

First-Year Seminar FYSE 109
Fall 2011
Amherst College
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Political Leadership

Political leadership can be a noble profession that serves the public interest. Leadership can also produce catastrophic results that destroy the public interest. Leadership attracts various kinds of people with various motivations. Some leaders live *for* politics. For them, politics is above all a cause, a vocation, whether noble or disastrous. Others live *off* politics. For them, politics is essentially a means of making a living and a means of personal gratification. Leadership is necessary in all forms of government--democracy, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, even terrorist networks. Certain general qualities of leadership can be named—for example ambition--but some are particular to a given type of politics. This seminar will consider all kinds of leadership but the problems of leadership in democratic political life are most important here. In this, comparative thinking is vital because understanding what democracy is involves knowing what it is not.

Close reading, class participation and improvement of student writing are emphasized. The writing involves several short papers and a longer final essay. Two books for purchase: Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (Amherst Books) and the course multilith (Political Science office, Clark House 105).

Syllabus

Part one

1. course introduction: dilemmas of political leadership

2. conceptions of the origin and purpose of government

Aristotle, *The Politics*, excerpt, 51-55, 126-44 (M)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpt, ch. XIII, "On the Natural Condition..." (M)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-3 (M)

3. how institutions are fundamental to types of government

James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, #10 and #51 (M)

4. leadership and the moral basis of democracy: A. Lincoln

The Declaration of Independence (M)

Lincoln and Douglas, *Debate at Alton, Illinois*, (1858), pp. 286-322 (M)

Garry Wills, "The Words that Remade America: Lincoln at Gettysburg" (M)

Frederick Douglass, "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln" (Washington D.C., 1876) (M)

5. religion and democracy

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, chs. 3, 4 (M)

6. the ordinary politician in liberal democratic government

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?*, chs. 19, 24-28 (library reserve)

7. politics as a vocation

Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," pp. 1-6, 10-11, 20-27 (M)

Part two: varieties of political leadership

8. Alexander the Great

Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The Life of Alexander*, excerpts (M)

John Keegan, "Alexander the Great and Heroic Leadership," *The Mask of Command*, pp. 13-91 (library reserve)

recommended film: "Alexander" (3 hours) e-reserve

9. The Machiavellian leader

Machiavelli, *The Prince* (e-reserves)

10. totalitarian dictatorship: Hitler and Nazism

Film/documentary: Leni Riefenstahl, "Triumph of the Will"

11. barbarism and the average person

Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (library reserve)

12. totalitarian dictatorship: Communism and Stalinism

Documentaries: "Stalin" and "The Fall of Communism"

New York Times, *The Collapse of Communism*, pp. 3-21, 75-95, 216-22, 245-50, 270-75 (library reserve)

13. the anti-colonialist revolutionary movements after WWII

Film: "The Battle of Algiers" (2 hours)

Read: Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35-95 (library reserve)

14. Liberal geopolitics in a hard world: Franklin Roosevelt at the Yalta conference, February 1945

Youtube: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt Pearl Harbor Address," 2:37 (Dec 8, 1941)

"Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt meet in Yalta" (February 1945) 1:59

"Yalta Agreements" (M)

"Yalta & the Fate of Poland," New York Review of Books, 1984 (M)

Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Future of Yalta" (M)

15. the transformative religious leader

Youtube: Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream Speech," 1963 (17:28)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Historic Last Speech," 1968 (3:14)

Malcolm X, "Who Taught You to Hate Yourselves?" (3:30)

Reading:

Martin Luther King, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" (M)

K. Kiernan, Amherst Honors Thesis, 2008, pp. 1-80 and footnotes. (M)

16. father of a new nation: Nelson Mandela and South Africa

Documentary: "Nelson Mandela: The Man and His Country"

Reading: "South Africa under Apartheid," (Wikipedia)

17. Mandela cont'd

Nelson Mandela, *The Struggle is My Life*, 87-92, 133-60 (M)

Nelson Mandela, "South Africa's Future Foreign Policy" (M)

18. Political leadership as pedagogy: Mussolini and fascist populism

documentary: "Mussolini" (1 hr.)

read: Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," pp. 1-20

19. Political leadership as pedagogy: FDR, Obama and liberal governance

Youtube: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt Fireside Chat" 1 (9:24)

Speech on Race - March 18, 2008 (M)

Speech in Cairo – June 4, 2009, see Youtube above (M)

Speech in Ghana, July 2009 (M)

Drew Westen, "What Happened to Obama?," NYT, August 7, 2011

Part Three: dilemmas of American leadership in the world order

20. America's characteristic dilemma: democratic society, international superpower

Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness" (M)

21. The Vietnam War

Robert S. McNamara, In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam, chs.1, 5, 6 (P)

22. McNamara cont'd

McNamara, In Retrospect, chs. 7, 9, 10 (P)

Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars (M)

23. Democracy and the social and political upheavals of the '60s

Documentary: Chris Marker, "A Grin without a Cat" (3 hours)

24. McNamara cont'd: Robert McNamara speaks

"Preface" and 92-97 In Retrospect

Documentary: "The Fog of War"

25. McNamara and Lyndon Johnson: paying the price

Youtube: "Lyndon B. Johnson – Declares Not to Seek Re-election" (6 minutes)

McNamara, In Retrospect, preface, Ch. 11, "Appendix" (pp. 353-90, 408-16, 425-42, 448-51) (P)

Doris Kearns Goodwin, Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream, chapter 12 (M)