**Effective Organizations and the Work of Leadership**  
*(UEP 294-01)*  
**Spring 2017 – (First Half)**  
**Proposal for Discussion**

Wednesdays 6:00-9:00 pm  
72 Professors Row Classroom

**Instructor**: Laurie Goldman, Ph.D.  
laurie.goldman@tufts.edu (617) 627-5053  
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University  
72 Professors Row, 2nd Floor  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00-4:30 and by appointment (strongly encouraged; e-mail me and we’ll find a time)

**Course Description:**  
This module offers students key concepts and strategies for participating effectively in organizations dedicated to policy, planning, and other social change efforts. It explores how organizations enable people to coordinate and sustain their efforts to impact complex social, environmental, and urban problems. And it examines how organizations – despite their stabilizing and change resistant tendencies -- must also adapt in order to remain effective.

We’ll focus on the work of leadership that all organizational actors – including those without positions of authority – engage in to navigate this dynamic of stability and change.\(^1\) This work involves strategies for:

- setting the direction for action and the path to get there
- aligning organizational actors with the mission, forging their commitments to one another, and motivating them to keep on going
- adapting to external and internal changes

Class activities include reading and discussing case studies and investigating an example of struggle and striving in an organization and proposing potential solutions. We will also experiment with the power of routines and craft our public leadership stories to develop our leadership potential.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Analyze and assess opportunities for improving the effectiveness of nonprofit, government, and other public serving organizations.
- Examine, critique, and propose strategies organizational actors can pursue to make organizations more effective.

• Examine these concepts and strategies in relation to a specific organizational context that is relevant to your field of interest in policy, planning, and social change.

• Communicate about your “leadership story” that articulates what calls you to action, recognizes emerging opportunities for change, and inspires others to join you to advance a common purpose.

**Course Format and Expectations:**

**Reflecting on Real Examples:** We will investigate the work of leadership by analyzing real examples. Case studies prepared for students of nonprofit and public management and leadership will supply some of our raw materials. In addition, each student will examine an example of “struggle or striving” (described below) in the context of an organization you know well or would like to get to know better.

Reading and writing assignments will guide our exploration of both types of cases. They are also intended to help you cultivate routines for reflecting on your change work in the course of your busy lives.

**Readings** provide conceptual frameworks for analyzing observations from these investigations. Sources will include scholarly publications and reports geared to professionals who work in public, nonprofit, and (less frequently) private sector organizations. *Reading as a leadership practice* means asking questions that are meaningful to you. Some examples of questions to ask yourself as you read are: How do I understand my experience differently if I think about the ideas articulated in the publication? How does my experience challenge what this author is suggesting? What are the implications of this idea for how I do my work?

**Written assignments** will be short think pieces; they do not require extensive research apart from the investigations themselves. They are intended to help you deepen your reflections on the connections between the readings and your examples of “struggles and striving.” *Writing as a leadership practice* is also means to figure out what you mean and to communicate it effectively with your fellow change agents.

**Ongoing Class Participation:** In addition to the written assignments described below, participants will commit to contributing to meaningful class discussion. To facilitate such contributions, we will post provocative questions and comments about the readings and/or exercises on the Trunk web-site prior to class (at the agreed upon time). During the class sessions, participants will be mindful of how their comments or questions advance the session’s learning goals.

If a participant is unable to attend a class session for any reason, she or he will find a way to contribute to the learning goals for that day.
Course Assignments

Analysis of an Example of “Struggle or Striving” in an Organizational Setting:
You will select an organization of interest to you and identify a challenge the organization has encountered (or is currently addressing) as the focus of short written assignments. The organization should be one you know well or that you can learn about through conversations with its members. (You may choose to focus on a department or program within a larger organization.)

- You can select a challenge the organization has already worked to resolve. Your analysis will be retrospective and you might consider alternative courses of action as well as the implications of the steps the organizational actors took.

- You can focus on a struggle that is currently underway. This might involve a response to a critical decision point or an ongoing struggle to achieve mission and goals in the context of existing structures, systems, relationships, and resources.

