

Leadership A Critical Text
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How to Use this Book When Teaching

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Introduction

Leadership: A Critical Text is written for all those interested in engaging in a robust and thoughtful dialogue about leadership. The aims are to promote critical thinking to improve leadership in practice. I have also written the book with teaching in mind and, as a university lecturer and executive educator, the structure of the book comes from my experience of teaching, coaching and of leadership development. I have written for a double audience: those studying leadership and those practising leadership (often the same group with a dual agenda). This book will provide an excellent supplemental text for MBA courses and is written as a core text for leadership electives and other stand-alone leadership courses.

I will set out four options and offer a brief guide to those using the book for teaching purposes, adding a suggested critical pedagogy for course tutors:

Option 1) Ten/Twelve Session Course

Course Title: Perspectives on Leadership

Option 2) Three-Module Training Course (2/3 day modules)

Course Title: Understanding Leadership

Option 3) One Week Intensive

Course Title: Exploring Leadership

Option 4) Leadership Seminars/Master-classes

Titles Based on Chapters

Brief Tutor Notes

Each chapter is self-explanatory. As tutor/facilitator, the key is to help the group to read/prepare and work through the chapters prior to the session. The task is then to facilitate learning and discussion, with particular emphasis on learners bringing issues from their own experiences into the session. Notes on each session are shown as follows.

Session 1: Why a critical theory approach to leadership?

Session 1 will unpack what it means to take a critical approach, and will set out the specific critical framework used in this book. The Introduction will help the group see how the author draws on personal experience and practice to inform and interpret theory which sets the tone for learning on this course.

The learning aims for this session are:

- to develop an understanding of critical theory
- to begin to use the critical framework by applying it to the rest of the sessions and in the practice of leadership.

The critical framework is:

- Emancipation
- Depth Analysis
- Looking Awry
- Systemic Praxis.

Session 2: What is leadership?

Session 2 applies a critical approach, questioning how leadership is conceptualized; usually as the property of an individual, sometimes as a collective action, other times as a process. It explores some key dimensions, e.g. the difference between

management and leadership and finds that “when asking what is leadership, the answer depends on what one is looking for, and from where one is looking.” (p. 39). Applying the critical framework and ‘Looking Awry’ is essential to discover new ways to understand leadership.

The learning aims of session 2 are:

- to develop a broad understanding of how the term leadership is used;
- to develop a critical perspective on leadership beyond the normative understanding of leadership as being a personal and charismatic trait.

Session 3: Leadership, power and authority

Session 3 critiques notions of leadership, power and authority. It critiques authoritarian approaches and also those utopian and egalitarian ideals that deny or minimize the need for leadership. Discussions follow on Distributed Leadership: New Social Movements: Leaderless Groups, leadership and followership, collaboration and competition. Chapter 2 finds “there is no escape from leadership, like power, it is everywhere, and understanding leadership in relation to power and authority is paramount. How leadership is understood, and how best it is engaged with are philosophical, political, social and situational question.” (p. 56)

The learning aims of session 3 are:

- to develop an understanding of how leadership relates to power, authority, and followership;
- to be able to discuss how leadership fits with the emancipatory ideals of democracy and equality.

Session 4: Leadership and diversity

Session 4 addresses diversity as it is an essential part of understanding any critical and emancipatory approach. Key to this is the ability to ‘locate ourselves’ when discussing and trying to understand leadership and followership;

It is important to acknowledge that we all carry our personal, social and historical baggage with us, and however ‘PC’ (politically correct) we are, however progressive or liberal, we all belong to social groups, which exclude others, and we all make value judgements on a daily basis, often at unconscious levels.

Session 4 examines some of the structural and normative assumptions that are common and how these create constraints to widening leadership participation.

The learning aims of session 4 are:

- to gain an understanding of the key issues raised by diversity and to apply them to leadership, power and followership;
- to begin to locate one's personal and social self;
- to start asking key questions about leadership in the workplace.

