MOR 476B – Challenges and Opportunities in Public Leadership

Spring 2017

**Instructors:** Dan Schnur

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**Room:** JFF 312

**Day/Time:** Fridays 2-5 PM

**Office Hours:** ASC 326E, Tuesdays and Fridaysby appointment

**Introduction and Purposes**

* Regardless of a student’s academic or career goals, it is also important to prepare for your obligations as a citizen, a voter and a member of your community. This semester will be devoted to an examination of the opportunities, challenges, and obligations of Public Leadership. For those students who aspire to be leaders in the public sector, whether as elected or appointed officials, as staff members and advisors, or as policy advocates and community leaders, this course is designed to help you prepare for those leadership roles. For those students whose professional interests point in other directions, our goal this semester is to prepare you for the demands of leadership not just in your chosen field, but to help you understand how to be an effective public leader by advocating for important political and policy outcomes and holding your elected representatives accountable for the decisions they make regarding those priorities.
* While running for and holding elective office is the most visible form of public leadership, there are many other ways to perform public service. But for the purposes of this class, we will use three contemporary office-holders as case studies to help us identify and develop our own leadership goals. Perhaps no leadership challenge is greater than that faced by the President of the United States. In the immediate aftermath of the 2016 presidential campaign, we have an ideal opportunity to look back at the approaches to leadership employed by a small number of modern-day U.S. Presidents and presidential candidates to learn how they developed and utilized the skills to lead a nation of more than 300 million people.
* Because this is a course in modern leadership, and because the nature and demands of the presidency have changed so dramatically over the last two centuries, we will limit our study to those leaders whose service is of current-day relevance. While a course examining the approaches to leadership employed by Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt could reveal valuable lessons, we will focus on recent history and current events in the belief that contemporary challenges present an especially valuable learning experience.

* Based on this premise, this course will examine the outgoing president, Barack Obama, the incoming president, Donald Trump, and the individual whose career of public leadership has concluded just short of the White House. Students will read books or book section of each of the leaders and participate in both lecture and discussion about those leaders’ life experiences, challenges, and accomplishments.
* The case studies are tools we will use for students to examine, develop their own leadership goals. While learning about these leaders will hopefully be of some value to you, the primary purpose in reading about them and discussing their experiences and accomplishments, the primary purpose of a case studies-driven approach is for each student to take lessons – both positive and negative – from their stories and apply those lessons toward the development of her/his own leadership skills.
* The role of both the instructor and the students are much more participatory than in a traditional classroom atmosphere. While the first half of class is devoted to traditional lecture on the pre-assigned reading, students are expected to play an active and involved role in the form of questions, comments, or analysis on the topic at hand. The second half of each class requires even more involvement: it is devoted to a class discussion of the leader in which the students will be asked to prepare questions and analysis of the assigned reading and related materials. They will select a particular leadership challenge from the lives of one of those leaders and delve more deeply into learning the lessons from those challenges that could benefit our next president.
* Because of the nature of the course material, students will be expected to be familiar with daily news developments in the areas of government, politics, business and public policy. In addition to the assigned reading, students are encouraged to read at least one daily newspaper per day, watch both local and national news programs, and monitor online news coverage of events relevant to the course material.
* In each class meeting, we will discuss a different Principle of Leadership (which you will see listed on the “Class Sessions” portion of the syllabus. These principles are offered both as a lens through which to view the experiences of the leaders we are studying, but more importantly, are designed to help your own approach to leadership.

**Course Grading**

1. *Class participation, discussion -- 10%*

This includes questions and comments during the lecture session of each class, as well as active involvement in class discussion.

1. *Group presentation -- 10%*

In each class meeting, one group of students will begin the second half of class by presenting a series of thoughts/ideas that they have taken from that week’s assigned reading. The 5-10 minute presentation will be graded.

1. *Weekly Written Questions -- 10% per class (50% total)*

For every class meeting in which students are not part of a group presentation, each student will be asked to write up three to five questions from that reading that they find particularly interesting or worthy of class discussion. Questions must be typed and submitted on paper rather than by email.

1. *2-3 page Essay -- 30%*

Students will select a leadership principle discussed in the first five class meetings and apply it to their own leadership goals. Essay should cite at least one example (positive or negative) from the assigned reading or from another contemporary public leader.

(Note: while the course is graded P/F, you will receive a traditional letter grade on this assignment.)

**Class Requirements**

1. Students are expected to attend all classes. Unexcused absences, lateness in arriving, leaving early (i.e. at the break) and failure to meet the deadlines will have a negative impact on the student’s final grade. I appreciate being notified in advance if a student plans to miss a class.
2. Students who unavoidably miss a class are responsible for getting assignments and notes from a classmate. If an assignment is due, the student is responsible for turning assignments in to me before a class is missed. No excuses. No exceptions.
3. Grammar, spelling and writing ability are extremely important. Students are expected to have learned from prior courses and experience how to produce written materials that are error-free and meet the quality of standards of this school and the profession.
4. All written assignments must be typed.
5. Participation in class discussion is not optional, but mandatory. Students are expected to have read all course assignments and be prepared to discuss them.
6. There are no make-ups for late assignments.

