



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

PhD course: Critical Perspectives on Leadership

(7.5 ECTS Credits)

Dates: 19-23 May, 2025

Hours: 30 hours of lectures and seminars

Cost: 5,000 SEK + VAT (25% for students outside Sweden or Swedish students paying for the course personally).

We live in a culture increasingly preoccupied with leadership. Managers attend leadership courses, more jobs demand 'leadership skills', and we are constantly exposed to new leadership models and strategies for achieving leadership success. The call for leadership has intensified even further in recent years with the growing influence of generative AI. As algorithmic management exerts greater control over organizational life, the need for human(e) leadership appears even more pressing.

Leadership is often framed as part of the solution to social challenges like climate change, economic inequality, and discrimination. Yet, it is also associated with alarming developments in society, such as rising polarization, Big Tech dominance, and the spread of populism.

We are, in short, witnessing a 'leadership moment' in contemporary culture—one that compels us to question and critically examine the nature and impact of leadership itself. In this course, we explore how leadership ideas manifest in cultural contexts at both organizational and societal levels. Through discussions, course lecturers and participants examine what is compelling and problematic about these ideas. This interrogation of leadership aims to move beyond negative critiques. We also investigate alternative approaches to leadership, emphasizing more responsible, relational, and distributed perspectives. Participants will have ample opportunities to present their ideas and projects and receive constructive feedback.

Teachers

Sverre Spoelstra (Lund University) will supervise the course. Other teachers include Dan Kärreman, Magnus Larsson, Nadja Sörgärde and Stefan Sveningsson. More teachers will be announced.

Course Content

- Studying leadership
- Critical leadership studies
- Leadership and digitalization
- Human and non-human leadership
- Alternative approaches to leadership
- Relational leadership
- Leadership and identity
- Leadership ideology
- The leadership industry

Literature

Selected articles and book chapters.

Recommended readings:

- Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2011) *Metaphors we lead by: Understanding leadership in the real world*. London: Routledge.
- Spoelstra, S. (2018) *Leadership and organization: A philosophical introduction*. London: Routledge.

Examination

A final course paper critically discussing and applying relevant parts of the course literature (max 4000 words). Due end of August, 2025.

Applications

Applicants should submit a short bio on their motivation for joining the course as well as a short description, maximum 500 words, of their own research project (the latter will be distributed to other students of the course). Please send this document along with the [completed application form](#) (attached as appendix) to Sverre Spoelstra (sverre.spoelstra@fek.lu.se) by April 18, 2025, for provisional acceptance. (We can give earlier notification of provisional acceptance if needed.) Students who are provisionally accepted will be forwarded information on how to pay the course fee. The course fee will need to be paid by May 1, 2025, to ensure a spot in the course. In certain cases, such as when students come from partner universities, course fees may be waived.

Other Courses

We offer two other PhD courses in the Spring, on Critical Management Studies and Reflexive and Creative Methodology, which can be found [here](#). Non-exempt students attending two courses will be charged a reduced rate of 7.500 SEK (plus VAT).