

# NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

## DEVELOPING DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP WITH CONGRESSMAN JAMIE RASKIN'S UNTHINKABLE

Howard University, Department of Political Science, Spring 2022

Submitted to the Kallion  
Leading Teachers Community of Practice  
by Norman Sandridge



Elevating Leadership through the Humanities

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# Acknowledgments

THIS COURSE WAS THE PRODUCT OF THE COLLECTIVE TALENTS AND ENERGY OF SIXTEEN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS. I WANT TO THANK \*PROFUSELY\* THE THIRTEEN STUDENTS WHO SHARED DETAILED AND INTIMATE FEEDBACK ABOUT WHAT THEY GOT OUT OF IT. I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE EIGHT STUDENTS WHO AGREED TO BE IDENTIFIED BY NAME. I WILL REFER TO THEM BY THEIR FIRST NAME IN THIS REPORT. THE FIVE STUDENTS WHO PREFERRED NOT TO BE REFERRED TO BY NAME WILL BE QUOTED AS "ANONYMOUS". STUDENT RESPONSES HAVE BEEN LIGHTLY EDITED FOR OBVIOUS TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS AND PUNCTUATION.

SIMEON BARRETT, SOPHOMORE, POLITICAL SCIENCE  
TYE COMPTON, SOPHOMORE, POLITICAL SCIENCE  
ALRICK DAVIS, SOPHOMORE, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING  
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LAUREN NORTH, FRESHMAN, POLITICAL SCIENCE  
KENTHIA ROBERTS, SENIOR, MATHEMATICS (APPLIED MATHEMATICS)  
NIKKYA TALIAFERRO, FRESHMAN, POLITICAL SCIENCE

THIS COURSE WAS ALSO THE RESULT OF THE KIND SUPPORT OF MY COLLEAGUES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY WHO ENCOURAGED ME TO TEACH THIS CLASS, ESPECIALLY MY DEPARTMENT CHAIR, DR. RAVI PERRY, AND OUR OFFICE MANAGER, MS. BINTA CHAUNCEY. THIS COURSE IS ALSO THE RESULT OF THE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT OF MY MANY COLLEAGUES IN KALLION WHO CONTINUALLY PROVIDE ME WITH NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE STUDY OF THE HUMANITIES. FINALLY, THIS COURSE IS THE RESULT OF THE WONDROUS GENEROSITY OF ONE PHILANTHROPIC CONGRESSMAN, LAW PROFESSOR, AND FATHER.

# WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LOOK LIKE?

Five years from now, I hope to look back on this course and remember all the change it brought me. I was never good at participating in class, I have now conquered that. I was never good at writing my thoughts down and putting them on paper, I have now conquered that. I was never interested in American politics, and I wanted to stay far away from it at all costs, I have now conquered that. Never in a million years did I see myself wanting to launch a podcast and share my views with the world, I have now conquered that. This class has helped me tackle so many big obstacles in my life. It has taught me that every second is precious. I have learned that even through pain, life still goes on. It has built the strength within me to share my stories with others because you never know what someone is going through. It has given me life-long friends who support me and care about not only my academics but my personal life as well. I thank not only Congressman Jamie Raskin, but Dr. Sandridge as well for allowing me to fully immerse myself in this course and reap every benefit and sow every seed in those around me.

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**VICTORIA HUDSON, SOPHOMORE**  
Legal Communications Major



# WHY TEACH UNTHINKABLE?

Spring of 2022. I taught Special Topics in American Democracy (POLS 134) at Howard University. The “specialness” was our focus on developing democratic leadership by studying Congressman Jamie Raskin’s 2022 memoir, *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy*. This memoir treats the Raskin family’s loss of their son Tommy by suicide one week before the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, followed by Raskin’s time as the lead manager in the second impeachment of Donald Trump. I chose this book not only because of my personal attachment to it (my wife Kimberly Sandridge and I were research assistants), but also because the book weaves together a tragic and uplifting story about so many aspects of American democracy and the human experience.

## Civil Rights Movements

Abraham Lincoln  
Frederick Douglass  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Fannie Lou Hamer  
Bob Moses

## THEMES

## Trauma and Mental Health

Covid-19  
The Trump Presidency  
Suicide  
The Murder of George Floyd  
Post-traumatic Growth

## Insider Politics

The Impeachment  
Managers  
Speaker Pelosi  
Social Media  
Trump’s Defense

## Timeless Storytelling

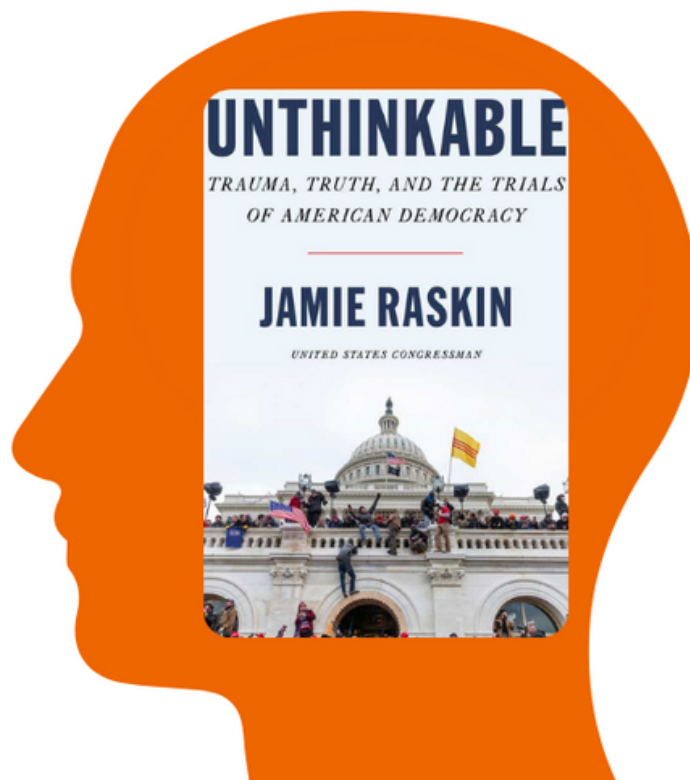
Launching a Political Career  
An Odyssey of Grief  
Political Figures Who Lost  
Children

## US Constitution

The Electoral College  
The Impeachment Process  
The Emoluments Clause  
The 25th Amendment

## Authoritarianism vs. Democracy

Violence  
Misinformation  
Insurrection  
The Pursuit of Truth



# THEMES

- **The US Constitution.** Because Congressman Raskin was previously a professor of constitutional law at American University, he offers detailed explanations of things like contingent elections, the 25th Amendment, the Electoral College, the impeachment process, and the Emoluments Clause.
- **Washington insider politics.** Raskin provides many insights into the personalities and inner-workings of both major parties as they work through the experience of January 6 and the subsequent impeachment. Raskin is an expert “sketcher” of the leadership of other congresspersons like Nancy Pelosi, Kevin McCarthy, and the impeachment managers. Readers get an excellent education on the many moving parts (and people) of our federal government.

# THEMES

- **The history of Civil Rights movements.** Raskin sketches many Civil Rights figures, from Frederick Douglass to Fannie Lou Hamer to Bob Moses. He treats the January 6 insurrection and the “Big Lie” that the 2020 presidential election was “stolen” from Donald Trump as a continuation of the “Lost Cause” narrative coming out of the Civil War.
- **Mental health.** Raskin movingly describes Tommy’s bout with depression beginning as a teenager and ending with his suicide at age 25. He broadens his scope to the mental health crisis in America, aggravated by events like the murder of George Floyd, the presidency of Donald Trump, and the Covid-19 epidemic.
- **Trauma.** Raskin recounts his odyssey with the trauma of losing his son and of the January 6 insurrection. He invites us to reflect on our own trauma and to search for meaning from it. We used as our definition of trauma “a serious challenge to or invalidation of our deepest assumptions about the world,” provided by the coiner of the term “post-traumatic growth”, Dr. Richard Tedeschi. We challenged ourselves to build an assumptive world that we would all find less traumatizing. One of the recurring themes in Unthinkable is that trauma is paradoxical. It can both be disorienting and center us where we truly belong. It can isolate us from others and help us form deep connections. It can cripple and empower us.

*This class has built the strength within  
me to share my stories with others  
because you never know what  
someone is going through.*

*--Victoria*



# THEMES

- **Democracy vs. authoritarianism.** Raskin paints a timeless and timely struggle between democracy as that form of government that “we all take care of together” and authoritarianism as that form of government bent on controlling others through violence and misinformation. He concludes *Unthinkable* with detailed predictions about the challenges to American democracy and calls for action to meet them. All sixteen students were deeply affected by January 6 and we spent our first class recounting our memories of that day.
- **Timeless story-telling elements.** *Unthinkable* lends itself to several timeless historical and fictional themes like the political figure who loses a child during a crisis (Priam in the *Iliad*, Pericles, Cicero, Abraham Lincoln, Joe Biden).