**Course Readings**

*Dreams from My Father* by Barack Obama (Three Rivers Press)

*Trump Revealed* by Marc Fisher and Michael Kornblut (Scribner)

*Notes from the Cracked Ceiling* by Ann Kornblut (Crown

**Class Sessions**

January 20 – Class Introduction and Overview

* Course Overview: Weekly Assignments, Reading and Discussion
* Introduction to Public Leadership
* Leadership Principle – Show Them the Tunnel, Sell Them the Light
* Reading Assignments for February 3: *Dreams from My Father (*Parts 1 and 2)
* Writing Assignment for February 3: Questions from Obama reading for class discussion

February 3 – Case Study: Barack Obama

* Leadership Principle – Every Leader Leads in Her/His Own Way
* Personal Biography/Growing Up
* Community-based Public Leadership
* Reading Assignment for February 17: *Dreams from My Father* (Part 3)
* Writing Assignment for February 17: Questions from Obama reading for class discussion

February 17 –Case Study: Barack Obama

* Leadership Principle - Leadership Principle: Leadership is a Team Sport
* Family Background and Impact
* Development of Self-Awareness
* Reading Assignment for March 3: *Trump Revealed* (pp.1 -171)
* Writing Assignment for March 3: Questions from Trump reading for class discussion

March 3 – Case Study: Donald Trump

* Leadership Principle - Leadership Principle: Leaders Take Risks
* Family and other Early Influences
* Establishment of Public Persona
* Reading Assignment for March 24: *Trump Revealed* (pp.172-347)
* Writing Assignment for March 24: Questions from Trump reading for class discussion

March 24 -- Case Study: Donald Trump

* Leadership Principle – The Second Most Important Thing
* Establishment of Political Persona
* 2016 Campaign
* Reading Assignment for April 7: *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling…* (pp. 1-88)
* Writing Assignment for April 7: Questions from Clinton reading for class discussion
* Writing Assignment for April 7: 2-3 page essay that applies one or more leadership principles to your own leadership goals

April 7 – Case Study: Hillary Clinton

* Leadership Principle – Some People’s Obstacles are a Leader’s Opportunities
* Challenges of non-traditional leaders
* Unexpected leadership challenges
* Reading Assignment for April 21: *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling…* (pp. 89-254)
* Writing Assignment for April 21: Questions from Kornblut reading for class discussion

April 21 – Final Lessons, Thoughts on Public Leadership

* Leadership Principle – When You Get to the End Zone, Act Like You’ve Been There Before
* Legacy of leadership
* Taking chances – courageous or risky?

**Office Hours and Additional Class Meetings**

The seven sessions listed above are required. However, if small groups of students would like to meet on Fridays on which class is not scheduled for additional discussion, I will be happy to schedule additional class meetings. However, those meetings are NOT required for all students and will have no impact on a student’s grade. These sessions could also include the attendance/participation of local or state elected officials, policy advocates and other public leaders who the students might benefit from meeting.

Obviously, we would schedule these sessions so as not to conflict with any co-curricular activities that have been arranged for the group.

Office hours can be arranged by appointment on Tuesdays and Fridays throughout the semester.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**DAN SCHNUR**

Dan Schnur has been teaching courses in politics, communications and leadership at USC since 2004. Dan is also an Adjunct Instructor at the University of California—Berkeley’s Institute of Governmental Studies and has taught at the John F. Kennedy School of Government’s Institute of Politics at Harvard University and George Washington University’s Graduate School of Political Management.

Before coming to USC, Dan worked on four presidential and three gubernatorial campaigns as one of California’s leading political strategists. He served as the national Director of Communications for the 2000 presidential campaign of U.S. Senator John McCain and was the chief media spokesman for California Governor Pete Wilson.

In 2010, Dan was appointed Chairman of the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), where he implemented groundbreaking campaign finance disclosure requirements. Dan also was a founder and cochairman of the Voices of Reform project, the bi-partisan statewide effort whose work laid the foundation for California’s landmark redistricting reform.

After completing his FPPC term, Dan registered as a No Party Preference voter and launched Fixing California, an organization dedicated to campaign finance and political reform. In 2014, Dan ran for statewide office as a non-partisan candidate for California Secretary of State.

Dan has been an advisor to the William & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Broad Education Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the James Irvine Foundation, the Public Policy Institute of California and the Stuart Foundation on a variety of K-12 education and college and workforce preparedness efforts.