DPLS 752 Leadership & Philosophy
Fall 2014

Brief syllabus

Our meetings will convene on Thursday evenings, 6-10 pm, September 11 & 18, October 2, 9, & 23, November 6 & 20, & December 4.

Needless to say, attendance and participation are mandatory.

You will be required to write reflective essays in several possible formats of your choice: either (1) a major paper, grounded in the assigned reading, equivalent to a journal-length article (18-20 pages), due at the end of the course; or (2) two briefer papers, grounded in the assigned reading, on a topic of your choice, 8-10 pages in length; or (3) four briefer papers, essentially one per book assigned, 4-6 pages in length.

We will conduct our meetings as seminar conversations. Therefore it's imperative to complete the assigned reading for each session prior to coming to class, prepared to bring your own insights, analyses, syntheses, arguments, and reflective appraisals to each text as we move through the course.

Editions

Plato, Republic, translated by Grube, edited by Reeve (Hackett).


A brief characterization

Philosophy and leadership studies go together like shoes and socks. From its inception, the European philosophical tradition has asked the relevant questions time after time and in each age: what are the meaning and significance of our humanity?; what is the relation of the individual person to the social order to which she constitutively belongs?; what is the nature of a “just” society?; how should a just and decent society be properly ordered?; what forms of rule are best and most consonant with our humanity?
In addition to the intrinsically philosophical character of such questions, philosophical investigation and reflection seems to be an integral and even a crucial component of the "Conceptual Framework" of DPLS, especially with its emphasis on self-knowledge. The oracle at Delphi to whom Socrates appealed in his trial issued the mandate, "Know thyself!" (To which we could add Polonius's speech in *Hamlet*, aside from Shakespeare's intention: "To thine own self be true!") Bernard Lonergan aptly framed this challenge and task as "reflective self-appropriation." I suppose a deep underlying assumption of our course together is that a morally and normatively well-conceived notion of "leadership" would not fail to take up the imperative of Delphi.

*September 11 & 18*

*Plato's Republic*

Probably the best known and among the most admired works of the European philosophical tradition, Plato's *Republic* is a dialogical and systematic attempt to answer a question of fundamental philosophical importance: what is justice? Here is Plato's attempt to build an ideal city (the *kallipolis*), on the premise that the city (the *polis*) is "the soul writ large." Justice is related to right relation and right rule both in oneself and in the identity-constituting communities to which one belongs. A philosophically well-conceived notion of leadership would inevitably engage this dialogue.

*October 2 & 9*

*John Dewey's Democracy and Education*

After nearly falling into obscurity on the American philosophical scene of the fifties, sixties, and seventies, a Dewey renaissance began in the eighties and is in full flower today. Widely regarded as the most important contributor to a genuinely American philosophical tradition, Dewey wrote prolifically on virtually all philosophical subject-matters. Even in the brief period of decline, his reputation as a leading philosopher of education ("progressive education") remained intact. Working out "the method of intelligence," his basic commitment is to "democracy as a way of life." He considered the public school to be an integral component of a democratic society; the building of democratic communities and a truly democratic notion of leadership (in sharp contrast, at least on the surface, to Plato). The *demos* does not have to be a mob.

*October 23*

*Martha Nussbaum's Cultivating Our Humanity*

After the death of John Rawls (in 2002), it is arguable that Martha Nussbaum, liberal feminist and trained classicist, has become the best known of America's "public philosophers." She has been a leading figure in the revival of the tradition of "virtue ethics" over the past three decades. The integral notions are "humanization" and "cultivation," consonant with a neo-Aristotelian approach. The implications for leadership studies should not be difficult to tease out.

*November 6 & 20 and December 4*

*Bernard Lonergan, The Lonergan Reader*
Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), the Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian, is better known today in Catholic theology than professional philosophy, but one might think that his philosophical renown is still to come. Two books are fundamental: *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957) and *Method in Theology* (1972). Among his fundamental aims as a thinker is what he calls "reflective self-appropriation." As I suggested above, this theme seems to me to be entirely consonant with the "Conceptual Framework" of DPLS.