In just over 400 pages Raskin finds a way to weave these elements together in a stunningly tight, educational, and lyrically beautiful narrative.

# KENTHIA ROBERTS

SENIOR, MATHEMATICS MAJOR

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This book holds a lot of power and the knowledge I gained is unimaginable. I learnt more about politics in this class than in my intro to political science class and it made me gain a greater appreciation for democracy.





# LAUREN NORTH

FRESHMAN, POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Reading \*Unthinkable\* helped my development within this course by allowing me to learn more about the legal aspect of the trial and the ways in which Raskin handled his trauma. I felt as though I was able to feel a hint of what Raskin was feeling by also learning and seeing what he did right and what some of his flaws may have been in his journey as he would have explained it.

# WHAT WERE OUR "LEARNING VECTORS"?



Student learning and leadership development took place in eight different modes--what I will call “vectors”--of interaction, as follows.

# Learning Vectors for Leadership Development



We began with Raskin's description of democracy as that form of government that "we all take care of together". Students identified ways that American democracy was failing and envisioned the kinds of leadership they would cultivate to address these failures. My hope was that we could improve our collective mental health by taking solace in the fact that each one of us was doing \*something\* that would free us all up to focus on our own areas of concern. For example, if one student was working hard on ensuring voting rights, another could focus on stopping the spread of misinformation. From here we began engaging with various materials--and one another--to facilitate this development.

# EIGHT LEARNING VECTORS, EXPLAINED

VECTOR ONE: Reading and reflecting on *Unthinkable*.

VECTOR TWO: Reading an online companion. Each unit contained a summary of the chapter on *Unthinkable* we were reading, an exercise in sketching leadership (in words), one or more featured aspects of leadership (the companion identifies twenty-nine overall), and one or more exercises for plotting leadership development.

VECTOR THREE: Class lectures, supplemented with an online “Chalkboard”, a.k.a., a Google document of key terms, updates, and reminders.

VECTOR FOUR: Class discussion.

VECTOR FIVE: Discussion outside class. The class was relatively small (16 students) and students quickly found ways to connect outside the classroom, sometimes online and sometimes before and after class. Once we took a 2-hour hike through Rock Creek Park--a site featured prominently in *Unthinkable*--and collected “garbage rainbows”.





VECTOR SIX: **Weekly journals**. Students wrote about 1,700 words each week in their journals. Entries consisted of the exercises given in the online companion, discussion topics in class, and student reflections on their own leadership development.

VECTOR SEVEN: **Student projects**. We discussed the students' personalized leadership development projects on three occasions. This project was meant to bring students as close as possible (as one semester would allow) to developing the leadership that would be necessary to address the problem with democracy that the student was interested in. This development included things like identifying people who are already working in the field the student was interested in and coming up with ways of studying and emulating those people. Development could also include applying for internships or exploring relevant graduate programs. These projects were presented to the students as something that was *\*for them\** individually, in the sense that they were both cultivating their leadership and cultivating a *\*reputation\** for certain leadership in front of their classmates. But these projects were also presented to the students as *\*for each other\**, in the sense that each project had the potential to inspire and guide other students in their own projects.

# VECTOR EIGHT

## THINKING WITH CONGRESSMAN RASKIN, A.K.A., JAMIE



Congressman Raskin visited our class mid-semester to hear about the students' leadership development projects. He engaged with each student individually, listening to their plans and offering feedback to further their development. At the end of the semester he joined us for a reception and invited students to participate in the Democracy Summer internship and to intern for the January 6th Select Committee. Students took turns thanking Congressman Raskin for writing *Unthinkable* and sharing his story.



# ALRICK DAVIS

SOPHOMORE, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING



If I were to discuss every single way that this course has helped me to propel my decisions in life, I would have enough content for a dissertation thesis. Over the course of the last 4-5 months, I've done more self-reflection than I've ever done in my life. I saw the implications that suicide attempts had on the victim and his loved ones and I had a clearer vision of what I didn't want my loved ones to experience. I had made the decision to start therapy in March and it's been a slow journey, but having started it is what I've been grateful for....In addition, I confirmed my liking of the legal and policy-making careers...I've officially added going to law school as an option for postgraduate studies. In my time of self-reflection, I remembered goals I once said I wanted and forgot about.

# WHAT WERE OUR FORMS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

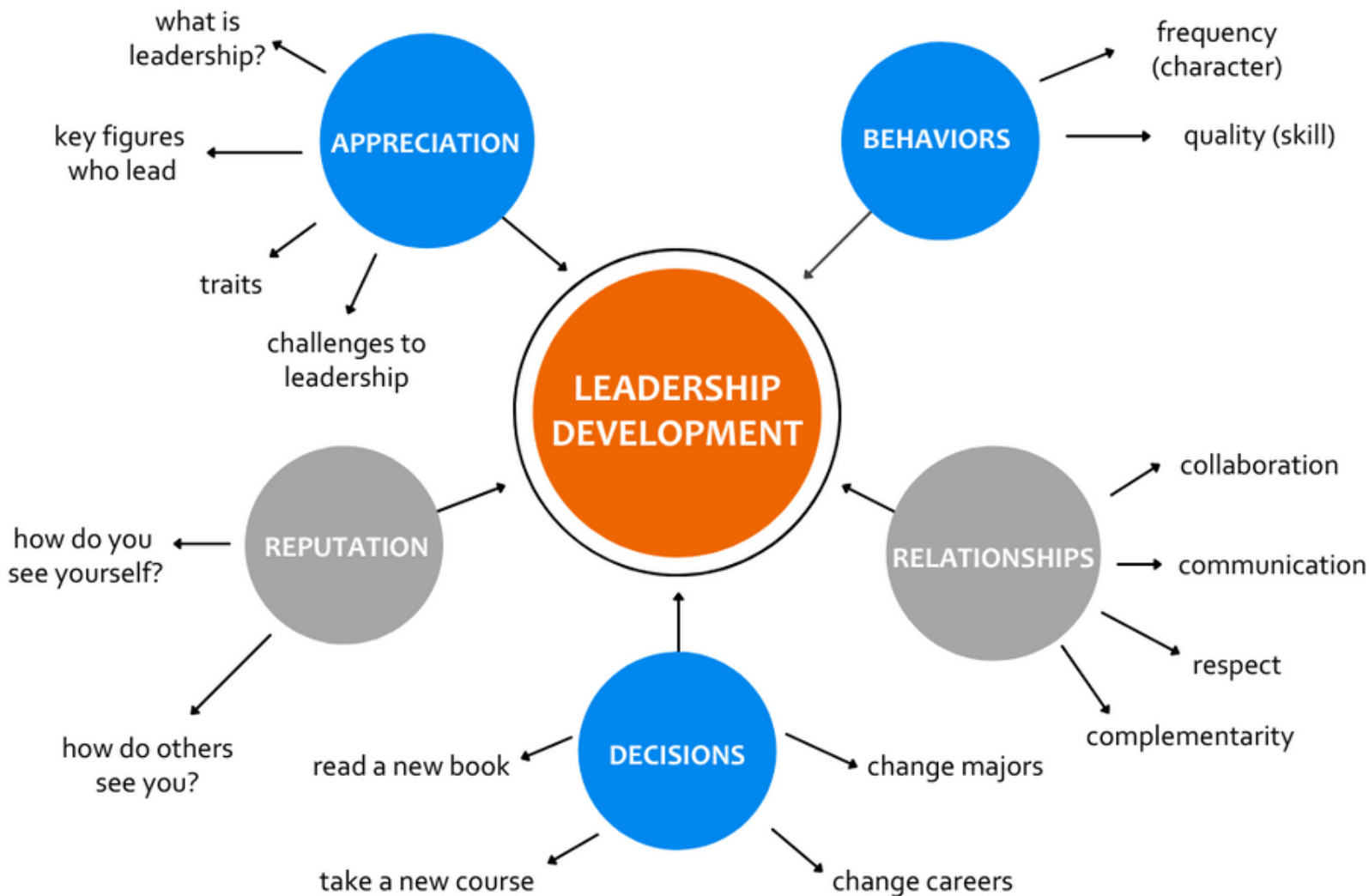
Students were encouraged to monitor their leadership development in five different forms:

1. to consider how their **appreciation** for democratic leadership was increasing
2. to cultivate democratic leadership **behaviors** both more frequently (which is a form of character development) and better (which is a skill development)
3. to reflect on their **relationships** with others and consider whether to make existing relationships more collaborative-- or whether to cast off these relationships and form others

4. to make **decisions** about, e.g., what new books to read, courses to take, majors and minors to pursue, and even careers to build. I brought books to class, like Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* or Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything*, gave a brief book report, and encouraged students to check them out. Sometimes students felt their conviction, resolution, or devotion to a decision already made grow even stronger.

5. to grow a **reputation** for leadership. This growth could be internal, that is, they were encouraged to identify new capacities for leadership in themselves. And the growth was external: students reflected on how others saw them and what they might do (or signal) to be seen in a new light.

