

Developing Leader Character Winter 2025

Course: SGPS 9201b

Instructor: Dr. Cassie Ellis

Date, Time: Wednesday, 9:30 – 11:30am ET

Email: cellis42@uwo.ca

Lecture Format: Weekly Lecture via Zoom, synchronous, not recorded

Meeting ID: <https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/94137871544?pwd=t8ZB371nVa05kO5Vgh2CbmSwwIAbvC.1>

Passcode: character

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) file to your calendar system:

https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/meeting/tJAsdO6gqTovHtCTNkN09j54OeINX_spgvay/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCsrgtEtOUtR2DRoWIBYjCKPzwtN5Ygrd-qDHuLXAKaFaiGedOHIpAA8jX&meetingMasterEventId=lpnbfHzXT7isC3FjEun-oQ

Developing future leaders extends beyond business schools. Today's most influential leaders are in fields such as medicine, literature, technology, and politics. In today's world leaders need to be global citizens whose education and leadership will "make a difference" and serve the public good. Leader character development can serve alongside the competencies learned in graduate studies. This course has been designed to introduce practical research and tools focused on leadership of self, particularly the development of leader character as depicted below. The development of Leader Character will enhance individual well-being and sustained excellence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The Developing Leader Character course aims to increase awareness of the Leadership of Self and prepare you to embark on a journey of self-discovery, assessment, and reflection. In highly dynamic and complex contexts, leaders' decision making requires profound judgment that is anchored in strength of character.

1. Reveal how leader character supports leader competencies and commitment.
2. Deepen your understanding of leader character and how it shapes decisions and actions.
3. Diagnose, exercise, and develop your leader character.

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT

This course is graded as pass/fail. It will appear on your transcript *if* you pass. Your assignments will be assessed numerically and through written feedback. The purpose of the feedback is to help you identify areas of improvement and understand how you are doing in the course.

1. **Attendance** – 15% (1 mark per class, 2 allowed absences without penalty)
2. **Contribution** – 25%
3. **Self-reflection** – 40%
4. **Group Project** – 20%

COURSE MATERIAL

REQUIRED: Crossan, M., Seijts, G., & Gandz, J. (2016). *Developing Leadership Character*. New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

- The book can be borrowed and downloaded through the UWO [Library](#) (free download)
- Purchase through: [UWO Bookstore](#), [Routledge](#) (best price), or [Amazon](#).
- Additional required readings will be distributed in class or posted on BRIGHTSPACE.

ASSIGNMENTS

Class #1 Assignment (Intro):

The following questions are just to get you started thinking about the subject. Please don't be constrained by them. Please prepare and bring with you to the first class.

1. Introductions – Please prepare something that symbolizes who you are (i.e., your essence), like “Show & Tell”. Typically, students have two things in mind – one that is personal and another that is “safe”. This first class is an opportunity to learn a lot about yourself and the choice you make in this regard. Our introductions should launch us into more in-depth conversations and create an environment for learning and development that is very generative and non-judgmental.
2. How important is character in leadership?
3. What do you make of the challenges for leadership as portrayed by the “21st Century Enlightenment”?
 - <https://youtu.be/AC7ANGMy0yo?si=UcRz11AKaiw3D533>
 - What is the philosophy that informs your leadership?

Class #2 Assignment (LCIA):

The Leader Character Insight Assessment is a survey that you will complete that will produce a report of your character strengths and weaknesses. The LCIA will help you gain a deeper understanding of leader character and importantly, your leader character.

The LCIA is designed to enhance understanding of leadership character and provide you with insight regarding your own character. It is a survey that will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. The link will be provided to you via email, which you can use to access your personal survey/report. Once you receive the report, please review it and prepare your key insights about the assessment. You should include these insights in your reflective journal. It may be that as the course progresses you leverage and develop these insights, however, be sure to include your preliminary insights in the journal.

Since the LCIA is a self-assessment, you may want to review your results with someone you trust to discern whether they see you in the same way or offer a different perspective.

Class #12 Assignment (Music):

1. Select a piece of music that help you connect with 1 (or more) of the 11 dimensions of character. You will be put into groups and asked to share your music (have the link ready or the song queued) and thoughts about how the music resonates with you. Your LCIA may help to inform this decision.
2. Draft the key points that will guide your *Letter to your future self*. Be prepared to share what you can/are willing to with your group.

GROUP PROJECT

Create a **Character Analysis and Character Development Plan for a Leader**. In randomly assigned groups, choose a leader to conduct a character analysis and prescribe a character development plan based on their character assessment. You will submit a written report and provide an informal presentation to the class to share your analysis and program.

