

# AHSC 475 01 2254 | *Organizational and Community Leadership: A Systems Approach*

Instructor: Cédric Jamet [cedric.jamet@concordia.ca](mailto:cedric.jamet@concordia.ca)

TA: Hany Shokair [hany.shokair@concordia.ca](mailto:hany.shokair@concordia.ca)

Moodle: <https://moodle.concordia.ca/moodle/course/view.php?id=179891>

**ROOM: VE 326**

**TIME: TUE, 5.45-8.30 PM**

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## Important dates

Term dates: January 12, 2026 – April 13, 2026

**DNE** - Full refund: January 26, 2026

**DISC** - Academic withdrawal: March 23, 2026

**Reading Week** - March 2-8

## Territorial Acknowledgment

Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, learn and teach today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the practice of leadership in organizations and communities with a human systems approach and perspective. It examines a range of theoretical concepts current in organizational leadership practice including systems thinking, team-based leadership, transformational models of leadership, and strategy formulation from a leadership perspective. It provides an opportunity for students to examine ethics, values, and abilities required in organizational leadership today.

## What we will do and how we will do it

Not all of us are encountering this course in the same ways, so each of us will have to make decisions about how we engage. I want to be clear about several things:

- You will be invited to formulate your own questions on leadership, and to explore them with peers in various formats;
- I am not the sole source of knowledge in this course, so are all of you. You each carry stories, experiences and insights that can be of service to you and

- your fellow learners. Bring them, share them to enrich each others' experiences.
- While we learn about leadership, we will also be building community together.
  - I believe that the most important leadership practice we can have in this time is to model kindness, generosity and curiosity about what it means to be a good human. In this spirit I invite you into the practice of asking for what you need, and offering what you can.

## Office Hours

I will be available for office hours as necessary. Just reach out to schedule a video meeting or an in-person meeting.

## Services and Accommodations

I have worked to make this course adaptive and flexible, so that you can find your own way into the work, whatever your context.

Concordia's [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#) guides, counsels, and assists students with disabilities. If you have already met with them, feel free to chat with me about any changes we can make to help your learning. I will certainly offer accommodations. I would rather we work together to make sure the course meets your needs. You do not need to divulge any personal information in order to have these conversations or to receive accommodations. I trust you and, of course, I will hold information you do share with me in confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you do not require accommodations due to a disability, understand that some of your fellow students might, and it is important to me that you do not make assumptions about where, when, or how they learn.

### **Concordia University Services for Students**

It is important to me that you feel able to show up fully to our work together. We are all humans first. Concordia has services in place that I encourage you to reach out to if you need:

## Academic success:

AHSC Academic Advisor: Alison Piela, [alison.piela@concordia.ca](mailto:alison.piela@concordia.ca)

Student Success Centre:

<https://www.concordia.ca/students/success.html>

Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides:

<https://library.concordia.ca/help/citing>

Academic Integrity

[https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity.html?utm\\_source=redirect&utm\\_campaign=academic-integrity.html](https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity.html?utm_source=redirect&utm_campaign=academic-integrity.html)

If you have health issues preventing you from engaging to the best of your ability in this course, you can reach out to these services:

Counselling and Psychological Services:

<https://www.concordia.ca/health/mental-health/counselling.html>

Health Services: <https://www.concordia.ca/health.html>

Sexual Assault Resource Centre: <https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/sexual-assault.html>

If you need help accessing financial aid and community resources:

Tuition and Financial Aid: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/financial.html>

Dean of Students Office: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/life/dean-of-students.html>

HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank): <https://www.csu.qc.ca/services/hojo/>

## Other services available to you:

International Students Office:

<https://www.concordia.ca/students/international.html>

Student Hub: <https://www.concordia.ca/students.html>

CSU: <https://www.csu.qc.ca>

Otsenhákta Student Centre: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/otsenhakta.html>

Loyola Landing (Student Services at Loyola) :

<https://www.concordia.ca/students/services/loyola.html>

Homeroom : <https://www.concordia.ca/students/homeroom.html>

Birks Student Service Centre : <https://www.concordia.ca/students/birks.html>

Noula, the Black Student Centre: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/noula.html>

## Course Objectives

Nothing in this syllabus will be set in stone or taken for granted. The outline and objectives here are a beginning, something we will treat roughly as the course proceeds. This is not a map, but rather a direction we will point ourselves with the goal of rewriting the syllabus as we go, discovering what we will learn together as we learn it, questioning what we will do even as we begin to do it.

