Course Overview

The conceptual framework of the Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies (DPLS) focuses on the personal, organizational, and global levels of leadership. These ‘levels’ are all linked to the phenomenological, moral, philosophical, scientific, and cultural experiences of human beings. This course represents a synthesis of these levels in reference to the theoretical and conceptual notion of social constructionism (and cognitive constructivism). This construct necessarily includes exploration and discussion of biological, psychological, social, institutional, and historical antecedents. The core text for the course is Lock & Strong’s excellent summary of key movements and movers in the intellectual history of constructionist thought. We will also read and discuss two more or less contemporary interpretations (Lave & Wenger and Stacey) as well as what is understood as the core text in sociology undergirding constructionist thought (Berger & Luckmann). We will also read and discuss a number of other shorter pieces.

The course is divided into four main themes. These themes and current theorizing and research in leadership studies will be integrated.

- We will begin by discussing the classical and modern roots of meaning, knowledge, and experience as they relate to the development of both constructivism and constructionism.
- We will focus on bio-psychosocial interpretations of meaning, knowledge, and experience from a more contemporary critical and scientific perspective and as they suggest the further emergence of the constructionist idea.
- We will investigate big picture representations of a socially constructed culture and society at scale.
- Finally, we will sum up with more or less postmodern/post-structural interpretations and their implications for leadership studies.

The integration with leadership studies will be carried out through the readings, your analysis of the readings, class presentations, and class dialogue. Traditional interpretations and enactments of leadership (trait based and positional models) will be contrasted with contemporary interpretations of leadership as rendered through the lens of a socially constructed reality.

Course Hopes and Aims (objectives):

- Understand the intellectual antecedents of constructionist & constructivist theories
- Develop a foundational knowledge of social constructionism
- Apply course content to your own experience and participation in the course as a “socially constructed” person in a learning environment
• Apply foundational knowledge of social constructionism to current research in leadership studies
• Apply your understanding of the basics of this course to your experience and interpretation of leadership and leadership studies
• Competently read and interpret contemporary organizational and leadership studies research

Course Structure
This course is composed of reading, writing, class discussion, lecture, group presentations, and video. We will form small working & presentation groups during the first class that will remain intact throughout the course. These groups or cohorts will serve multiple functions. Among them are:

• Content & process support - group participants will have an opportunity to discuss readings, past discussions, and class assignments.
• Project and activity work - One of our first activities will be for groups to develop an agreement about group process and individual responsibilities.

Each four-hour meeting will open with a dialogic ‘check in’ by each participant that articulates what is interesting or important from previous reading or meetings. We will also do an overview of the readings. Small group discussions of course notes and readings will then follow. We will generally take a 20-30-minute break. Following the break, we will do presentations, conduct full class debriefs, continue class discussion, or review readings or presentations.

My style of pedagogy and theory of knowledge are based on pragmatist, constructivist and interpretivist assumptions. Which is to say that I believe there is no one or singular definition or interpretation of phenomena that holds true in all cases for all people at all times. All of us bring unique perspectives and experiences to the situation we call a DPLS seminar/course. However, it is also the case that the University confers degrees, awards credentials, etc. This larger set of social and cultural norms about what counts as scholarship, depth of thought, originality, academic honesty, and quality is something that I also take very seriously.

Consequently, we triangulate interpretations so as to arrive at a rough consensus about what or what is not good deep scholarly work. Each of the writers/authors we present in our courses has a perspective and a unique interpretive lens. Each of you have a perspective and a unique interpretive lens, when we work together in groups or discuss ideas we create yet another interpretation. I, as chief facilitator and designer of the course, also have an interpretive lens. The goal of this course (of all my courses) is that we make use of all these interpretations so that at the end of the day – at the end of the semester – you have had the richest, most complex, and engaging experience possible. What this requires of all of us is a willingness to listen to each other deeply, take risks in what we say and think, and stay present and engaged throughout the course. My essential perspective is that learning is the productive confusion of understanding and knowledge.