Part 1: Conduct a character analysis on a leader identifying their character “profile” demonstrated through their behaviour and quotes. Consider the mini case studies we do in class:

- Their character strengths
- Their character weaknesses
- How their virtues may manifest as vices
- How their character influences their decision-making and judgment
- How their character may influence their performance

Please ensure you are providing evidence of the identified behaviours.

Part 2: Once you have completed their character analysis, develop a character development plan to enhance their overall character. Think about the character development principles we covered in class and what you have learned about character development through your own experiences. Think about incorporating your “recommendations” into this plan. Make sure to:

- Identify the focus behaviours for development and rationale for why
- Identify how they will develop the focus character behaviours
- Identify specifics for the plan
- Identify which character behaviours may need to be activated to support the focus behaviour development
- Identify how this plan is expected to influence other character behaviours and their overall character
- Identify how their character development is expected to shift their judgment and performance as a leader

Students completing team assignments will receive the same grade as their team members for the same group report. Students are expected to contribute substantially to group work. Every student understands that all group members are equally responsible for the entire project unless otherwise indicated by the professor. If an individual(s) has not contributed significantly to the group’s work, the individual in question may be severed from the group and receive a grade independent from the group. The faculty reserve the right to assign a failing grade to any individual who has not meaningfully contributed to the group. The faculty may request each student to independently evaluate the contribution of other group members.

Group Project Deadlines: Your group must submit a 1-page proposal to BRIGHTSPACE by **Wednesday March 19th**. You will be provided with input and suggestions. The documentation of the presentation for all groups must be submitted no later than **Wednesday April 16th**.

JOURNAL & LETTER

Record your reflections from each class as separate journal entries. This should not be a summary of what took place but rather key insights and in particular the implications for you as a person/leader. The class (2nd lecture) with the LCIA warrants additional focus but this may be included in that week's reflection or other sections of your journal. You will also be asked to enter your overall reflection on the course with particular focus on your take-aways for leadership of self and intended actions for development. General insights and suggestions for what you liked and how you think the leadership course could be improved could be included. In addition, you are required to write a 1-page letter (Letter to Future Self) defining your vision for the type of leader you want to be and how you will measure your success. The letter will be emailed to you in one year (Spring 2023). Please submit this as a separate document along with your reflections.

Your journals will be treated with absolute confidentiality. However, please feel free to remove anything you consider to be too private to share. Please submit the journals electronically either in .doc or .pdf format, or as a photo file (e.g., some students prefer to use an actual book for their journal, in which case you can take a picture and send me the photos of your journal entries).

You may wonder what it means to “reflect”. Below is an excerpt from the late Gareth Coombes' (former student) journal describing what it means to reflect. For him it was about his experience teaching in Africa. For you it will be about your journey through the course, which also should invoke memories from the past and your thoughts about the future.

So... I understand this is probably not what you had in mind when you said “reflection” ... To be honest I am still not quite sure... For me, I have taken the action of reflection seriously. This practice is intensely personal. I am reaching deep into the gut of my being and surgically manipulating and comprehending my experience and then sharing my product with someone halfway across the world whom I have only recently met (although I have certainly grown fond of). This past month has thrown me through countless life altering experiences with each one leaving behind little knotted balls of confusion that accumulate inside of me. I enjoy these reflections because they are really a practice of mentally examining each ball and unpicking them through written verse until they can be unwound and understood. They are also exhausting ... This was the biggest knot in my chest, and I unpicked it. I haven't exactly solved anything, but I have faced some philosophical questions that I have been asking for a while. You asked for deep reflection, and to me, that is what this is. It has resonated on the deepest chord of my being, and to step back and write something easier seems fundamentally wrong.

Reflections Due:

You will submit 4 Reflections: each entry is due the last Friday of the month: **January 31st**, **February 28th**, **March 28th**, and the final entry (general insights, suggestions, additional thoughts) and your Letter to Future Self will both be due **Friday April 25th**. The reflections are a critical component to what you will get out of this class as indicated by its weighted value in your total grade for this course. Please ensure you are taking notes from each class to support your reflections on each topic covered. The purpose of periodic reflective submissions is to check-in with each student throughout the semester to minimize the gap the virtual classroom can create.

CLASS CONTRIBUTION

Developing leader character is an unusual course with respect to contribution. The emphasis is less on knowledge and more on generated wisdom both individually and collectively as a class. The emphasis will be on working at modelling the character strengths we will be exploring. Practically speaking, for some there will be emphasis on having the courage to express ideas that may seem at odds with the rest of the class, or at times showing humility and temperance to allow others room to express their point of view, or possibly leaving your comfort zone around issues to explore what it means to have a sense of transcendence, or simply having an open mind to delve into thorny issues, such as justice so that you deepen your individual and our collective capacity to learn. We will know whether we have succeeded on contribution when we create a culture of trust, encourage the plurality of voices and perspectives that are inherent in the class and feel that we have a safe environment in which to express views and develop the character strengths around Leadership.