# Five Forms of Leadership Development

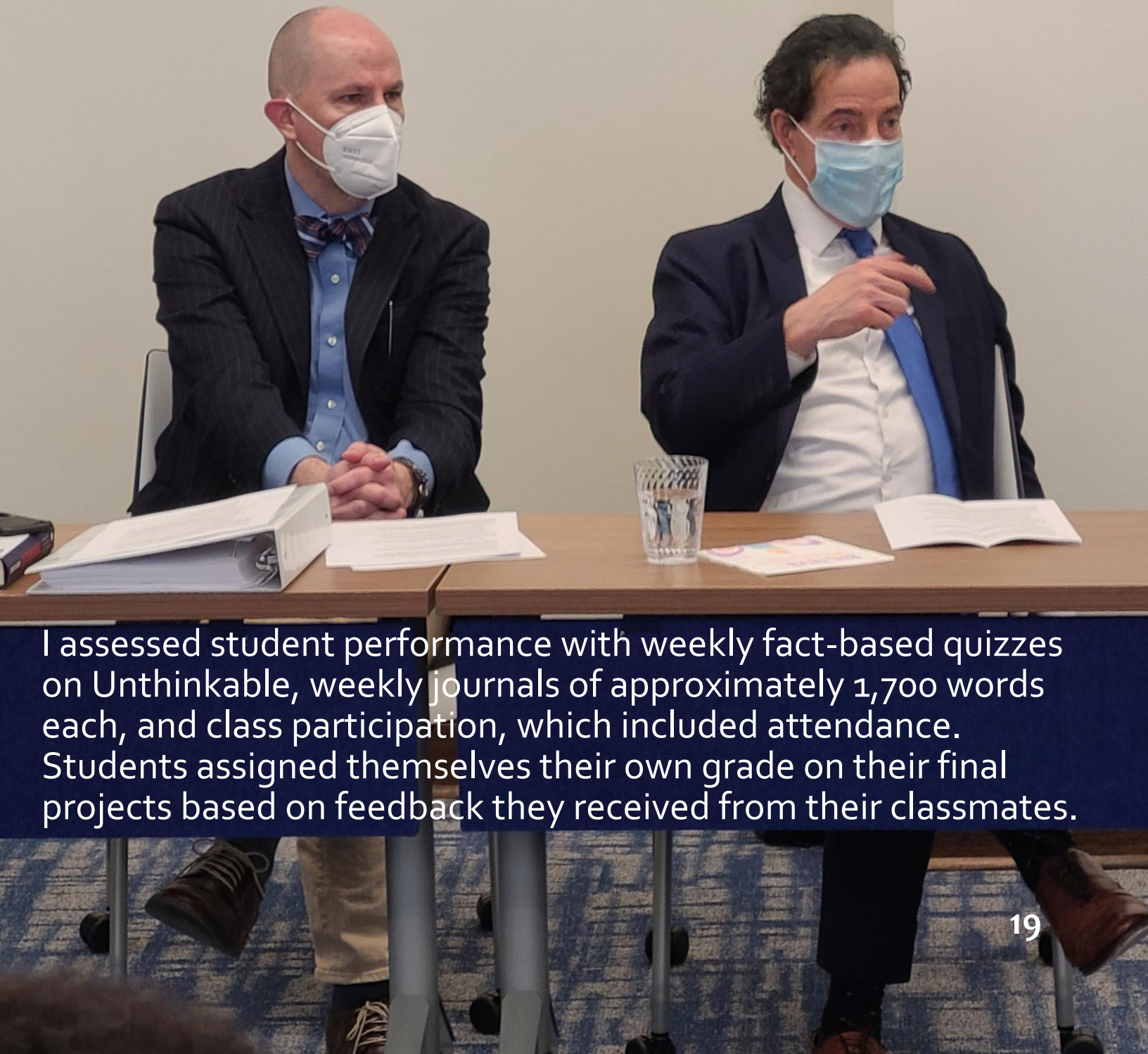


I didn't know how much knowledge I hold and can speak to until I decided to talk with people about this class and what I had learned. I am normally not the first person to speak up or participate as I normally just listen and think rather than speak. But the class has helped me step out of my comfort zone and participate as well as spoke about my own interpretations on Unthinkable. I was reassured my classmates that what I was saying wasn't completely wrong (which is the self-doubt talking). I also appreciated the fact that I was able to practice speaking up about my opinions and ask questions.

--Anonymous



# *HOW DID THE INSTRUCTOR ASSESS STUDENT PERFORMANCE?*



I assessed student performance with weekly fact-based quizzes on Unthinkable, weekly journals of approximately 1,700 words each, and class participation, which included attendance. Students assigned themselves their own grade on their final projects based on feedback they received from their classmates.

# EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT USING THE “JAMIE RASKIN DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP INDEX”

I am being both playful and serious in adopting the psychologist's notion of an “index” to help students monitor their leadership development. On the one hand, the language I am using to describe democratic leadership behaviors is colloquial, imprecise, and difficult to “operationalize”. “Thinking with others” and “radiating appreciation” are two of Raskin’s leadership behaviors that we discussed a lot in class; but they could mean a lot of things to different people. And it would be difficult to quantify how much more often someone practiced them as a result of taking this course. On the other hand, we spent a lot of time in class trying to think about these terms as precisely as possible using examples from Unthinkable and our own experiences. Moreover, because the process for generating these terms was so casual (e.g., asking students “how would you characterize Raskin’s leadership here?”), I had the goal of encouraging students to generate their own terminology and indexes for leadership behavior going forward. My message was “you do not need to be a professional psychologist to think carefully about what leadership looks like.”



We discussed twenty-nine democratic leadership behaviors featured in *Unthinkable*. I tried to identify some categories, or “domains”, that I thought these behaviors fit into. One will note again a lack of precision and also wonder whether a certain leadership behavior should be placed in one domain or another. I offer these behaviors and domains here not as the final word but to start a conversation. I imagine that future readers and teachers of *Unthinkable* might come up with different ways of conceptualizing it. Readers who are interested may find a link in the bibliography to an explanation of the twenty-nine democratic leadership behaviors discussed here.

## THE JAMIE RASKIN DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP INDEX

### STRATEGY AND EXECUTION

- defending democracy
- waging "war" on behalf of democracy
- organizing
- helping others become what they need to be
- coaching

### COMMUNICATIONS

- sharing your story as solace for others
- lyric and vulnerable storytelling
- inclusive storytelling
- connecting your story to the stories of others
- educating others using your own misfortunes
- preserving history and memory
- showing and radiating gratitude/appreciation
- persuasion
- searching for common ground
- not giving up on others

### MORALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

- maintaining integrity/staying in the moral center
- maintaining one's integrity/being with others
- "behaving with" others
- confronting the unthinkable
- taking responsibility
- finding your role
- overcoming pessimism and doubt

### COGNITION

- exercising independent judgment
- resourceful intelligence
- thinking with others
- seeking opportunities to learn and be mentored
- communing with history
- noting the paradoxes of trauma
- remaining vigilant

# HOW DID STUDENTS SEE THEIR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?

At the end of our course students were asked to take an exit survey about their leadership development, specifically their impressions on how they had progressed along the five modes we had focused on and on how they felt each learning vector had contributed to their development.

Students consistently cited the opportunity to reflect on their leadership development as one of the most meaningful aspects of the course as well as the friendships they developed. They cited “thinking with others” as the most common leadership behavior they practiced, and they spoke positively about the course’s impact on their mental health, citing stronger feelings of optimism and hopefulness, both from the example of Congressman Raskin and from getting to know each other. Many stated that they were much more committed to defending American democracy going forward.

For each of the twenty-nine featured aspects of leadership development students reported whether they performed that behavior "no more frequently", "more frequently", or "much more frequently" as a result of this course. They were also asked of the same behaviors whether they performed them "no better", "better", or "much better".