The key questions are:

- Who is sitting at the leadership table?
- Whose voices are being heard and whose aren't, and why?
- Whose values are being represented, and on whose behalf?
- Who is absent from the decision-making process?

Session 5: Asymmetric leadership

Session 5 addresses how leadership is not a single symmetrical linear entity. It identifies seven leadership stances analysed from within a single social movement.

This session identifies leadership as being asymmetric and plural rather than symmetrical and a singular linear concept.

The learning aim of session 5 is:

- to understand the asymmetrical nature of leadership, identifying the plurality of ways it can be understood and enacted.

Session 6: The discourses of leadership, The leader as controller

Session 6 introduces the idea of how leadership has evolved and has been thought about in the past century. The aim is to identify dominant discourses that determine what the commonly held perceptions, assumptions and norms are when discussing and enacting leadership. This session aims to explore how leadership has developed in different historical and social circumstances. These leadership discourses are not exclusive of each other and they overlap and converge, however, one is usually

dominant in any organizational-departmental culture. Session 6 goes on to discuss the

Leadership as Controller discourse.

The learning aims of session 6 are:

- to understand what a discourse is and how a leadership discourse creates a ‘normative’ approach that defines how leadership is thought about and practised;
- to develop an understanding of the Leadership as Controller discourse.

Session 7: The Leader as Therapist

The Leader as Therapist discourse emerged from the human relations movement and session 7 describes how this discourse had a massive and dominant impact on leadership thinking in the post-war period until the late 1970s and still remains a powerful discourse today.

The learning aim of session 7 is:

- to gain an understanding of the Leadership as Therapist discourse.

Session 8: The Leader as Messiah

Session 8 explores the Leader as Messiah discourse, arising in the early 1980s and characterized by the Transformational leader, this discourse is the dominant discourse of contemporary times.

The learning aim of session 8 is:

- to gain an understanding of the Leader as Messiah discourse.

Session 9: Religious fundamentalism: looking awry at the Messiah Leadership discourse

Session 9 ‘Looks Awry’ at the Leader as Messiah discourse and connects it to a parallel, social phenomenon, religious fundamentalism, which also advocates transformational leadership and offers a new resource to explore the impact of this contemporary leadership approach. This feeds into and helps to explain the rise of the Leader as Messiah discourse.

The learning aims of session 9 are:

- to look beyond management theory to understand leadership. Making links to other social phenomena that impact on workplace leadership.
- to gain a deeper analysis of the Leader as Messiah discourse.

Session 10: Christian fundamentalism and corporate America

Christian fundamentalism in the USA provides a comparative case example of the Messiah leadership discourse and the collectivist, dynamic and ultimately totalizing cultures this leadership creates. Session 10 explores how social change within contemporary workplaces and social change in wider society influence each other.

Chapter 11 also identifies how a seemingly dynamic leadership approach also produces dangerous conformist and totalizing cultures.

The learning aim of session 10 is:

- to gain a critical understanding of how the messiah leadership discourse can be both dynamic and visionary, while at the same time producing conformist organizational cultures.

Session 11: An Overview of the leadership discourses

Session 11 takes the learner through summaries and an overview of the three leadership discourses, relating these to organizational practice (Chapter 12). Chapter 13 then goes on to ask, what's next in leadership?, examining emergent leadership trends: Post-Heroic Leadership, Leadership Spirit, Systemic and Emergent leadership and identifies the next likely leadership discourse as the Eco-leader. Underpinning this discourse are ethics, spirit of leadership, and connectivity/holism.

The learning aims of session 11 are:

- to relate the discourses to the participant's own organization;
- to have an understanding of the emerging Eco-leader discourse.

Session 12: Reflections: leadership formation

Session 12 briefly reflects on the course thus far and the course tutor should give participants as much time as possible to discuss key themes and ideas that they have

learned and time to reflect on any unresolved dilemmas and preoccupations that they have.