To the programmatic outcomes, I'll add that we will:

- Widen our perspectives about what leadership can look like in complex times
- Reflect on the ethical implications of leadership
- Reflect on the different contexts in which leadership can be found
- Explore leadership from a living systems thinking lens
- Formulate strategies to develop one's own leadership capacities
- Change our mind about stuff.
- Have epiphanies.

## The Work of the Course

### Required Texts

There is not a traditional textbook for this course. We will do some reading and welcome some guests, but the course will center around the experiences we bring and our discussions about what we uncover.

Every week there will be a different reading, or resource (video or podcast) for the theme of the day.

These readings will be available openly online through the course reserve.

## Participation

This is a collaborative course, focusing on self-reflection, discussion and work in groups. The class will be a cooperative learning experience, a true intellectual community. In order for us to work together as a community, we all have to come prepared to participate.

Here are some principles to codify what this may mean:

- Read the class material ahead of the class.
- Care. Consider how the way you show up impacts everyone's experience (including mine!).
- Openness. Be prepared to share your experiences, your insights, your wisdom;
- Curiosity and judgment can't coexist in the same mind at the same time. Consider prioritizing curiosity.
- Humility. No one has a monopoly on the truth.
- Respect. We are here to grow and learn. No shaming others for their views.
- Confidentiality. No sharing other people's personal stories outside the class, or on social media.

## Collaboration

You may collaborate with your peers on any of your projects, including your personal reflections. If you have questions about the various ways collaboration can work, chat with me at any point.

## Self-reflection

You'll do lots of reflecting for this course, some of it short, some of it long, some of it rough, some of it polished, some for an audience, and some of it just for yourself. There will be lots of room for you to decide how much time and energy you want to invest in each of the activities or assignments we'll do. The most important work you'll do is to reflect on your own leadership and experiences with leadership (your own and that of others).

## Schedule

Here is what we will spend our time doing together this Winter. The schedule will evolve as we proceed. Watch regularly for more details and added activities. Things might change or move around as our conversation does.

Week 1: Course Intro	Questions: What is the work we will be doing, and how will we do it? What is leadership? How will we assess learning in this course?	Resources - Course outline - Ungrading as leadership  Method : World cafe
Week 2: Living Systems view on Leadership	Questions: What can we learn about leadership from the natural world?	Resources: - Reid, the chaordic path (video) - Wheatley - leadership lessons from the real world - Living systems - Corrigan, The four-fold practice (video)  Method Embodied inquiry Images
Week 3: hosting self	Question: What personal practices do we need to become better hosts and leaders?	Resources: - Seashore, self as instrument of change - - adrienne maree brown, I am the practice ground.  Method - Circle practice
Week 4: Being hosted	Question What is the quality of relationships we need to foster when we practice the	References - Robin Wall Kimmerer, The Intelligence of plants (Podcast)

	art of hosting meaningful conversations?	<p>- Melanie Goodchild, Duck Shit Tea, Yarning &amp; The Magical Space In Between Things</p> <p>Method</p> <p>- World Cafe</p>
Week 5: Hosting others	Question: What is a container and how do we design and host them?	<p>Resources</p> <p>- Starhawk, the Empowerment Manual, chapter 4, on power and responsibility</p> <p>- Corrigan - Designing and Hosting Containers</p> <p>Method</p> <p>- Open Space</p>
Week 6: Co-creating	Question: How do we make good decisions together?	<p>- Starhawk, the Empowerment Manual, Chapter 6: Leadership roles for leaderless groups -</p> <p>- Slade, Going Horizontal, chapter 8, Learning and development or Chapter 7, Decision-making</p> <p>Method</p> <p>Generative decision making process around the format of the final reflection.</p>
Week 7: hosting self	Question: Who are we, and who else can we be when we do the work of leadership?	<p>References</p> <p>- Scharmer, Uncovering the blind spot of leadership</p> <p>- Bushe, Being the container</p> <p>Method</p> <p>- Narrative-based inquiry: Anecdote circles</p>

