

Course guide | Take the lead: All you need to know about Public Leadership

Course coordinator

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Date and location

12-15 October, Utrecht

Aim and background of this course about leadership

The popularity of leadership, as a theme about which many questions can be raised and multiple answers given, can hardly be overstated. For example, the term 'leader' results in almost one billion hits on Google and about 3 million on Google Scholar. The same popularity attracts leadership development and training, because many of us want to know how to become a leader.

So, what does it take to take the lead? And what can we learn from academic perspectives on leadership, and specifically public leadership?

As Paul 't Hart states in his latest book on public leadership that "The power of leadership has been loathed, feared and admired, but can hardly be denied". Although leadership is a powerful term, surprisingly it is also often weakly conceptualized. The prominent scholar James MacGregor Burns famously stated that leadership is one of the most observed but least understood phenomena on earth. In other words, it is a 'magic concept', meaning everything and nothing. In this course, we want to go and look into this magic concept by making it more concrete and tangible, so that scholars can study it and professionals can use these insights in their organizations. In addition, we like to familiarize you with a few leadership tips and tricks to explore and boost your own leadership.

This course thereby focuses firstly on the 'public' aspect of leadership. Vogel and Masal (2014) argued, "in current research on public leadership, the emphasis is still on the aspect of 'leadership' rather than on the 'public' element" and that "research on public leadership needs to pay more attention to publicness itself". Hence, we will especially analyze what makes leadership in public context different - such as the role of politics and the media, the importance of ethics, and the face of leadership in times of rapid change and crisis. Next to this, we will also discuss general leadership concepts, such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, servant leadership and ethical leadership. In this way, this course uses insights not only from public administration, but also from political science, organizational behavior, management science and psychology.

Next to focusing on the theoretical content, this course will also let the participating PhD students dive into the methodological and practical side of leadership studies. This is done by means of hands-on research (such as learning from a diversity of methodological approaches in dissertation research and presenting your own research with charisma), the playing of 'serious games' (such as ethical decision making with a 5 steps model and a negotiating challenge as Pirates of the Caribbean) and writing a short essay combining a topical leadership example and theoretical knowledge.

Hence, we aim to develop a dynamic learning environment regarding leadership in the public sector, which is not only highly educational but also brings heaps of fun.

Learning objectives

In this course, you will learn both scientific and professional knowledge and skills. The learning objectives of this course are:

1. To become familiar with the core themes of leadership in the public sector, including dealing with a political and public environment, leading with integrity and responding to citizens and society's problems;
2. To obtain knowledge about the distinctiveness of 'public' leadership and to integrate this knowledge with more general leadership studies in political science, organizational behavior, psychology and management;
3. To reflect on the methods of doing research into public leadership;
4. To integrate theoretical and empirical insights into a short essay/ news article/ blog on contemporary leadership in public organizations.

Objective 1 and 2 are 'content' objectives, which are explicitly related to objective 1 and 7 of the NIG: "A systematic understanding of Public Administration / Political Science" and "Ability to communicate with peers in Public Administration / Political Science and scholars from other disciplines and with society in general". Objective 3 and 4 are 'competency' objectives, which are explicitly linked to objective 2 and 3 of the NIG: "Mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with Public Administration / Political Science" and "Ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research".

Related to this, after this course, you are able to:

- Define and explain key concepts and theory related to leadership in the public sector;
- Describe the difference of public and political leadership with organizational leadership and Public management;
- Identify and analyze a leadership issue using different theoretical and methodological approaches;
- Assessing and evaluating a topical leadership issue by writing an essay;

And;

- Identify and experience some of the leadership challenges, and take the lead by: presenting your own research with leadership charisma, approach sensitive issues with ethical decision-making skills; and get what you want with a hefty doses of negotiation skills.

Credits

4 EC