Table of Contents

2 How to use this curriculum

3 Philosophical Basis

4 Readings
5 Cicero, “On Fame”
9 Maya Angelou, “Weekend Glory”

11 Image of the Week
Edward Kienholz, The Portable War Memorial (1968)

13 Guiding Questions

15 Short Guide on Leading a Discussion

Other resources, including daily meditations, periodic podcasts, on-line seminars and discussions, and occasional on-line conversations about this week’s curriculum, are available at:

aspeninstitute.org/programs/executive-leadership-development/resources-for-living-and-leading/
How to Use this Curriculum

Connected Learning in Times of Confinement is designed to support people and their families, neighborhoods, organizations, and networks by building upon the Aspen Institute’s unique expertise in facilitating meaningful conversations in a seminar setting.

We envisage a weekly curriculum that can be used in pieces, or all at once, or in various combinations. Our hope is that these readings and guidance will allow you and others to reflect on fundamental human questions in ways that nourish our hearts, minds, and fellowship in a time of confinement. A curriculum (from the Latin currere, to run) is a path, an exploration, not something to be mastered but an invitation to discovery and wonder. These materials are curated to intrigue and delight you, and we invite you to reflect upon them on your own, and to share them—with family, friends, neighbors, teams, networks. In this, the journey itself is the destination, a call to thought, dialogue, and action.

In a journey it is often helpful to have a guide, and in this curriculum you will find three guides:

First, the authors themselves— we do not need to follow the authors, but we do well to understand what they are saying;

Second, guiding questions— for each reading, there is a set of guiding questions designed for individual and collective reflection; they are not the only (or even most important) questions, but a way of getting started; these may be found at the back of the packet and are best read after you have read the texts;

Third, general guidance— for each discussion, participants and discussion leaders may want to remind themselves of some best practices; these may be found at the back of this packet.

We invite you to share these readings widely and encourage others to engage in conversation. As you do so, know that fellow seminar graduates and their families, friends, and colleagues are doing the same. We all contribute to a global chorus of conversation about ideas worth sharing and acting upon.

—Todd Breyfogle, PhD
Managing Director, Aspen Executive Leadership Seminars

About Aspen Institute Seminars

The Aspen Institute Executive Leadership Seminars Department drives change through reflection, dialogue, and action in service of a more free, just, and equitable society. We do this by: curating brave spaces of shared meaning which help people become more self-aware, more self-correcting, and more self-fulfilling; deepening participants’ humane sensibilities and capacities for moral judgment through an examination of the humanistic traditions; establishing meaningful connections among diverse people and organizations in service of a better society.

For more information, including information about customized programs for companies and other organizations, please contact Kalissa Hendrickson, PhD, Director, at Kalissa.Hendrickson@aspeninst.org or 202-736-3586. Learn more.
The Aspen Institute starts from an act of faith in the humanistic tradition: one must be reflective in order to insure that all human activity—political, scientific, economic, intellectual or artistic—will serve the needs of human beings and enrich and deepen their lives.

The Institute believes in the value both of the “Great Ideas” of the past as well as the importance of the sometimes inelegant and highly controversial ideas of the present.

The Institute is dedicated to the fundamental educational value of dialogue for mature men and women from different nations and cultures -- intercommunications between people of comparable competence from various backgrounds and specialized fields of experience.

The Aspen idea recognizes that the processes by which persons learn and develop or change their ideas are not mechanical or even purely rational. As there is a mystery at the edge of human thought, so there is a magic about human relationships, and the magic we attempt to invoke in Aspen is that of the sheer beauty of this area of the Rocky Mountains.

With Erasmus, we hold that “nothing human is alien” to the inquiring purposes of the Aspen Institute. The Institute intends to be, in sum, a place of excellence and excitement where men and women of the finest qualities of mind and spirit from all walks of life in the United States and abroad can meet to learn from one another through serious discussion of and work on significant problems facing society and the greatest ideas which have been expressed throughout history and today concerning these problems.

—J. E. Slater, President, The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1972
Readings

5  Cicero, “On Fame”

9  Maya Angelou, “Weekend Glory”
On Fame
by Cicero
(106 BCE–43 BCE)

9. But I have treated of friendship in another book, under the title of Laelius. Let me now speak of fame. Though on that subject also I have written two books, let me touch briefly upon it here, since it is of the utmost service in the administration of important affairs.

The highest fame, and that to which there are no drawbacks, consists of these three things,—the affection of the multitude, their confidence, and their regarding a person as worthy of honor because they hold him in admiration. Moreover, these requisites to fame—to speak plainly and concisely—are obtained from the multitude by nearly the same means by which they are obtained from individuals. But there is also a certain other avenue to the popular favor, by which we may, as it were, steal into the affections of all.

Of the three things just named, let us consider, first, the rules for winning good will. It is, indeed, best secured by conferring benefits. But, in the second place, favor is elicited by the will to do good, even if the means of beneficence chance to be insufficient. The love of the multitude, indeed, is strongly excited by the very report and reputation of liberality, beneficence, honesty, good faith, and all those virtues which are included in gentleness of manners and affability. For since that very style of character which we call right and becoming, in itself, gives us pleasure, and by its nature and aspect captivates the minds of all, and shines forth with the greatest lustre from the virtues that I have named, we are therefore compelled by Nature herself to love the persons in whom we think that these virtues are found. These, however, are only the most efficient causes of good will; for there may be some others, though of less weight.