<p>Week 8: Being hosted</p>	<p>Question: What qualities of listening, attention and participation are needed for the work of living systems leadership?</p>	<p>Resources: - Wheatley, On Islands of sanity  Method - Collective story harvest</p>
<p>Week 9: Hosting others</p>	<p>Question How do we call in meaningful conversations?</p>	<p>Resources - adrienne maree brown - Emergent strategy Principles - Southern - Framing Inquiry - Slade, the Art of Invitation  Method - Questions game</p>
<p>Week 10: Co-creating</p>	<p>Question: How do we support collective imagination in service of life?</p>	<p>Resources - Vanessa Andreotti &amp; Rob Hopkins, on Imagination (Podcast) - adrienne maree brown, On Radical Imagination and Moving Towards Life (Podcast)  Method Proaction cafe?</p>
<p>Week 11: Harvesting</p>	<p>Question: how do we harvest the fruits of a good conversation?</p>	<p>Resource: Nissen and Corrigan, The Art of Harvesting  Method Knowledge camp with action learning circles</p>
<p>Week 12: Harvesting (2)</p>		<p>Method Knowledge camp with action learning circles (2)</p>

# Evaluation Method and Breakdown

## Assignments

Leadership through my eyes With personal questions on leadership	Individual	20%	January 27 (week 3)
Personal reflection journals (0-6) * - 0 journals completed: 0 marks - 1 journal completed : 5 marks - 2 journals completed : 10 marks - 3 journals completed : 15 marks - 4 journals completed : 20 marks - 5 journals completed : 25 marks - > 5 journals completed: 30 marks	Individual	30 %	
Action Learning Group Process	Group	20 % P/F	
- Part 1: Group proposal			February 10 (Week 5)
- Part 2: Group Harvest Final piece			Week 11-12
Final reflection	Individual	20 %	April 14 (or earlier)
Course participation and engagement *	Individual	10 %	

See Moodle for detailed assignment descriptions.

\* The reflection journals will be made available on Moodle after each class.

\* For the course participation and engagement part, you will be asked to give yourself a grade based on a rigorous self assessment process (involving some peer assessment) that we will discuss in class.

## Grades and Assessment

"Extrinsic motivation, which includes a desire to get better grades, is not only different from, but often undermines, intrinsic motivation, a desire to learn for its own sake." ~ Alfie Kohn, ["The Case Against Grades"](#)

Instead of your grade, here's what I want you to focus on:

- Actively engage in the work of the course.
- Determine what participation in our community looks like for you. Listening and reflecting can be just as important as speaking and questioning.
- Reflecting is not an independent exercise, so I encourage you to focus a good amount of your energy on helping your peers and offering feedback that pushes them in their own thinking process on leadership.
- Reflect on your own work. This course is about process, not product.

This course will focus on qualitative assessment and feedback, rather than on grades. For each assignment, I will be asking questions and making comments that engage your work rather than simply evaluate it. After receiving my feedback and reviewing it, you are encouraged to resubmit the assignment if you feel that it will serve your learning (you do not have to!). At this point, I will attribute a grade

**You should consider this course a “busy-work-free zone.” If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.**

If at any point you feel unsure about how to engage with this process, please connect with me and we can discuss possibilities together.

## Grade scheme

A total of 100 marks may be earned in this course, and final grades will be computed as follows:

VALUE	LETTER GRADE	GPA	U/G CALENDAR DESCRIPTOR
98-100	A+	4.3	Outstanding
94-97	A	4.0	
90-93	A-	3.7	
85-89	B+	3.3	Very Good
80-84	B	3.0	
76-79	B-	2.7	
72-75	C+	2.3	Satisfactory
67-71	C	2.0	
63-66	C-	1.7	
59-62	D+	1.3	Marginal
54-58	D	1.0	
50-53	D-	0.7	Pass
0-49	FNS	0.0	Poor - Failure

## BEHAVIOUR

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities (<https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/common/docs/policies/official-policies/BD-3.pdf>) which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

## Plagiarism

The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement.”