*The percentages are as follows, with each of the democratic leadership behaviors tallied under the four domains (N=13). The same data is presented in two charts on the next page.*

**DOMAIN ONE:** Strategy and Execution

Frequency: 18% (no more frequently), 51% (more frequently), 31% (much more frequently)

Quality: 18% (no better), 51% (better), 31% (much better)

**DOMAIN TWO:** Communications

Frequency: 10% (no more frequently), 54% (more frequently), 36% (much more frequently)

Quality: 11% (no better), 52% (better), 37% (much better)

**DOMAIN THREE:** Moral Development and Mental Health

Frequency: 10% (no more frequently), 36% (more frequently), 54% (much more frequently)

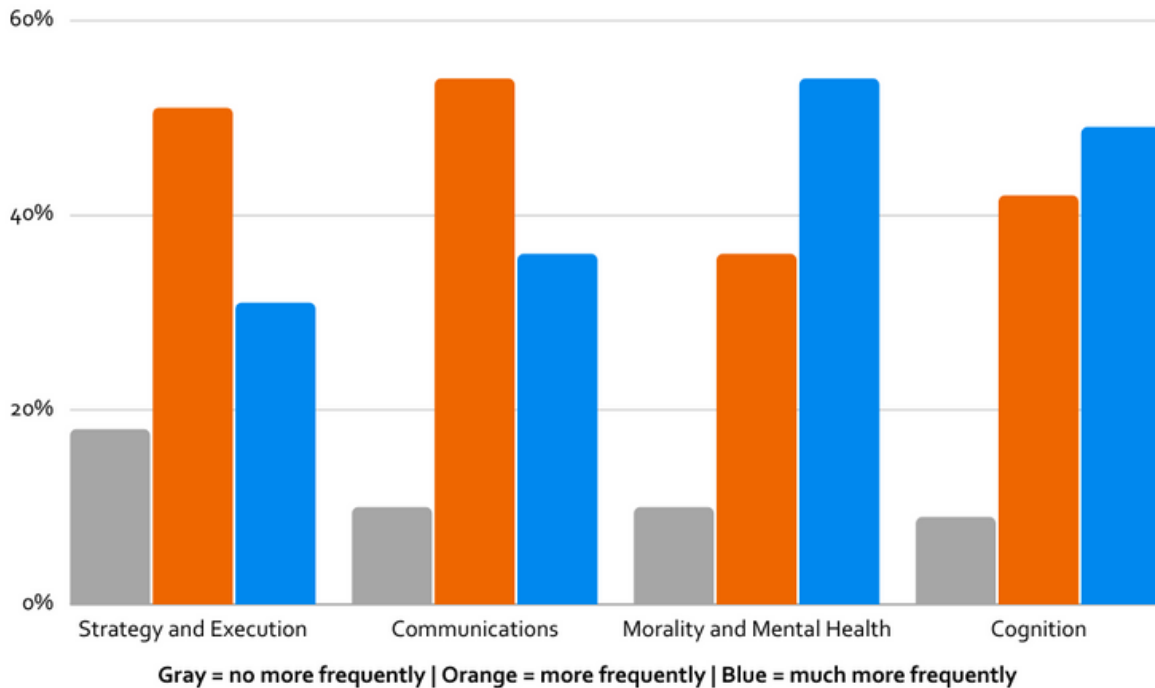
Quality: 8% (no better), 54% (better), 38% (much better)

**DOMAIN FOUR:** Cognition

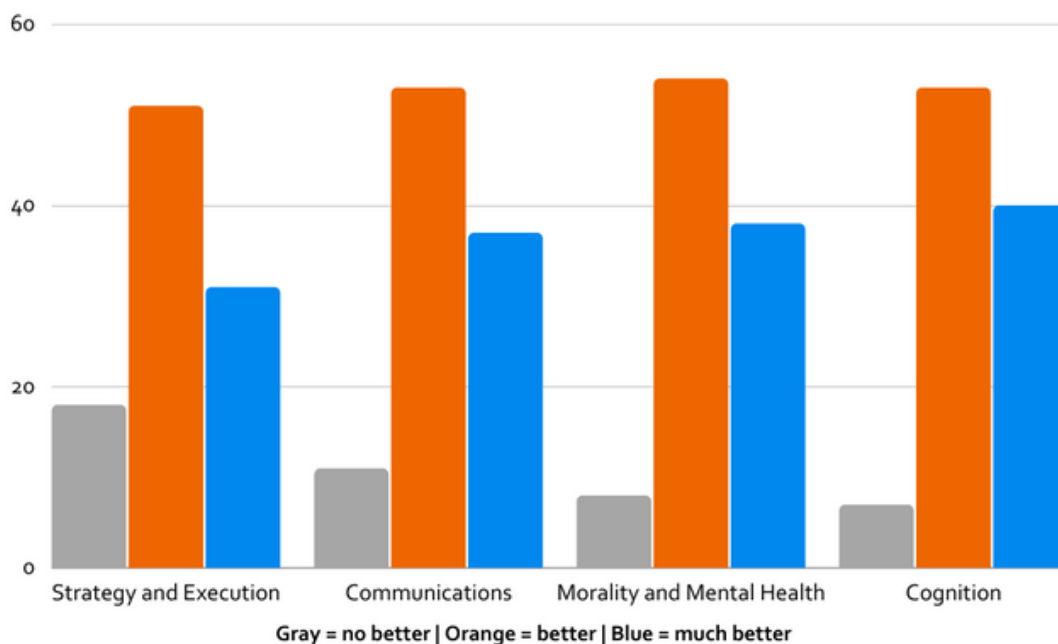
Frequency: 9% (no more frequently), 42% (more frequently), 49% (much more frequently)

Quality: 7% (no better), 53% (better), 40% (much better)

## Student Self-Reported Frequency of Democratic Leadership Behavior across Domains (Spring 2022, N=13)











## Student Self-Reported Improvements in Quality of Democratic Leadership Behavior Across Domains (Spring 2022, N=13)



*If these percentages are normalized to represent a "composite student" from the thirteen respondents, then, in aggregate, there was the rough equivalent of one student who saw no improvements in the frequency or quality to their democratic leadership behaviors in the course of the semester. There were approximately six students who saw some improvement on this index of democratic leadership and also six students who saw *\*significant\** improvement in themselves.*

## Normalized Frequency and Quality of Democratic Leadership Behavior Across Domains (Spring 2022, N=13)

	Frequency	Quality
Strategy and Execution		
Communications		
Morality and Mental Health		
Cognition		

Gray = no more frequently/no better | Orange = more frequently/better | Blue = much more frequently/much better

# How reliable, or meaningful, is this data?

All of these behaviors are self-reported and could be flawed. Students may have a very different understanding of these behaviors than I planned for them to. They may not have actually performed any more/better but were just conditioned to pay closer attention to their behaviors and thus appeared \*to themselves\* to be showing them more frequently or better. A higher ed consultant once cynically told me that students always end up parroting whatever the “party line” of the university is in terms of their development. So, if the university calls itself a “servant leadership” kind of university, students will leave that university telling everyone that they got an education in “servant leadership”, even if they know no more about servant leadership than students at any other school. Additionally, the data may be inaccurate because the students may all be narcissists and inclined to exaggerate how much they truly developed in the course.



Yet in order to give students as authentic an impression of their leadership development as possible, I instructed them to monitor and record their growth in their weekly journals and in conversations with each other.

Additionally, as part of their exit survey I asked them to be as detailed as possible about the forms that their development took. We may continue to discuss what it might mean to think with others more frequently vs.

\*much\* more frequently or better vs. \*much\* better; but I am confident that the eloquent and thoughtful responses that the students have given demonstrate meaningful democratic leadership development. I invite you to read these responses and form your own conclusions about how they perform on the “Jamie Raskin Democratic Leadership Index”. You will note things like the range of **decisions** they made in the course, from taking more courses, changing majors, changing career aspirations, shifting research focus, and even things I did not expect like taking up reading more or beginning psychotherapy. You will see the appreciation they have for learning vectors like writing in their journals, which they see as a tool for deeper reflection, monitoring their development, plotting their future growth, and just finding better ways to express themselves. Finally, you will see just how much they were learning about themselves and cultivating new reputations among their classmates.

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS APPRECIATION

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This is probably one of the most influential classes I will take here at Howard. Through class discussions and journals, we are able to connect Unthinkable and various leadership behaviors and see them right in front of our eyes. I most likely would have never read Unthinkable if it wasn't for this class, and it's sad to think about how I would miss out on such valuable people and stories. Thanks to Jamie Raskin and his willingness to be open, I now wake up every day with a new, better perspective than last semester. When I look back on the course, I think self-reflection and the outcome of multiple leadership development prompts will be the most obvious effect.

--Adrienne

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# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS APPRECIATION

I think I have grown in my appreciation of democratic leadership. In the beginning of the semester, it was not an interest for me to be involved with democracy, but I've grown a greater appreciation for the way it functions and prevails in our country. This class has encouraged me to continue working towards improving my own democratic leadership in clubs such as BGCA and in legislative work by talking about the importance of democracy and defending it to my peers. I have also improved in my collaborative relationships with others. I have always been someone who preferred to work alone, but after this class I have grown more comfortable working with others and even prefer gaining other people's perspectives to get new ideas. This skill will help in student organizations such as HUSA that I plan to be apart of as well as my future plans to go into internships with legislators. This can also help in my personal life by encouraging me to gain perspectives and ask for help from other people. Another aspect of democratic leadership I have cultivated is my long term and short term abilities to make decisions. Recently, I have been making more decisions to help set myself up for future goals and accomplishments. Putting myself out there is not something i have always been good at, but through this class I have learned to seriously think about my long term goals and how my short term ones can accomplish that. I have reached out to people I want to cultivate in myself like Tye to gain a greater perspective of how they are doing the things they are and ways I can involve myself. Long term and short term goal making can help in all aspects of my life because I am constantly making decisions that can have a positive impact on me later in life. I am working to be more thoughtful and bold with the decisions I make.

--Nikkya

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS APPRECIATION

I really think that I'm thinking about this one for the books (no pun intended). It really opened my mind about the development of my leadership through the lenses of democratic ideals and principles. I learned how important it is to be involved with our democracy and to be involved into our emulation of our heroes and idols.