- You may consider the prospects of adopting a new initiative for the organization while taking into account the organization’s mission and stakeholders and considering the implications for its actors, structures, and systems.

The written assignments for the organizational assignment include:

1. Initial description of the challenge and a characterization of the organization in which the challenge is grounded. (Due Friday, February 3rd, 1-2 pages.)

2. Analysis of the challenge that draws on a concept from the class readings and discussion. (Laurie will help you identify supplementary resources to guide this analysis if that proves useful.) (Due Friday, 24, 3-4 pages)

3. A memo directed to pertinent actors in the organization that proposes a course of action for addressing the struggle or continuing to strive towards a new direction. Alternatively, the memo may offer suggestions for how to proceed differently in similar situations in the future. (Due Friday, March 10, 3-4 pages. You will also present the proposal to the class in the last session, March 8.)

Examples of struggle or striving you might explore:
- responding to a change in the authorizing environment, such as a policy or budgetary change, loss (or gain) of a significant funding source or contract, a shift in priorities of key allies
- modifying established procedures to embrace a new direction or approach to the organization’s ongoing work
- contending with a leadership transition or other change in staffing or reconfiguring the board structure or membership
- negotiating conflicting perspectives and interests of multiple stakeholders
- devising a structure and process for problem solving and learning
- re-energizing staff, volunteers, board members or other actors and sustaining their motivation to contribute and their commitment to the organization
- efforts to improve representation of constituents or other diverse populations among staff and decision-makers
- efforts to preserve the organization’s identity or alter its image in response to an internal or external change
- pitching a new direction or approach to current or potential funders

As many of these themes intersect, you may include more than one of them. You may also suggest additional themes.

Leadership Development: Class participants will experiment with several of the leadership strategies in the course of our everyday lives as well as in our class sessions.

1. Routine change exercise: Choose a routine you would like to change. It can be a habit you would like to quit or a new practice you would like to adopt. The routine may pertain to your work or personal life.

   You will devise plan for how you will help yourself fulfill this commitment. (Commitment to be presented to the class, in writing on Feb. 8). You will observe your experiences with this effort and share some of your observations on the discussion forum devoted to this purpose. After 4 weeks, you will write up your gleanings in the form of guidance to others who seek to modify routines. (Due in class, March 1, 1 page).

2. Leadership story: A public-directed narrative that articulates what calls you to action, recognizes emerging opportunities for change, and inspires others to join you to advance a common purpose. Delivered in the last session of class, March 8.
Schedule of Assignments

*Details about each of these assignments and the evaluation system will be discussed in class.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date*</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example of Organizational Struggle or Striving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characterization of the example of struggle or striving and its</td>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
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<td>organizational setting (1 page)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of the challenge drawing on a concept from the readings (3-4 pages)</td>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal for addressing the struggle or adopting the new idea (3-4 pages)</td>
<td>March 10 (present in class on March 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Routine Change</td>
<td>In class:</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- commitment and plan (post on forum)</td>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>- post self-observations on discussion forum</td>
<td>Feb. 8- March 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>- reflection and gleanings (1 page)</td>
<td>March 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery of Leadership Story (2-3 minutes)</td>
<td>In class:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>March 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active participation in class discussions</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
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<td>Regular and insightful contributions to Discussion Forum</td>
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*Written assignments are due on Fridays at 5pm unless otherwise indicated. Assignments must be completed and submitted on time in order to facilitate class discussion and thematic development.*

Who Can Benefit from the Course: The course is intended for students interested in a range of policy and planning fields. It seeks to develop competencies that are assets in all types of nonprofit and public sector organizations, for a variety of roles within those organizations. I’ve built flexibility into the design to allow us to delve more deeply into participants’ specific interests and ideas that emerge in our investigations and discussions. The course is particularly appropriate for students who are thinking about next career steps and for all those who are interested in being more effective participants in your field of interest.