Finally, the course will focus on Leadership Formation, identifying a potentially different approach that develops leadership as much as leaders.

The learning aims of session 12 are:

- to help learners to reflect on their personal learning and to identify key themes that they will work on within their own organizations;
- To identify how Leadership Formation might be used in the participant's organization.

Option 1) Ten/Twelve Session Course

Course Title: Perspectives on Leadership

To take a group through a stand-alone leadership course or an MBA elective, follow the chapters in sequence. The structure of the book and the chapter lay-out have been written to take a group or an individual reader through a process of inquiry. The book has a sequence and narrative to it that takes the reader through a journey of learning. I have set out a twelve-session course using the identified chapters, that can be adjusted to fit ten or six sessions.

Session	Title	Chapters
1	A Critical Theory Approach	Introduction Chapter 1
2	What Is Leadership?	Chapter 2
3	Leadership, Power and Authority	Chapter 3
4	Leadership and Diversity	Chapter 4
5	Asymmetric Leadership	Chapter 5
6	The Discourses of Leadership The Leader as Controller	Chapter 6 Chapter 7
7	The Leader as Therapist	Chapter 8
8	The Leader as Messiah	Chapter 9
9	Religious Fundamentalism: Looking Awry at the Messiah Leadership Discourse	Chapter 10
10	Christian Fundamentalism and Corporate America	Chapter 11
11	An Overview of the Leadership Discourses Emergent Leadership: The Eco-leader Discourse	Chapter 12 Chapter 13
12	Reflections: Leadership Formation	Chapter 14

Note:

- For a six-session course, lengthen and double up sessions 1 and 2, 2 and 3, etc. (Six sessions will be intensive and you might choose to leave some aspects out of the course.)
- For a ten-session course, merge sessions 8 and 9 together, and 11 and 12.

Option 2) Three-Module Training Course (2/3 day modules)

Course Title: Understanding Leadership

(Use briefing notes from the Leadership Elective above.)

2-3 days Part One	What is leadership?: A critical approach Identifying how to use a critical framework, and why a critical approach gives the leader an advantage. Applying the framework to key ideas about leadership	Chapters 1-5
Between Modules	Applications of learning Identifying questions for Part two	
2-3 days Part Two	The discourses of leadership. Understanding leadership assumptions, norms and expectations that define how leadership, followership and organizational cultures are thought about and practiced.	Chapters 6-11
Between Modules	Applications of learning Identifying questions for Part three	
2-3 days Part Three	The ethics and practice of contemporary leadership The ethics of leadership: emergent themes in leadership for the next century. Thoughts on leadership development	Chapters 12-13

Option 3) One Week Intensive

Course Title: Exploring Leadership

As above, but days divided over 1 week:

- Part one: 2 days
- Part two: 2 days
- Part three: 1 day

Option 4) Leadership Seminars/Master-classes

Titles Based on Chapters

For single taught sessions on any of the seminar titles below select the relevant chapter as reading material. Each session is flexible enough to be developed in a bespoke manner; ensure the book chapter is given as pre-reading, and utilize briefing notes to support the teaching of these seminars.

Title	Chapter
Understanding Critical Theory	Chapter 1
What Is Leadership: A Critical Understanding	Chapters 2 and 5
Leadership, Power and Authority	Chapter 3
Leadership and Diversity	Chapter 4
The Discourses of Leadership: A Short Historical and Social Perspective	Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 (include chapter 13 if you wish to cover the Eco-leader discourse)
Transformational and Hero Leadership: Forming Conformist Cultures	Chapter 9, 10, 11
Religious fundamentalism: Leadership Implications for Organizations	Chapters 10, 11
Ecology of Leadership: A Systemic and Ethical Approach	Chapter 13
Leadership Formation: Beyond Leadership Development	Chapter 14

A Critical Pedagogy

Teaching critical leadership is best achieved through using a critical pedagogy (the philosophy and method of teaching/learning). Drawing on Chapter 1 will help here. The key to this suggested pedagogy is to engage the ‘learners’ by getting them to make constant links between the theory in the book, and their own leadership/followership practice and personal experience.