--Tye

This was an unconventional political science class - in a very good way. We gained the ability to see how psychology and ethics played into the role of developing and guiding a politician in the midst of a very hard point in American politics. And not to mention, the course was taught by a professor who clearly cares about his students, someone who values opinion and thought guided by structure and personality.

--Anonymous



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS APPRECIATION

One aspect of democratic leadership that I was able to understand and appreciate better due to participating in this course was the aspect of thinking with others. Due to this class, I began to empathize those around me, no matter where they seemed to come from or what they represented. At times, I would find it difficult to think with those I disagree with, but this course has taught me the importance of empathizing with others in order to further understand where they may be coming from.

--Anonymous

When I told my friends to join this course with me, I had a different perspective as to what this class was going to obtain. However, I cannot be appreciative enough for this class, including the good, the bad, and the hilarious. We had some deep conversations that really made me think about my perception of this reality, and we also had many laughs with each other and shared many things with each other. I have to say this has been the most intimate course I have had thus far, but I am not mad at it. I thank Dr. Sandridge for absent-mindedly pushing me into the uncomfortableness of change, challenge and reflection. This is a class I will remember for years to come.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Radiating Gratitude.

I was able to appreciate this better because of the class because before this class, I noticed I would often show and radiate gratitude during special days such as birthdays or holidays. From this class and from reading Unthinkable showed me the importance of not just doing it when it is someone's birthday or a holiday, but doing it all the time. As humans I think we tend to often look for people to validate that we are doing the best we can or just to compliment us. I know that it always makes me feel good when someone compliments me or just simply tell me things that they enjoy about my personality. As a result, I have been doing this with my friends, parents, sister, etc., and have noticed that our relationship has become more pro-active and kind of positive. While i am uplifting them and giving them compliments, they are doing the same for me. Especially when there are times where I may be feeling low or down, this really helps uplift me and keep me grounded. In summary, people who I have relationships are benefitting from this, and so am I.

--Lauren

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Noting the paradoxes of trauma.

For some reason, before this course, I thought of trauma as something unspoken, a word sometimes thrown around in conversations with peers. Never did I associate it with something I could learn from, something that can be used to fight other battles in life, something to give us hope. I think I was able to take this lesson specifically out of class and share the idea of trauma as a shield with my friends in our conversation and that made my appreciation for trauma not being something that remains negative or demolished forever more real. I was given hope that I don't have to push trauma to the side because sometimes it can be used as a building block for new opportunities.

--Kenthia

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Thinking with others.

My classmates and I have said this phrase so much this semester that the understanding and appreciation for this behavior heightened each time I heard or saw it playing out in a situation. I understood how thinking with others is so important and plays a valid role in our everyday life. It's almost an extension of putting yourself in someone else's shoes, being a listener, and being open-minded to not selfishly or blindly assume that you know all but to allow others to enter into the same space to share and connect. Thinking with others is not only something that should be welcomed when offered but we as humans should also solicit counsel and invite others to think with us, just as Jamie did with Tabitha when composing his speech.

--Kenthia



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Thinking with others.

Before this class I did not think with others or really take into consideration other people's opinions or advice when it came to me making my own decisions. I was often pretty stubborn and felt that I knew what was best for me and that I should only listen to myself. Because of this I have noticed that I have missed out on many great opportunities that could have helped me today and even in the future. As a teenager who was going through many different hormones and life in general, it just felt easier for me to kind of block people out. After taking this class as well as during this class, I have learned that yes it is ok for me to be passionate about what I want and I should listen to myself, but I should also listen and take into consideration what others are saying to. I know that I cant do everything alone and must heed advice of others. Especially when it comes to my professional life. I am going to need to be able to talk with and get advice from people who are already in this positions. In my relationships as well, I will have to work, talk, and voice my concerns in order to keep that relationship healthy and going.

--Lauren

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Thinking with others.

When it came to thinking with others, I believe this is the aspect of democratic leadership that I was able to appreciate the most. Being at Howard, and immersing in the culture, it causes one to be, somewhat, forced to think with others. Whether I'm doing a group project or joining a new organization, I am constantly thinking with my peers. Being in this course and reading Unthinkable has allowed me to think with others beyond anything I ever imagined.

--Victoria

### Defending democracy.

I believe that in the future I can perform this task a lot better than what I have done in the past. By being in this class and reading Unthinkable, I have gained more knowledge of democracy and what it means to be a leader in democracy. I see in my generation that most of us do not care for politics due to the system being so corrupt, however, now I can combat that belief. I see that not all Congressmen are bad. Not all politicians have an agenda.

--Victoria

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Educating others using your own misfortunes.

I think this was the aspect of leadership that when I realized how I was actively appreciating it, I was surprised. This behavior definitely made me vulnerable, after not wanting to share if I was tired, stressed, overwhelmed, etc for a very long time. However, this semester I realized that even in my leadership roles I had to step down from trying to pretend like I got it and let my teams and organizations know that I am human too, I have exams too, etc. Sometimes it was hard, but eventually, I realized it allowed for others to open up, I usually felt better afterward, and sometimes it was just hard being the strong one all the time and it felt good to know I wasn't alone. Education through suffering was at its peak this semester and sharing that even with my mother too was relaxing to know I had the support, I was encouraged to take breaks and definitely allowed people to know me better as well, especially my best friend.

--Kenthia

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Overcoming pessimism and doubt.

Recently, I have seen that I am improving a lot in this behavior by growing more confident in myself and the future. I have learned to understand that I am in control of what happens in my life and that if I work to build a future that I want to see it can happen. Because school can be challenging there will be many opportunities for me to work on looking on the bright side. It will benefit other people having a positive attitude because it will encourage others to do the same.

--Nikkya

### Exercising independent judgment

I am trying to get better at not always needing someone else's opinion to make a decision. I want to learn to be more confident in the opinions and ideas I have and act on them without approval. There are many decisions I am making currently like what projects I want to be a part of and what roles I want to play and I want to make these decisions on my own to make sure that I am doing what I want to and so others get to benefit from me working where I am passionate and helpful.

--Nikkya



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

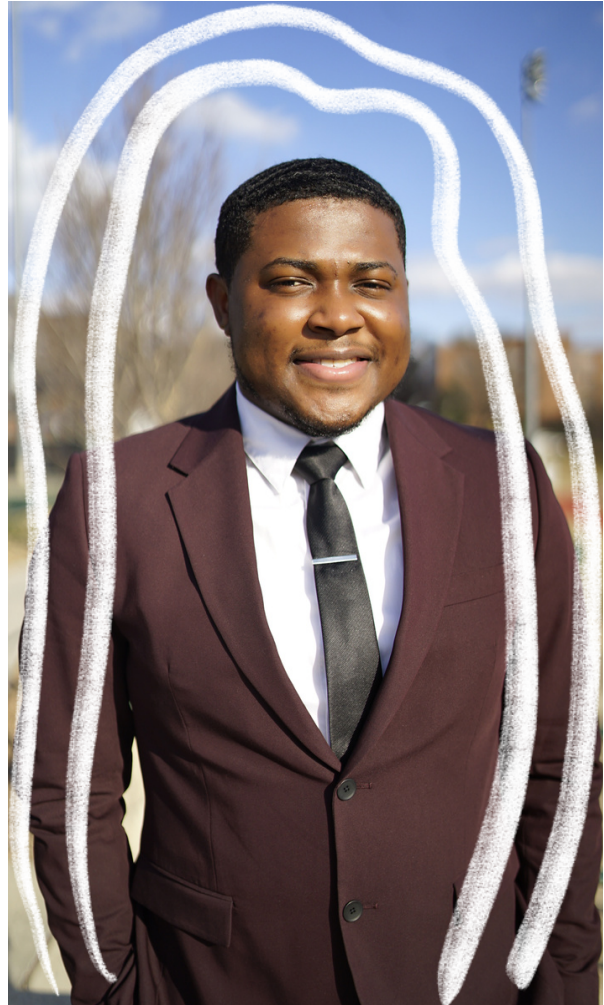
## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

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Sharing your story as solace for others.

I've always been a little shy about sharing my experiences with any and every one as a result of either not wanting to be defined by my trauma or coming from a place where talking about our traumas in life aren't as encouraged as they are in the US. This course allowed me to be so vulnerable about so many different aspects of my life and I found solace in knowing that others may find my story as a source of inspiration and motivation.

--Alrick



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Defending Democracy

I have a much clearer understanding on what democracy is and how democratic leadership fits into our worlds. It has definitely helped me in numerous conversations and debates. In one of my classes, Science and Public Policy, we were asked, in a discussion post, if we believed that democracy depends on scientifically literate citizens. I immediately thought of this class when I wrote out my answer and read others answers as well. I replied that democracy is not entirely dependent on what people know or how much they know but if they use their voice to share their opinions and vote. Would the country be better off with scientifically literate citizens? Absolutely, but it is not dependent on democracy working or not. Regarding my assumptive world presentation it was very interesting to be able to research about what it looks like in a capitalist society and in a socialist society and I love that I am able to be confident in my ability to defend democracy no matter what economic, political, or social changes America goes through over the years and I would not be able to say that if I didn't take this course.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Helping others become what they need to be.

