Class Activities

# Chapter 1: Understanding Leadership

## Guide to the Class Activities

Each activity is designed based on Fink’s Learning Taxonomy and is tagged with the following tags under the taxonomy’s learning and assessment structure:

1. Foundational Knowledge (F)

2. Application (A)

3. Integration (I)

4. Human Dimension (H)

5. Caring (C)

6. Learning How to Learn (L)

These activities may be used in either small-group or large-group settings, depending on class size and time available. Some may also be suitable as homework.

## Activities

### Get the Ball Rolling (F, A, I)

Here are some ideas for starting discussion in class. (1) Ask all students to share a key idea from the reading as a way to do quick review; (2) Ask students to write down the universal leadership trait that they think is most important. Have them share the trait in pairs, aloud, as a way to energize and initiate discussion; (3) Offer a position statement about the day’s lesson (“The relational approach is the most effective style of leadership.”) Ask students to write a 2-3 sentence response, agreeing or disputing that position, as a way to engage their thinking.

### Practicing Effective Leadership (A, H, C)

In class, brainstorm what the pressing issues are in your community (high unemployment, political corruption, scholastic underachievement, etc.). Select one for discussion. Ask students to form small groups and assign each one a different leadership approach (trait, skills, etc.). Ask each group to think about how their leadership approach would contribute to better leadership in this area. For example, what traits are most needed by the leaders involved in this issue? How do traits empower these leaders to lead? Do they give them inner strength, inspire others, or build trust? Ask each group to share its insights with the whole class. Discuss: Do different social problems require different types of leadership?

### Learning from the Past (I, H, L)

Every community has members who contributed to its success in the past, or events that shaped its identity, such as war or another tragedy. Often these people or events are remembered through public monuments or memorials. This assignment asks students to become informed about key aspects of their community’s history through examining its public memorials. The assignment can be developed in several ways:

* Individually, students can research a memorial of their choosing. They should make a site visit to examine the memorial in its setting, and then do some archival research on its construction and the person or event being commemorated. Some questions to consider: What is the significance of the person or event being commemorated? What materials are used for the monument and how do they add to the meaning of the memorial? Does the student think this is a good site for a memorial? How does the public interact with the memorial? How does this memorial instruct us about what we are to value from the past and take with us into the future?
* This can also be developed as a group assignment, with the instructor assigning small groups to research different monuments in the community that honor leadership. Groups can give brief reports in class, addressing the same questions as above, or the class can take a field trip to some of the sites and experience the memorial space first-hand, with small groups reporting their findings at each location.

### Inspirational Quotes (F, A, H)

Option 1: Ask students to bring their favorite leadership quotes to class. If needed, they can look some up online. In small groups, ask individuals to share their quotes with others and why these quotes are meaningful to them. Then put up sheets of newsprint around the room, each with a different leadership approach mentioned in the chapter (“Leadership is a trait”, “Leadership is a behavior”, etc.). Have students find the leadership approach that is reflected in their favorite quote and tape their quote onto that sheet. Once all quotes are posted, what patterns emerge? Which leadership approach has the most quotes? The least? Why?

Option 2: Ask students to bring in a leadership quote related to each of the different leadership approaches previewed in this chapter. The quotes can either support or contradict the approach. If possible, students should identify the source of the quote. Discussion can then center on how the authors’ different life experiences may have shaped their diverse thinking about leadership.

### Opinion Box (I, C, L)

One way to encourage honest responses to questions and issues in class is for students to communicate anonymously without worrying how the instructor or fellow students will react. Instructors can make a lidded cardboard box into a drop box for reactions to class lectures (“What was the best part of today’s lecture?”), opinions on controversial issues, parts of the reading that were unclear, and so on. Provide cards or slips of paper for students to write on in each class. This can also be done without a box, if slips are folded and turned in en masse at the end of class.

## Writing Assignments

### Valuing My Culture (F, A, H)

Have students look up a significant leader from their culture (or subculture) and write a 2- to 3-page reaction paper showing which of the universal leadership traits the leader displays. In what ways is this leader unique (i.e. culturally specific)? Could this leader be equally effective in any other country (or subculture)? What leadership approach described in this chapter best explains this leader’s effectiveness?