Outside the classroom

Theory: The identified chapters to be read prior to the class.

Practice: Activities should be planned relating to the participant’s work (or if in an MBA programme, their previous work and leadership/followership experience) along with their ‘lived experience’ of being in their learning groups, and including their observation of political and social leadership around them. This brings the material alive and creates engaging dialogue.

Experience: Observing one’s own and others’ experience of leadership and followership as the course unfolds is helpful data to bring into the classroom.

Learning support outside of the classroom can be provided by the following material.

Coaching buddies: Setting up ‘coaching buddies’ to become a ‘critical friend’ throughout the course can be a very useful learning aid. As we are promoting critical thinking, it can be really useful to establish ‘trusting pairs’ to enable reflection on personal and cultural assumptions that often become polarized and defended in group situations.

Learning logs and journals: It is useful to have focal points when using learning journals, relevant to the course: For example:

- *My learning* – what I have learnt about myself.
- *My assumptions* – observing and questioning our own assumptions.

- *Other assumptions* – observing how others make assumptions about leadership they believe to be ‘the norm’. What informs these assumptions? Are they personal history, social and cultural, class-based, gendered?
- *Structural issues* – how leadership is embedded in an organization and social structure. Diversity issues are often good examples - how many women are at a board meeting? The visibility of some groups and not others. Observing power dynamics and how power and authority can be used with legitimacy and also how it can be manipulated consciously and unconsciously.

Action-learning forums: IT-based or face-to-face learning sets and discussion forums can all be useful ways to encourage and support learning outside of the classroom.

In the classroom

Presenting the theory: The identified chapters are to be taught/discussed in class, led by the tutor who will lead and facilitate this process. Small group and pair work should be planned in order to discuss challenging theory and to support sense-making. It is important to highlight the areas that challenge the class. This can be done in two ways:

- 1 The tutor can present the chapter.
- 2 Selected individuals/pairs or small groups will be asked to prepare this in advance to present to the group.

These individuals/groups should highlight:

- key themes;
- examples from their own experience;
- discussion points, questions, contentious issues.

They should present the chapter and then get the class to critique it, thinking about their own assumptions and experiences. Remind them that critiquing is different from criticizing; they need to present an argument, a point of view that is supported by theory or experience. They do not need to have all the answers but they do have to present thoughtful questions. Breaking into small/table groups and pairs supports good discussion.

Practice: The table groups will be asked to work on given activities of the tutor's choosing, in the class and outside of the classroom. For example, reflecting on their own leadership and follower dynamics during a given task is a useful exercise. To do this nominate an observer to sit and watch the group process whilst the task is undertaken. The aim is to link the theory to practice and to personal experience (Figure 0.1).

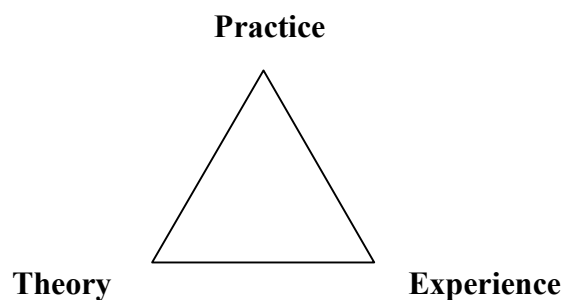


Figure 0.1 *Linking theory, practice and personal experience*

The classroom pedagogy should be structured to maximize learning. Remember this is a critical approach that means the participants have to challenge their own assumptions, and the norms around them. A good way to achieve this is to try to enact the emancipatory leadership the book is attempting to teach, i.e. allowing the students to take a lead in their own learning (dispensing leadership). Also to get the group to discover each other's assumptions/norms and to challenge each other to 'look away', to find what is beneath the surface, to ask each other ethical questions, to explore the

systemic impact of their discussions, e.g. what are the effects on the wider ecology of the company, the sector, the environment?