Coinciding with the ability to coach I wanted to make sure that people were doing things that they wanted to do and made them happy. A lot of my friends, for example, are doing things because their parents pressured or forced them to do it even though they would rather do something else. I found it easier to advise them to try and have a conversation with them to either meet in the middle or try and explain to their parents to see it from my friends side. As well as told them that as they get older and financially independent they will be able to make all of their own decisions. I also try and inform them that life is too short, as cheesy as it is, and no one should be going into a career they aren't passionate about. The only way they will be happy and find their role in this world is to find their passion.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS BEHAVIORAL FREQUENCY AND QUALITY

### Finding your role.

I originally came into class not really knowing exactly what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go after college but by being in the room with so many go-getters and constantly being inspired by Congressman Raskin's words in Unthinkable it helped me think more about what I am passionate about and asked myself the question that I haven't reflected back on since freshman year which is, "why did I decide to major in political science?" I knew I wanted to address the problems experienced in marginalized communities on the federal level. I began networking a lot more within my internship on the hill and it has helped me find a clearer picture of what I want to do after college. I am slowly realizing the role I want to be in and find myself. I am also open to my interests changing as some of my peers in class expressed changing their major or field and even if I end up doing one thing it can change as long as I like what I am doing I will find my role.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

I have formed many friendships within this course that I wouldn't have formed otherwise and it has improved my ability to lead because I am more motivated to stand up in a room knowing that someone in the crowd could have been my classmate who would support me either way. I think I have also improved upon many of my relationships in my communities such as my social group and it has motivated me to already lead in the classroom and out. I think that I also value welcoming others into the conversation more often and intend to seek out collaborative relationships which will help improve my leadership as well.

--Kenthia

Realizing that relationships are keenly important in any person's life has benefited me to a great extent over this course. The relationships that I have been able to build contribute to my reputation, which is another form of leadership that I have realized. Of course, my behavior is the engine that helps me to build such relationships.

--Simeon



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

My relationships have improved overall, but my friend group that I have now has improved even more. With the friend group I had back at home, it was not as genuine. I would often not voice my concerns or what I was upset about because I did not want to cause drama. Because of this, I noticed that all of that began to build up and I would just stop talking to people because of this. I have learned through this course and through my experiences that communication is truly key. I am not only responsible for how I treat people, but also responsible in the way that I let people treat me. I have learned that not only is showing and radiating gratitude a must, but also showing and explaining to people when I have felt that they have done wrong. In order to have healthy relationships, I have learned that I have to continue to connect and talk with people and not be closed off.

--Lauren

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

A relationship that I have formed this semester would be with my mentor, Jasmine Lowe. I met Ms. Lowe through my stepmom. Ms. Lowe is a corporate attorney who I have been shadowing this year. I believe that by connecting with her I have enhanced my communication skills. To lead, one must be able to communicate with others and most importantly themselves. If you know you are tired and need help, as a leader it is your job to communicate that with others and reach out and ask for that assistance. Ms. Lowe has instilled in me the importance of communicating with others my needs and wants. She taught me that nobody is going to read my mind, I must let it be known.

--Victoria

The relationships that I have formed with my classmates have improved my lead now and in the future. These relationships have improved my ability to lead because I feel like we saw each other growth throughout the class, and really let each others stories guide us to be better versions of ourselves. Throughout our discussions, I was able to see some leadership qualities (telling your story, preserving history & memory, etc.) in real life, and was able to see how important these skills are in leading.

--Adrienne

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

I have improved mentor-mentee relationships from both sides. This semester I really built relationships with mentors in a way I have not in the past. It has historically been very difficult for me to ask for help, to show vulnerability in letting someone see the gaps I needed address. But this course has made me think more about the role that ego plays in all of that and how unhelpful it is. I am trying to own where I am more and do so shamelessly. I was also able to improve in my role as a mentor because the problem I highlighted before definitely goes both ways, not showing vulnerability makes you inaccessible and unhelpful as a mentor. But in owning what I don't have to offer I can own what I can offer in a much more practical way. I am able to communicate to younger people what they can learn from me if they want to.

--Anonymous

This class definitely helped me gain some new friends and a new close friend. I think even the way we communicated was atypical and unique because of our class size. It wasn't like how larger (or other) classes would typically interact with each other and things felt personal (in a good way) outside of class.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The relationship that I have formed during this course that has improved my ability to lead myself is my therapist. When I first began speaking with her it was difficult to completely open up about what I was going through but after had done some of the journals for this class it helped me to open more during our sessions. I learned a lot about myself and it was officially my first therapy session in my young adulthood as I used to think that therapy was helpful but it wouldn't work for me specifically. After meeting with her it it definitely helped my development and outlook on my personal life as well as how I respond and view others. I definitely believe that my decisions and way I decide to respond to certain situations have definitely been positively affected through my sessions and I appreciate that a lot. I have also inherently been working on the leadership behavior, overcoming pessimism and doubt within my sessions as my therapist knows I tend to have a lot of self doubt. She helped me work through that and although it is taking a good amount of time I definitely have made progress.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

I have gained many relationships from this course because of our like-mindedness and common career goals. Colleagues like Tye, Evan and Simeon are those that i know now treasure and cherish from here on out. And I know that five or ten years years from now we will all be celebrating one another, supporting each other and keeping each other accountable throughout our fields. And I have Dr. Sandridge and this course to thank for that. Meeting these friends have helped me gain interest and insight in areas that I was not previously into, helped me cultivate more ideas and gain confidence in my ideas, as well as gain confidence in my career journey, even after COVID had robbed me of my senior year and freshmen year of high school.

--Anonymous



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

I think the decision I made to further follow the passion I have for children's media with my love for developmental psych research was something I may not have done without this class. I also made the decision to start back reading hard cover books because I loved how I would feel holding it , turning the page and just having \*Unthinkable\* on my bed. I have also made decisions to look up internships outside of the corporate world but more geared to work inside museums or education that allow me to indulge in the technology and science background that I want to be able to combine with my passions. This course has also made me be self-aware about the steps I am taking right now to be who I want to be but also made me create a plan for the future, explore and write down ideas and avenues on paper, which has definitely influenced my career. I have also seen my self thinking about the next step I would take in a situation before taking it , allowing me time to reflect on which behavior I would want to use to apply to this situation which has made me a better leader. I think at first , for a long time, I was ashamed to broadcast my love for disney among my peers but this course has also given me the courage to articulate the whats and whys of disney I love and show how its more than just a love for movies but a love for imagination, storytelling and engaging and connecting with the unthinkable creatures described and presented.

--Kenthia

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

Certainly meeting Jamie and Sarah [Bloom Raskin] has the potential for propelling me into a greater level after I graduate. Without this course, I wouldn't be able to have had the opportunity to review footage for the January 6th Select Committee for the US House of Representatives. I can't thank you enough, professor, as well as them for their guidance.

--Simeon

I decided to apply for the HUSA student advocacy department as well as internships on the hill which will set me up for leadership down the road by improving my leadership skills and my resume. I have also involved myself in organizing with boys and girls club and tobacco legislation which will allow me to gain more confidence in my skills such as working with others and radiating appreciation.

--Nikkya

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

As stated in my project, a huge decision I made this semester was to make a podcast. I believe that, for me, I let a lot of things go unsaid and I no longer want to do that. Starting this podcast is my first leap of faith in adulthood. It took time for me to reflect and understand that I am doing this for me and not for anybody else. I chose to do this podcast as a form of leadership that I will be taking over my future. Through this growth, I believe I will become a better leader because I will go for what I want more. I will make sure that I work with others to not only better myself but better my product. I will work diligently to restore the spread of accurate information being spread to others which in turn will allow me to combat a huge problem in American politics.

--Victoria

Some decisions that I have made in this course that I believe will set me up for leadership down the road is applying to various internships (some public policy and some environmental advocacy), centralizing in possible areas of study, and potentially auditing classes in the Interdisciplinary Studies program.

--Adrienne

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

One decision I have decided to make since being in this course is getting more involved in campus. I have a list of organizations I want to join in my last year and meeting my peers in class helped with that a lot. I knew that I wanted to spend more time on campus and just meet more people to learn more in general to make more friends and connections. Learning more about my peers and what they are interested was very inspiring and want to meet more like-minded individuals. Regarding internships, I have applied for an intern position at the nonprofit, Center for American Progress, in their rights and justice department that focuses on a variety of issues such as criminal justice reform, LGBTQ, religion and faith, gun violence, racial equity, etc. I wanted to apply for an internship that had more of writing opportunity as I wanted to develop my writing skills outside of the classroom as writing at a job is a little different I also wanted the opportunity to take what I had learned in my assumptive world project and be able to write or talk about it at the internship. It allows intern to write blog posts, columns, and possibly an entire published submission on the website. I also figured out that I may want to pursue a JD in the future as I originally wanted to pursue a masters in public policy or public administration. I wasn't completely sure yet but after talking with some of my peers in class and just learning more about what I want to do in the future it made the most sense to consider law school.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

One of the key decisions I have made for this course is switching my desired career in the Air Force back to Security Forces. Security forces officers are usually responsible for hundreds of airmen who look up to them and rely on their leadership. These airmen do not just need a manager, they need people who will understand their struggles and be able to lead with great consideration. Security forces members also work very long hours and are the ones who protect everyone else...I feel like having someone in their backyard who radiates gratitude and positivity and understand where they are coming from would be a drive.