The expectation is that you will be present and prepared for every class and share your views in the classroom discussion. In addition, we expect your **videos to be turned on**. Please let us know if for any reason your video is not working or you don't have video function (e.g., your device does not have a webcam or you dialed into the class). If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to let the Instructor or TA know and discuss ways in which you might contribute and learn despite your absence. Please be aware that **failure to miss more than 2 of the class sessions** will impede the ongoing submission of self-reflection reports since the opportunity to "reflect" will have been seriously impaired. Furthermore, this may affect whether you are qualified to **pass** the course. Your interactions and discussions outside of the classroom can also contribute in major ways to the learning of your peers. The frequency of mentions by your peers may cause your final contribution grade to be adjusted but only in an upward direction. The class will be taught through the Zoom platform and the expectation remains that you are not otherwise occupied by your computer during the lecture. Using your computer during class for personal activities such as reading/writing emails, working, surfing the Web, playing games, etc. is a distraction, is counterproductive, and violates our norms.

Weekly Contribution:

Character development requires personal commitment and collaborative effort. We expect class participants to contribute in class to encourage engagement and to learn from others. Beyond the expectation of contributing during class, you will also be responsible for applying what is learned in each class to develop your character. Each week, we will learn about a specific character behaviour and at the end of each class you will identify an exercise to implement during the next week to develop this behaviour. You will be responsible to share this in class or through the BrightSpace Forum through a photograph coupled with a brief description. This contribution is to support your personal character development and to informally share your insights with other classmates and learn from one another as a community. You will not be graded on the posts because this will act simply as a resource for the class. Rather you will be graded on simply submitting each post, attending each class, and contributing to the discussion each class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Schedule tentative and subject to be changed.

	Class Date	Topic	Readings (before class)	Due
1	January 08	Introduction and Overview	Chapters 1-3 (1-42)	Intro Assignment
2	January 15	LCIA & DLC	Suggested – DLC chapter	LCIA - complete by Sun 12 th
3	January 22	Drive	Chapters 4 (43-54)	
4	January 29	Collaboration (Improvisation)	Chapter 5 (55-66) + Improve to Innovate paper	Reflections due: Fri Jan 31 st
5	February 05	Humanity	Chapter 6 (67-79)	
6	February 12	Humility	Chapter 7 (80-92)	
	Feb 15 – 23	Reading Week		
7	February 26	Integrity	Chapter 8 (93-103)	Reflections due: Fri Feb 28 th
9	March 05	Temperance	Chapter 9 (104-114)	
10	March 12	Courage	Chapter 12 (139-149)	
11	March 19	Justice & Accountability	Chapters 10 & 11 (115-138)	Submit proposal for group project
12	March 26	Transcendence	Chapters 13 (150-161)	Reflections due: Fri March 28 th
13	April 02	Judgment	Chapter 14 (162-174)	
14	April 09	Music workshop	Chapters 15 & 16 (175-191) + Music chapter	Music Assignment
15	April 16	Presentations & Conclusions		Present Final Project; Future Letter, Final Reflection due Fri April 25 th

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The Developing Leader Character course is intended to be a very personal journey that may require some “deep excavation” around who you are, why you have become that person, what you value and who you hope to become. This kind of journey is not just an individual effort. There are several layers of support including your extended family/friends, your peers, myself, your GSA, and also the network of support provided by student services at Western University. It is important to note that Western Student Services does provide professional support which may be of assistance if you are dealing with particularly challenging issues.

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as a faculty member or Faculty Program Director. Students who are in emotional and/or mental distress should also refer to Mental Health@Western http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously. Students are expected to read the appropriate policy at:

- The Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>
- Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf
- The Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/mapp/section1/mapp135.pdf>
- The Code of Behaviour for Use of Computer Resources and Corporate Data:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/mapp/section1/mapp113.pdf>
- Graduate Student Academic Appeals:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing, such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students in the Western Academic Calendar). All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Western Code of Conduct applies. In addition, please note that this course requires a high degree of confidentiality. General concepts may be shared outside the classroom; however, personal details of discussions are not to be shared. Under no circumstances will there be any recording of a class or pictures taken in the classroom without consent of the instructor. This is a course designed to develop character and breach of this code may result in academic sanctions.