Suggested structure of the class

To achieve this level of engagement a good rule is to have 50 per cent lectures and 50 per cent activities and discussion.

The following pedagogical devices are useful:

- **Hot seats:** Two seats facing each other at the front of the class, to enable the tutor or any two protagonists to have a debate on a hot issue. The protagonists are given about 10 minutes to debate an issue before the tutor opens it to the class.
- **Table discussions:** If possible, the class should be seated at tables of 4–8 people whilst the seminar/lecture takes place. Each table is organized into learning groups who share common themes (they work together, they work in the same sector or at a similar level, they share a geographic or cultural theme, etc.). At different points in a lecture they will be asked to break off and have a table discussion; they will then be asked to share dialogue between tables, before reporting the discussion back to the plenary group. If the class is too large and has a theatre layout, ensure discussions take place between pairs in the lecture theatre and that there are break-out times for group discussions.
- **Democracy wall:** A white board/flip chart is set up called a Democracy Wall, and this is a place for comment, polemics, learning points, questions, suggestions of other resources to use: anyone can write on this during the class (an online version can also be created). It is important to find time to briefly go through these points at the end of each session.
- **Free associations/reflections at the beginning of sessions:** This can be done as per Chapter 13 if working with a small group; or it can be a simple 5–10-minute silence where individuals collect their thoughts (using their learning journals), reflect on the previous lecture and what they have reflected on in

between sessions. They then share their reflections at the tables before a go-around where each table shares the key points with the whole group. This takes half an hour, but if time permits, it is worth every minute, as it creates the space for thinking and learning. Again this enacts good leadership in the workplace; creating a thinking space is a vital leadership capability.

If you are teaching a very large group: a 5-minute reflection on the last session followed by a 5 minute-discussion with the person sitting next to you also works.

Using the WILD Questionnaire as a Training Tool

The wild questionnaire can be found on www.simonwestern.com

Using the framework of the four discourses outlined in the book (see below) the questionnaire produces a report indicating which of the discourses dominates your thinking on leadership.

- The leader as Controller
- The leader as Therapist
- The leader as Messiah
- The Eco-leader discourse

The Wild report is an excellent tool to raise your awareness of how you think about leadership. It is not a psychometric tool, or competency framework, rather an indicator of preference, conscious or unconscious, about what you consider to be good leadership, and in what discourse you prefer to operate in.

This tool offers a framework to make you think and question your own leadership and the leadership around you.

This tool has been tried and tested with very positive results. I am currently using it to carry our research in the Further Education Sector. It can be used as an individual learning tool, with a teaching group, or as an in-house training tool.

It offers these learning opportunities:

- 1) A personal feedback report on an individuals leadership thinking and approach
- 2) It stimulates thinking and discussions about the discourses of leadership. The report brings this discussion to life, as the group has actual data to discuss.
- 3) Getting individuals to compare and discuss their results to inform them how their different contexts affect their results. EG. their different workplaces, international students, different sectors, different functions, different products.

Using the tool in-house training

Another way of using this tool is to ask a department/organisation to undertake it in order to discuss the diverse or similar mindsets that constrain leadership and cultural change and what opportunities are available. The tool gives a common language to discuss leadership. Where are we now and what leadership should the organisation strive for?

Some Reflective Questions Using the WILD Questionnaire

Does your report align with how you work as a leader?

What conflicting pressures are there between how you think about leadership (your report) and how leadership is enacted around you?

Does your report align with how your senior managers/leaders take up their roles?

What expectations and what responses do others in your organisation have regarding leadership and leadership development?

Who are powerful and who are marginalised and disempowered at your workplace?

How does the dominant leadership discourse at work maintain or challenge this?

What happens to those who resist the dominant leadership discourse?

See if you can identify different Leadership discourses in your organisation e.g. in finance department and the sales department. At senior and at middle management level.

Can you identify other leadership discourses around you: what about in politics?