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources.

Plagiarism does not refer to words alone – it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism.

(Source: The Academic Integrity Website - <https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity.html>)

In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!

### **A note on the use of artificial intelligence tools (ex: Chat GPT)**

- Students are encouraged to make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to their understanding of course materials, under the circumstances outlined below.
- Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.
- Students may use artificial intelligence tools for generating ideas, creating an outline for an assignment, or polishing language, but the final submitted assignment must be original work produced by the individual student alone.

- To achieve favorable results with generative AI, it is essential to invest time in refining prompts and to use specific prompts that emerge from a place of knowledge about the topic.
- Material drawn from ChatGPT or other AI tools must be acknowledged; representing as one's own an idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated will be considered an academic offense (on acknowledgement, see below).
- Students may choose to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the assignments in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

## Inclusive Community

While some of the work for this course will be done independently or with a small group, think of all your peers as a source for feedback and encouragement. Draw on their expertise. This class will be as much (or more) about you teaching yourselves and each other as it is about me teaching you. Because of this, it's incredibly important to me that we create an inclusive community that is respectful of our differences and offers space for the boundary-setting necessary for positive relationships to form.

## Appendix 1 - Teaching statement

As a teacher, a facilitator of dialogue, a consultant in organizations and communities, a designer of participatory processes, and also as a citizen, an immigrant, a parent, a member of communities, concerns with justice, equity, diversity and inclusion have been central to my professional practice and my personal life. As a cis, able-bodied white man, I recognize that I grew up with privilege and that I benefit everyday from policies designed primarily by and for people who look like me. I am on a learning journey to become a better ally to those most affected by the inequities inherent to the systems we live, work and learn in. Allyship resides in the explicit intention and practice of challenging our current systems and helping build new ones that provide fair opportunities to people coming from less privileged places in society, that welcome and celebrate diversity in all its forms, and that seek to include the perspectives and voices of people and communities who have been historically silenced and marginalized.

### Teaching Principles

My working principles as an educator are the very principles that have shaped the core of my practice as a process consultant and facilitator.

As a teacher,

- I believe in the liberating possibilities of higher education.
- I consider the classroom as a fractal of the real world, in the sense that everything that happens there has the potential to become a learning experience and can support reflection and growth.
- I believe that all students who come to our learning spaces are whole people who carry with them stories, beliefs, knowledge, gifts and experiences.
- I consider that all students have the capacity to grow, learn and find your agency in the world around.
- I believe that my role is to create the conditions so that you can discover and polish your gifts and access that capacity to learn what you need to learn, knowing that you are ultimately responsible for your own learning.
- I believe that my responsibility lies in designing and holding a container for that learning to happen.
- I leverage the space and time I share with you all in class to build a learning community that recognizes and honours the diversity of learning

backgrounds, experiences and styles that are present in any classroom I set foot in.

- I explore evaluation and assessment as an intentional process aimed towards fostering learning and growth, as opposed to judging and ranking.

In practice, this means that :

- I do not teach concepts and theories out of context.
- I leverage the space and the time we share to foster a learning community where we learn and practice the art of dialogue in order to explore together what it means to be human.
- I design each class and each learning experience with care, so that you (the students) can access the concepts you need to articulate and make sense of your world and practice, process the content through your life and work experiences, and create new meanings and insights, both collectively and individually.
- I leverage practices from a wide variety of sources, and adapt the way I work to the needs of the people in the room.
- In my teaching, I mobilize elements of arts-based practices, storytelling, participatory action research, improvisation, coaching circles, and collective intelligence practices.
- I approach evaluation as a process that gives space for choice and agency to the students, as a conversation where we can be in mutual learning, and as a space where we can also practice radically democratic, equity-based values.