### Current Events (A, H, L)

Have students write a 1-2 page paper about a current leader in their community. Which of the leadership approaches previewed in this chapter best describes this leader’s effectiveness?

### Stepping Up (A, H, C)

Ask students to respond to this statement: “The challenge for each of us is to be prepared to lead when we are asked to be the leader.” On what occasions has the student been asked to lead? Why? How did he or she respond? What types of leadership roles does the student anticipate being asked to fill in the future?

### One Minute Paper Topics (A, I)

What is involved in the process of influencing others?

Which of the leadership approaches previewed in this chapter best explains unethical leadership? Is it bad character? Bad behavior? Bad relationships?

### Making It Personal (A, H, C)

Ask student to identify the leader who has been most influential in their lives and the leadership role this person held. Why was this person so significant? In what ways did he/she influence the student? What about this person would they emulate?

### Storyboarding (I, H)

Storyboarding is a way of graphically representing information in consecutive steps that lead to a desired outcome, or answer a specific question. This planning strategy will be used throughout the course to help students visualize how a leadership process takes place or a goal can be achieved. Steps can be drawn as squares or circles. Sample templates can be found online.

For chapter 1, ask students to consider the process behind this question: How do leaders on the “dark side” emerge? Research suggests three pre-conditions: a destructive leader, susceptible followers, and weak checks and balances in the organization/system. What are the steps that lead to this outcome?

Have students research a modern day leader they consider to be unethical, manipulative, or amoral, to learn about his or her background, development, and rise to power. What happened first to lead them down the “dark” path? What happened second? Third? And so on. Limit the number of steps to ten or under. Avoid researching extreme cases such as Hitler, Mao or Stalin, or leaders with megalomania or other mental health issues. Instead, students should choose leaders from their own countries and think about the choices they made that turned them in destructive directions. What are the critical life events, the turning points, the personal influences, the social contexts, which change leaders’ behaviors away from moral purposes?

After students have completed their individual storyboards, class discussion can positively address:

* What are common themes in the leaders’ stories?
* How can we identify leaders whose goals are self-serving or harmful to others?
* How can we discourage people from following such leaders?
* How can we build self-esteem and self-confidence within our circle of friends and co-workers to resist the influence of destructive leaders?
* How can we teach and model respect for others in schools and in our workplaces?
* How can we create robust public discourse about democratic principles and civility?

### Sketch-noting (F, A, I)

Sketch-noting is gaining popularity as a way to think visually about an issue. There are several books and online resources that demonstrate this technique and its applications. For example, see Sunni Brown’s TED talk, “Doodlers, unite!”: https://www.ted.com/talks/sunni\_brown

It’s helpful for instructors to practice this method first and see how extensively they want to use it in the course. Consider:

* Do you want students to learn about the importance of visual language?
* Do you want students to learn to draw basic icons and symbols they can use repeatedly in class activities?
* Do you want students to learn about different types of sketch-notes (system maps, process maps, and so on)?
* Do you want to bring in a seasoned sketch-noter to teach a workshop?
* Do you want students to develop this as a transferable skill for the workplace (event planning, team decision-making, and so on)?

Making sketch notes is not about drawing, or artistry, but about making marks on paper (or a white board) to help oneself think. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Everyone will do it differently.

A basic, introductory exercise is to ask students to take a piece of paper and sketch out what they consider to be the most important points in chapter 1. THIS IS NOT A TOPICAL OUTLINE, but what stands out for them in the chapter. After they put down some words, or boxes or symbols, ask them how the different parts relate to one another and how they might represent them? What questions do they have about what they read? Where would they mark them on the paper? What are the “edges” between the parts they have selected? Will they draw lines or arrows connecting them, or some other mark? After everyone has had a chance to sketch for 15 minutes, display everyone’s work across tables or on the wall and have students look at what their peers have sketched. You are NOT EVALUATING drawing ability, but seeing how people think and perceive differently. As a class, can they identify some common themes across the sketches? What are differences? What might this exercise suggest about the role of follower perception in leadership?

This technique can be used throughout the course, to help students remember chapter content in their own unique ways.