--Anonymous



# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

This semester I finally made the decision to open the door to leaving political theory. It has previously been something I have refused to seriously consider because it felt like a concession I wasn't willing to make. But I am beginning to see the value in embracing who you are and the role you are meant to play. I have always approached leadership from an internal perspective in terms of advocating for my own community. I am not compromising enough to fight battles in the belly of the beast but that same unwillingness to compromise has made me a serious threat when my platform is supported by my community. I am now planning to apply to both African American studies programs and Political Theory to see the way the cards fall but either way opening the door reminded me of who my work is for and the role that the discipline I choose (or the one that chooses me) should play.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS DECISION MAKING

When I first came into this class, I had the aspirations to be a federal congressional politician. But while doing this project, it practically forced me to reflect on exactly what I wanted to do, and was a federal congressional role going to give me the liberty to realize those goals. One of the biggest cons of being in federal congress, is that it is hard to try to have a say in your state from a federal level. So it helped me realize that the more direct position in policy was at the state level, much like the issue I challenged in my presentation. And that was the position I needed to aim for first. During our presentation, I also had to make a decision on which solution I wanted to work on, and it made me question overall, what do I want to do in life? How can I solve an issue with my means of knowledge and background? I had to face the music that I cannot be superwoman and do everything, everywhere. However, if I could have just found a way to deal with things in my best knowledge and area, that is more than doing nothing and I am still making an impact.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS REPUTATION BUILDING

I think my classmates and I, though joking about it sometimes, have often pointed out in conversation what others are good at in terms of leadership behaviors and I have done it a lot too. Some of them would message me for advice or place trust in me for a favor and I think that is something I valued. I remembered trying to share my story as solace for others many times with classmates, some of who I don't even interact with often and they noted that they applaud me for being so honest, vulnerable, and having integrity.

--Kenthia

As I've said before, at times..it is difficult for me to understand that as an individual, I have the ability to influence change within others. Once I took this course and began to realize this, I have attempted to make others believe in themselves as well. I've learned that I do have the ability to make a difference through thinking with others and overcoming feelings of doubt.

--Anonymous

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS REPUTATION BUILDING

Coming into this course, I did not think I was good when it came to working/thinking with others. I thought that was something that I was going to have to develop after this class. However, when being around my classmates and talking to them, I realized I had amazing skills when it came to thinking with others. I also believe that came as a shock to those who already knew me prior to this class. I have never been one to work or think with others. It was something I despised. So now, seeing that I am so good with it truly amazed me and inspired me to open myself up to other things that I may have closed myself off to previously.

--Victoria

I definitely found new ways to lead in which I did not see before. I now see myself leading in a way in which I allow myself to become vulnerable with people. Just speaking on the phone with my mom about the enjoyment of this class, she has even noticed that I have become more confident in myself and determined to take on more opportunities.

--Lauren

# STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS REPUTATION BUILDING

When it comes to reputation, I am known as a mediator. Someone who always wants to hear both sides and weigh the means. Sometimes I can be seen as fake because I do not favor a side immediately, but I as well as others see it as being extremely vigilant and careful. At first I thought I had this gift because I did not like confrontation, but this course helped me to realize that I can use that power to help bipartisanship in congress, and to help pass bills and laws. Others in class realizes this when we had troubles deciding on one thing, like what to do as a class. I believe that this capacity helps me remain moral in hard times, because it forces me to weigh the opportunity costs of all things emotional and logical.

--Anonymous

I definitely did not know that I had the capacity to balance so much until this course. This course encouraged me to put myself out there and be involved with whatever I was interested in and it allowed me to see my full capabilities when I put my mind to something.

--Nikkya



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## A SUMMARY

Reading Unthinkable helped me look at trauma from an entirely different lens. It was inspiring to see how open Raskin was in the book when discussing the death of his soon and his time as the lead impeachment manager. I also really like that he always had a positive outlook on things and was very optimistic which was a part of the reason I wanted to be less pessimistic. Reading the online companion helped with the way I read the chapters and also gave me so much time to reflect. I really enjoyed the sketching leadership and plotting your leadership development sections of the companion. I didn't realize that the time to reflect on past or current events does not happen often as I normally think of the future. I also enjoyed the fact that we could make up fictional people or events to answer the question as it helped just as well when reflecting. When I was writing about my family and friends I realized how incredible they are and my appreciation and admiration for them skyrocketed. While I was writing my weekly journal entries, similarly to the companion, I enjoyed the fact that I could connect the reading to my own life in a moment of reflection. I also enjoyed that I was able to talk about any thoughts I had that week and write that down. It gave me time outside of class to continue to reflect and discuss topics we talked about in class and write them down. Listening to Dr. Sandridges's presentations in class were always insightful and I always appreciate his teachings and perspective on the topics we discuss. They made me think a lot and look at things differently. Listening to my classmate's presentations was my favorite part of the class as I really enjoyed hearing what everyone has been working on this semester. Seeing what everyone was passionate about and what steps they are taking to continue their work in their respective fields was really cool. I was definitely inspired and will take steps to learn more about their respective interests. For example, I will make changes in my personal life to figure out what exactly I can do to lessen my carbon footprint. I also took a look at the Juveniles DC organization Nikkya mentioned and will potentially join in my final year. Regarding class discussion, it is always insightful to hear my classmates perspectives on the book or about where they are regarding their research. I always learn a lot when they share their thoughts. Regarding my interaction with them outside of class, I got to know Kenthia a lot outside of class which has been really nice as well as comforting since most of the class I was unfortunately face-timed in but my connection with Kenthia always stayed in-tact.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## READING \*UNTHINKABLE\*

I believe that this class was created on the premise that you MUST look back 5 years from now and remember this is where you had your light bulb moment. For many it was and others it's a foundation for your light bulb moment. I personally had mine, the Unthinkable was so amazingly written by Congressman Raskin and it showed me perspectives of a paternal figure I never really got in my life. I learned so much about America's political system, even the ambiguous parts that aren't taught well in schools. I would definitely recommend taking this class to anyone, especially someone having a little trouble finding themselves.

--Alrick

I really loved the book \*Unthinkable\* and its ability to inspire change in so many people. It was really heartbreaking but inspiring to see how Jamie could work through such a tragedy and accomplish so much with the help of the people around me. This course has allowed me to better analyze the leadership within myself and encouraged me to further develop and improve it. I think in 5 years this course will allow me to be someone who is constantly learning how to be a better leader and work on myself and my relationship with others.

--Nikkya

Personally, reading Unthinkable has been the most influential to my development within this course. As I read about Tommy Raskin and how selfless of a person he was, I truly wanted to emulate him, through this, I further developed my leadership skills as I wanted to help people in the way Tommy wanted to/did.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

### READING \*UNTHINKABLE\*

I think that Unthinkable has had very moving and touching impacts on me that have made me think about life differently, think about those around me differently, and have also made me reflect on things that I hadn't before. It has also made me get back into reading, appreciate storytelling as well as also challenged me as a writer when it was time to write my thoughts out about what I felt and related to. I saw myself change over the period of engaging with the book, from the way I interacted with my peers and those around me to my self-awareness of taboo words like "suicide" that seem to have some unspoken element around it. I saw myself wanting to use words like "love" more as well as relating the story to my experiences when talking with friends. I found myself being comfortable with my classmates, so much so that they became my friends ( something that I cannot say I had in many of my other classes). Much times I would read Unthinkable and it would bring me back to reality, give me a good laugh or even connect with my sadness.

--Kenthia

I Reading Unthinkable gave me a whole different perspective on what a politician is or what we think a typical politician acts like. It also gave a whole new look into what it means to be both vulnerable and a leader with the serious reality of people likely trying to take away your credibility.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

### READING \*UNTHINKABLE\*

Unthinkable is a great guide on how to deal with trauma. Reading this book has caused me to think about how I can better deal with trauma as it is inevitable that it will come into my life again. Politically, this book is also a great guide on how to deal with people who may not agree with your ideology/perspective. Unthinkable has shown that it is crucial to have patience in dealing with the opposite side as it can help to find common ground with them. Five years from now, I will probably look back to this course and reflect on how much of an impact it has had on my life as I will have hopefully gone into a career that I enjoy.