I also make available on Blackboard interpretive lecture notes of selected readings. It is my hope that these interpretations inspire and assist students in interpreting and analyzing the readings from their own perspectives in a deeper way. I also prepare a number of slides based on the notes
to stimulate discussion and/or communicate concepts and ideas. There may also be additional readings posted on Blackboard.

**Assignments, & Grading**

Grading:

The grading emphasizes your individual and collaborative learning achievement in this course. You will largely determine your grade in this course. Aside from my analysis of your assignments as reflected in the assignments rubric below I will also note that grades reflect the following:

- Great Effort and great understanding = A
- Great Effort and adequate understanding = A-
- Adequate effort and adequate understanding = B

**Assignments**

- Read all materials and attend all classes and participate with all your attention. Please let me know if you intend to miss any classes.
- Pre-Class reading – See Syllabus
- Group Presentation – See Blackboard (~20% of Grade)
- Readings Analysis Assignment - See Blackboard (~30% of Grade)
- Final paper – Please see Blackboard (~50% of Grade)

**Expectations and Assessment**

This course requires a significant amount of reading and some of the books may be written in a style unfamiliar to you. I encourage you to devote ample time to the reading. There is also a reading ‘assignment’ due at the beginning of the course. See Blackboard for more detail.

Assessment of doctoral work in leadership studies is challenging. Interdisciplinary work dealing with complex and sometimes contested theories and concepts requires (from my perspective) a tolerance for uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency. I am also struck by the need for a high degree of self-directed behavior on the part of doctoral students and candidates. I would like my teaching style, assessment policy, and rubrics to support and facilitate self-direction. The DPLS is an interdisciplinary program and students come with a variety of experiences, different types of expertise, and different professional and scholarly needs. It is my intention to honor, help cultivate, and support these differences.

However, behind my philosophical questions about assessment and uncertainty in evaluating anyone in an absolute manner there does reside (in my view) a set of skills that serve to hold and shape work with language in a complex world. I believe we need a grammar, syntax, and semantics of clarity, coherence, depth, and breadth. My assumption at the beginning of the term is that all of the students in this class possess the requisite skills, talents, and propensities needed to be clear, cogent, and complete. I admit that the standards I refer to are objectively stated and subjectively enacted. My assessment will be based on the quality and content of expressed thought as exhibited in both written assignments and classroom presentations and participation.
Grading Criteria for Written Work

Content Criteria:
The content of papers should reflect the level and style of content in readings and discussions. There is an expectation that doctoral students will reach outside of their comfort zone in terms of appropriation of ideas, concepts, and frameworks. The substance of papers and other writings will be weighed against the general level of discourse in class meetings and the style and density of expression of the readings.

Thought and Expression Criteria
Student writing should raise vital questions or issues, formulating them clearly and precisely. I will be looking for evidence of breadth and depth and the insightful, in-depth analysis of complex ideas. Main points should be developed and supported with relevant information and references that are appropriately incorporated.

The organization and logic of your writing is critical. The expectation is for well focused, well organized, and well reasoned conclusions. The writing should flow with the reader not getting lost or having to work to determine what you are saying.

There is also an expectation that your writing/thinking has an open and inclusive character when exploring alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as appropriate, their assumptions, implications, and/or practical consequences.

Technical Criteria
Your writing should be clear and demonstrate a high level of vocabulary through careful word choice. Sentences should be constructed skillfully and purposefully. Transitions between paragraphs and sections are important and will evaluated for their efficacy in weaving your concepts, themes, and purposes together. Summaries and conclusions are also vital elements of good writing and will be evaluated based on their appropriateness and effectiveness.

Of course grammar, punctuation, and spelling are expected to be flawless. Careful proof reading of your paper is a basic expectation.

Papers, unless otherwise noted are to be completed in APA style. References should be cited properly within the text and a complete reference list must be provided. Appropriate use of headings will also be noted.

Required Texts (Please use ISBN numbers to locate the correct text/edition)

Selected chapters from the following two texts will be provided on Blackboard:


The following articles will be provided on Blackboard: