict; Theory U at individual, interpersonal, group/team, organizational, community, societal and global levels

- We will divide the class into small groups that will read distinct books:
  - Block, P. *Community: The structure of belonging*
  - Macy, J. & Johnstone, C. *Active Hope: How to face the mess we’re in without going crazy*
  - Additional options possible on request

Come to class prepared to:
- Share with the rest of the class the main points, discoveries, insights and value you derived from the book your group read
- Lead an experiential learning activity that you design and create, that brings alive and begins to generate some of the healing possibilities of the book you explored
- Discuss how you would apply the perspectives you experienced in OD work and life

Recommended:
Kaplan, J. ‘The Birth of the White Corporation’

Class Period #6: Saturday, April 27

Readings:

Assignment for today: Class presentations on:
- How would you use Latham in your new OD Career?
- Sharing your leadership journey in and through the course and program

Wrap up
Course evaluations

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS:
- Participation, engagement in class and with materials and assignments
- IEP: DUE MARCH 15 at 5pm. Not letter graded; purpose is to check in. One page single spaced. Sample questions you might use to focus and define your learning plan:
  - How do you want to grow in/through the course?
  - What do you want to learn in/through the course?
  - How do you plan to lead your own learning and growth in and through the course?
  - What materials will you explore to support you in your desired growth/learning?
  - What activities and/or practices will support you in making powerful use of the materials for your growth/learning?
  - How will you be able to recognize your own growth and learning?
  - How will you recognize when a shift or redirection would be valuable?
  - What kind of feedback from (a) me, (b) your classmates and/or (c) other people in your life would be helpful to you as you lead your own learning? How will you solicit this?
  - How would you like to share your growth/learning journey/process/outcomes with (a) me, and (b) the rest of the class?
- Design and execute a learning activity for class 5, in groups of 3.
• Midterm paper applying the Kegan and Lahey book to your life
• Engagement throughout the class – lead your own learning, co-create learning in and with the cohort. Prepare 1-2 discussion questions on each reading for classes 3-5.
• Presentations in final class. These can be either presentations or active learning experiences you design for the class/group or another format/genre. Topics can be either your leadership and learning journey through the course, or leading transformation from where you are situated regarding a wicked problem you are passionate about, or exploring an issue or topic you wanted to engage in the program that you have not yet had a chance to engage.
• Final reflection paper due April 29 at 9am.

OPTIONAL CLASS STRUCTURE for classes 3 – 5:
• Discussion of readings and topics. Please come prepared having read the materials and, for classes 3-5, also with 1-2 discussion questions for the group for each reading.
• Open discussion and/or activity time (small groups and then big group share out) for you to connect readings and topics to your real life professional and personal experiences in your organizations and lives. Begin this process while you are doing the readings prior to class.
• Class 4: 2nd half of class is open for creation! Class 5: Small group active learning activities
• Anything else you want to make room for!

Class 6: Individual presentations on your leadership and learning journey

RECOMMENDED READINGS (NOT REQUIRED)


Film: Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room


Wheatley, M. *Turning to One Another*, pp. 18-26 & 32 – 41.


Additional speeches by Rev. Dr. King: ‘Love, law and civil disobedience’; ‘Pilgrimage to nonviolence’; ‘An experiment in love’; ‘Suffering and faith’…

Film: *Citizen King* (PBS)—available as streaming video through the GMU library system (on campus only?) [http://avalon.lib.virginia.edu/media_objects/avalon:174](http://avalon.lib.virginia.edu/media_objects/avalon:174)


ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
GMU Writing Center: I would encourage you to make use of the GMU Writing Center while you’re here (regardless of how well you write), since getting feedback on writing is often a great learning opportunity and one that’s harder to come by once you leave school. The writing center info can be found online at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

New online resource: SPP 101

New Voices in Public Policy is a journal designed to disseminate student work in SPP to a broader audience. It is reviewed by a combined panel of students and faculty. Please let me know if you would like me to consider nominating your course paper for publication in New Voices in Public Policy. I may also proactively ask and check with you. Note: Official GMU language for inclusion in syllabi: "New Voices in Public Policy: I will consider nominating the very best papers in this course for publication in New Voices in Public Policy. New Voices is a student-and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP's finest student work with the rest of the world."

SPECIAL NEEDS: If you are a student with special needs that require academic accommodations, please see me in the start of term and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

PLAGIARISM: All submitted work must be your own, and it is imperative that you accurately cite all sources in your work.

- GMU is an honor code university. The Honor Code statement, including definition and statements on Plagiarism, can be found here: http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm

- You are responsible for reading and familiarizing yourself with the definition of plagiarism and how to ensure that you do not either intentionally or unintentionally engage in it.

- ODKM has a plagiarism policy that adds to the foregoing the requirement that: “you must cite any time that you reuse your own work, indicating all previous uses you have made of the same work in this or any other class.” (quoted from Baker, PUBP 503 Syllabus 2008).

- Violations of plagiarism policies can result in expulsion from the university.

- To quote from GMU’s policy as emailed to me on 3/20/08 by the SPP office: “The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. “Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined. “Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career. “The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to
failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa. “To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.”

Please note the following (does not replace the foregoing – supplements it)

- Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks, with references to the corresponding source and page number(s).

- Paraphrased ideas should appropriately reference the source materials.

- Some plagiarism is involuntary but this is still plagiarism and has severe consequences. To protect yourself from this, take notes carefully. In your notes, always 1) use quotation marks around direct quotations and include source and page references, and 2) make clear what ideas come from which sources, versus are your own ideas

Grade distributions as follows:

93 –100 = A
90 - 92.99 = A-
86 - 89.99 = B+
83 - 85.99 = B
80- 82.99 = B-
70 - 79.99 = C
Below 69.99 = F