--Simeon

Reading unthinkable gave me insight into the mind of a well-seasoned constitutional lawyer, and well-known congressional senator who had not yet lost his morality after over 20 years in politics. One of the biggest standards I hold myself on now is being a "real politician", one who cannot be swayed with money or power, but for what is needed for my constituents and needed for our country as a whole. And Raskin hit that on the nail perfectly.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Reading the Online Companion Materials

Reading the Online Companion helped me better understand at a deeper level what the book was talking about. By connection Greek mythology stories and terms I was able to understand and connect more on a deeper level as to what the book/Jamie was getting at.

--Lauren

## Class Lectures

Listening to dr.s was great, I think it helped my development because he proved to be a guiding source for our minds and discussions but also let go of the handle when necessary to let our minds flow. He served as a very good mentor in class providing us all with individual and encouraging feedback and dialogue that made listening to him easier ( since he would always welcome us into the conversation right after). He also proved to be the example of a great professor , one that I look up and one that I talk to others about as well in terms of me emulating him, they emulating him and saying that other professors should emulate him as well. The thought he put into his presentations made the class enjoyable, easy to attend and made me feel obligated to put in the same effort he would give.

--Kenthia

The best mode of study. Dr. S is full of knowledge, and every class he shared valuable information about the book and other various topics. I never skipped class, as I knew whatever would be discussed would directly influence quizzes in the future.

--Adrienne

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Writing in Weekly Journals

Writing my weekly journals helped me reflect more closely and deeply because it took what was in my mind and my tongue and forced me to write it on paper. Most times it was a skeleton and whatever I engaged with the most I would write about which gave me the freedom I needed to actually see which weeks I engaged with the chapters more than others.

--Kenthia

Writing in my weekly journal gave me the opportunity to reflect and document my leadership development and gave me a space to plan out what behaviors and aspects of democratic leadership I wanted to cultivate in myself and ways I wanted to improve.

--Nikkya

In my weekly journals I was able to learn more about myself, and often saw it as a way for me to track the development of my Democratic leadership. I noticed that while writing in my journals every week, I was able to learn different things about my relationships and myself that I never really thought of before.

--Lauren



# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Writing in Weekly Journals

Through my journals I found myself gaining the ability to transfer my exact thoughts into words. I do journal on my own about my day-to-day life, however, in these journals we had to take a more academic stance and that is something I have never done before. It was very beneficial to my learning and overall comprehension of Unthinkable.

--Victoria

Writing my weekly journals gave me a chance to analyze myself and really express how I was taking in what was occurring in the book and developing my own leadership at the same time. It was also a new, healthy method of jotting down my thoughts and memories as they come so I get the chance to look back and say wow.

--Anonymous

The weekly journals were my favorite. Giving us freedom to discuss whatever we wanted was amazing. It really became a place to play with whatever ideas the chapters were sparking. I did not like having to put dates on different sections because I like a more natural flow to my writing and often write everything at once.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Listening to Student Project Presentations

Listening to my classmates made me gain a greater appreciation for hearing the perspectives of others and helped me build indirect relationships with them because the more they shared, the more I understood their views, the type of person they were and how passionate and real they were inside and outside the classroom. That helped my development because I became a better listener and someone who valued hearing others' stories because it taught me so much.

--Kenthia

The presentations were also helpful as they have allowed me to digest a perspective that is already familiar with the book before the course even started. Listening to other classmates' presentations was such a joy; it was amazing to see other perspectives as we may not have the opportunity to hear everyone's thoughts during a normal class.

--Simeon

It was incredibly inspiring to listen to how my classmates wanted to tackle their aspects of our assumptive world as it seemed as though they were all passionate about their topics.

--Anonymous

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Listening to Student Project Presentations

Listening to my classmates and what they had to say in a way made me feel more like a human. Listening to some of their experiences and the stories they told, I was able to connect with. I also just enjoyed each and everyone one of them. I feel as though we all have different but amazing personalities/experiences and I valued what each and every one of them had to say. I made sure I truly listened and took in what they were saying because I knew that there was something that I could learn from all of them.

--Lauren

## Class Discussion

Class discussion was helpful because it made the class feel less like a teacher talking at us and more like a group of friends all exchange dialogue with the teacher talking with us. It was heartwarming and very mirroring of a democracy in my eyes, where everyone had a say and things were fair. Sometimes the discussion would never end and I liked how all minds would come together to create an authentic conversation.

--Kenthia

I truly loved every class discussion that we had this semester, it truly allowed me to open myself up to public speaking and participation. Through speaking in this class, I saw myself become more confident in other aspects of my life and I appreciate not only my peers for that but Dr. Sandridge as well.

--Victoria

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACROSS LEARNING VECTORS

## Class Discussion

Class discussions were always really great because the class has such diverse interests and perspectives. I think we were able to form a really open space where people felt comfortable challenging each other and sharing their vulnerabilities which always enriches conversation.

--Anonymous

## Student Interaction Outside the Classroom

I think interacting with my classmates helped because it created a relationship where in class it was easier to share and speak up about experiences. It made the environment welcoming and that helped with my development because it allowed me to genuinely be me.

--Kenthia

# Final Takeaways

## Class Size

The 16-student class size was a major factor in its success, I believe. It enabled students to get to learn everyone's name and eventually form smaller friendship circles. I was able to get to know them well individually and organize trips like a hike to Rock Creek Park or a reception for Congressman Raskin. Congressman Raskin was also able to get to know students better in this smaller cohort. Finally, fewer students meant that there was more time for students to take turns participating in class discussion and to share their ideas for the leadership projects. Final presentations were 18-minutes each and, by contrast, a class size of e.g., 32 students would have required shorter presentations or twice as many class periods.

## The Classroom

Our classroom was organized into a large square, which I believe allowed for much more student interaction and took emphasis away from my role as lecturer and primary learning vector. It was often very heartening to move into the background and observe students developing their own ideas with minimal moderation from me.

## The Time and Pace

This course took place across thirteen weeks, from January 19, 2022 - April 21. We met twice per week for 80 minutes each class period, mostly in person but sometimes online when Covid spiked. My expectation was that students would spend approximately six hours outside of class each week, for a total of approximately 120 hours, though my hope was that the course experience would be percolating in their minds on many more occasions.

# Final Takeaways

## Room for Improvement

The one area where I feel we could have all had deeper engagement was with the online course material. This material was there to provide students with more context and background to Unthinkable and to give them a greater precision of language when talking about and thinking about their leadership development. By the end of the semester I could tell students were not reading it very carefully and in some cases not at all. In future classes I will look for ways to rectify this.

## Instructor Gratification

I have been teaching now for approximately twenty-five years. This course was one of the most gratifying to teach--perhaps \*the\* most gratifying--in the sense that I witnessed so much investment in leadership development on the part of the students, I got to know them better than I get to know most students usually, and I felt like I myself was able to contribute many different parts of myself, including things like bringing my eight-year-old daughter on a hike in Rock Creek Park to meet my students and make friends with them by talking about things like moss and Star Wars. It felt like we were restoring freedom to the galaxy.



# Key Links and Bibliography

## Course Materials

### Syllabus

[http://kallion.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Syllabus-Political-Science-134\\_-Special-Topics-in-American-Democracy-Developing-Democratic-Leadership-with-Jamie-Raskins-Unthinkable-1.pdf](http://kallion.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Syllabus-Political-Science-134_-Special-Topics-in-American-Democracy-Developing-Democratic-Leadership-with-Jamie-Raskins-Unthinkable-1.pdf)

### Online Course Companion

<http://kallion.org/courses/leadership-with-jamie-raskins-unthinkable-trauma-truth-and-the-trials-of-american-democracy/>

29 Featured Aspects of Leadership Development (from the Course Companion)

[http://kallion.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Featured-Aspects-of-Leadership-Development-in-Jamie-Raskins-\\_Unthinkable\\_-Norman-B.-Sandridge-for-Kallion-Leadership-Inc..pdf](http://kallion.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Featured-Aspects-of-Leadership-Development-in-Jamie-Raskins-_Unthinkable_-Norman-B.-Sandridge-for-Kallion-Leadership-Inc..pdf)

### The Exit Survey Students Took

<https://forms.gle/zy4vsmcBBFNzmWrS7>

# Key Links and Bibliography

## Prior Writings on Pedagogy that Informed This Course

"Saving Higher Ed (in part) by Translating Leadership Study into Practice"--January 21, 2019

<http://kallion.org/475/>

"Studying the Humanities Seems to Increase the Frequency and Quality of Certain Leadership Behaviors (maybe a lot)"--  
March 9, 2019

<http://kallion.org/studying-the-humanities-seems-to-increase-the-frequency-and-quality-of-certain-leadership-behavior/>

"The Humanities Educator's Brief Guide to Seeing Yourself as a Leadership Trainer"--December 10, 2020

<http://kallion.org/seeing-yourself-as-a-leadership-trainer/>

"The Humanities as Leadership Training"--February 16, 2020

<http://kallion.org/the-humanities-as-leadership-training/>

"A Story of Leadership Development as Told by Students"--  
December 17, 2020

<http://kallion.org/leadership-development-as-told-by-students/>



"Taking care of our democracy together!"



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[www.kallion.org](http://www.kallion.org)