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2 If participants cannot fulfill their obligation to their classmates for any reason, late submission may be approved pending submission of: (1) a plan for attending to all responsibilities displaced by work on the late assignment, including but not limited to the other work for this course and (2) a proposal for mitigating the impact of the late assignment on fellow classmates.
READING ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULE

The required readings will be posted on the Trunk site for the course, either as links to electronic sources or as downloadable “pdf” files. Additional references on each of the course themes will also be posted on the site. We will add to this list throughout the course, in relation to your specific interests and in response to the topics that emerge in your investigations and the class discussions.

This is a preliminary list to illustrate the topics and types of readings we are likely to examine in the course. You will develop your leadership capabilities by assuming responsibility for the course development. This syllabus is a proposal for that enterprise to be refined and further developed by the course participants.

Session 1, January 25th Introduction: Starting with What We Know about Change

Discussion of the mission, objectives, and guiding principles of the course.

What do we mean by organizations, leadership, and the work of leadership?


We’ll start crafting our Leadership Stories in class.

Session 2, February 1st Mission and Mandate, Authorizing Environment, and Capacity

The aim of this session is to delve into the quagmire of an organizational struggle to identify challenges and potential strategies for contending them that we will address throughout the course.

Read the case study about one leader’s effort to assume responsibilities for a struggling public sector organization. Use the frameworks in the other readings to identify the key actors and their motivations and struggles. What was the department’s mandate and mission? How did factors in the environment influence what was possible for the actors to do? What do you think about the actors’ capacity to act given their roles, skills, resources, and relationships? How would you recommend designing the retreat?


Description of the example of struggle or striving and its organizational setting (1 page) due on Friday, February 3rd.
Session 3, Feb 8th  Aligning Efforts to the Mission & Sustaining Motivation for the Effort

Bridgestar (2011) “Strategies for Changing Your Organization’s Culture.” (9 pages)

Due in class and post on forum: Routine change commitment and plan

Session 4, Feb. 15th  Responding to External Pressures: Relationships with Funders, Constituents, and Other Stakeholders with Different Perspectives and Priorities


Session 5, Feb. 22  Transformative Communication and Connecting Across Differences


Analysis of the “struggle or striving” example (3-4 pages) due Friday, Feb. 24.
Session 6, March 1st  The Power of Organizational Routines as Resources for Change


Due in class: Routine change reflection and gleanings (1 page)

Session 7, March 8th  Synthesis of Our Reflections

Presentations about proposals for struggles and striving. **Proposal due, Friday, March 10th**

Delivery of Leadership Stories
Increasingly, policy and planning efforts span organizational boundaries. Working together allows organizations to take advantage of partners’ diverse resources, expertise, and constituencies to advance common goals. But collaborating is challenging; it consumes time and other resources and often exacerbates frictions among actors with divergent perspectives and priorities.

This module will adopt a similar format of student selected and other case studies that we will examine with guidance from readings, short writing assignments, and discussions. Students who participated in the “Effective Organizations and Work of Leadership” course may build on the work they did during the first half of the semester.

The topics we will cover include:

1. The rationale for collaboration:
   What are the advantages and disadvantages of working together with other organizations?
   What is the impetus for organizations to join forces rather than work on their own?

2. Designing Partnerships:
   For what purposes should organizations collaborate?
   How should they select partners? Which ones? How many?
   What should they do together? (e.g., share information, creative problem solving, joint projects or initiatives)
   How closely connected should partners be? (e.g., informal networks, formal contracts, committed alliances)
   What structure should they adopt?

3. The Work of Collaboration and Effective Collaborating
   How can partnership members contend with the challenges of working collaboratively?
   - building and sustaining committed and trusting relationships;
   - managing conflicts and leveraging differences for creative problem solving
   - fostering effective communication and planning among partners and between partners and their home organizations
   - adapting to change
   What decision-making and management processes and structures should they adopt?
   Who should do the work of the partnership?

4. Evaluating partnerships and collaborative efforts
   How can we evaluate the work of collaboration (in addition to the outcomes of our joint projects)?
   How can we describe the relationships (especially of informal networks)