Of the confidence which may be reposed in us there are two efficient causes, our having a reputation for discretion and, at the same time, for honesty. For we have confidence in those whom we think our superiors in intelligence, who, as we believe, look into the future, and who, when an affair is in agitation and a crisis is reached, can clear it of difficulty, and take counsel according to circumstances (for this men regard as true and serviceable discretion); while the confidence reposed in honest and faithful men, that is, in good men, is such that there can rest upon them no suspicion of fraud and wrong. And so we think that our personal security, our fortunes, our children, can be most fittingly intrusted to their care. Of

these two qualities, then, honesty has the greater power to create confidence; for while without discretion honesty has sufficient prestige, discretion without honesty can be of no avail in inspiring confidence. For the more skilful and adroit one is, for this very reason is he the more odious and the more open to suspicion, if he has no reputation for honesty. Intelligence, then, combined with honesty, will have all the power that it can desire in creating confidence; honesty without discretion will have much influence toward that end; discretion without honesty will be of no avail whatever.

10. But if any one may have wondered, why, while all philosophers alike maintain, and I myself have often asserted, that whoever has one virtue has all, I now separate them as if a man could be honest without being wise also, my answer is that the nicety of expression employed when the inmost truth is under discussion is one thing; the language used when what we say is entirely adapted to popular opinion is another. Therefore, on this head I am speaking as people in general do, when I call some men brave, others good, others wise; for I ought to employ common and usual terms when I am speaking of public opinion, and Panaetius employed them in the same way. But let us return to our subject.

Of the three requisites for fame, the third that I named was this,—that men should so hold us in admiration as to regard us worthy of honor. Men generally admire all things that they see to be great and beyond their expectation, and specially in individual objects such unexpected good qualities as they discern. Therefore they admire and extol with the highest praise those men in whom they think that they perceive certain rare and surpassing virtues; while they look down with contempt on those in whom they imagine that there is no manliness, no spirit, no energy. For they do not despise all of whom they think ill. They do not despise, indeed, those whom they regard as villanous, malicious, fraudulent, capable of doing mischief,—by no means; of persons of this sort they think ill. But, as I have said, those are despised who, as the saying is, are of no good to themselves or to any one else, in whom there is no work, no industry, no forethought. On the other hand, those are regarded with a certain measure of admiration, who are thought to excel others in virtue, and to be free not only from all disgrace, but also from those vices which their fellow-men cannot easily resist. For sensual pleasures, the most alluring of mistresses, turn away the minds of the greater part of mankind from virtue, and equally when the fiery trial of affliction\(^1\) comes most persons are beyond measure terrified. Life, death, riches, poverty, most violently agitate the great mass of mankind. When men with a lofty and large soul look down on these experiences, whether prosperous or adverse, while any great and honorable object of endeavor proposed to them converges and concentrates their whole being in its pursuit, who can fail to admire in them the splendor and beauty of virtue?

11. This contempt of the mind for outward fortunes thus excites great admiration; and most of all, justice, for which one virtue men are called good,
seems to the multitude a quality of marvellous excellence,—and not without good reason; for no one can be just, who dreads death, pain, exile, or poverty, or who prefers their opposites to honesty. Men have, especially, the highest admiration for one who is not influenced by money; for they think that the man in whom this trait is made thoroughly manifest has been tested by fire.

Thus justice constitutes all three of the requisites to fame which I have named,—affection, because it aims to do good to the greatest number, and for the same reason, confidence and admiration, because it spurns and neglects those things to which most men are drawn with burning greediness. Moreover, in my opinion, every mode and plan of life demands the aid of men, and craves especially those with whom there may be friendly conversational intercourse, which is not easy, unless you are looked upon as a good man. Therefore, even to a recluse, or to one who passes his life in the country, the reputation of honesty is essential, and the more so because, if he do not have it, in his defenceless condition, he will be assailed by many wrongs. Those, too, who sell and buy, hire and lease, and are involved in business affairs, need honesty for the management of their concerns. The force of this virtue is such that those who obtain their subsistence by crime and guilt cannot live entirely without honesty. For he who takes anything by stealth or force from a fellow-robber cannot maintain his place in a band of robbers; and even the man who is called captain of a crew of pirates, if he were not impartial in the division of their plunder, would be either killed or deserted by his crew. Indeed, it is said that even among robbers there are laws which they obey, which they hold sacred. Thus by fairness in the distribution of booty, Bardylis, an Illyrian robber, of whom Theopompus makes mention, obtained great wealth, and Viriathus, the Lusitanian, much greater, to whom indeed some of our armies and commanders gave way in battle, whom Caius Laelius, commonly called the Wise, when he was praetor, crippled and reduced, and so subdued his ferocity that he transmitted an easy conflict with him to his successors. Since, then, the force of justice is such that it strengthens and augments the resources even of robbers, how great shall we account its efficacy among laws and courts, and in a well ordered state?

12. I am inclined to think, indeed, that not only among the Medes, as Herodotus relates, but also among our ancestors, men who had borne a high moral character were in early times appointed kings, in order to the administration of justice; for when the poor commonalty were oppressed by those of greater wealth, they had recourse to some one man pre-eminent in virtue, who, while he defended the poorer classes from wrong, by establishing equitable jurisdiction kept the highest under the same legal obligations with the lowest. There was like reason for making laws as for choosing kings; for equality of right was always sought, nor without equality can right exist. If this could be obtained through the ministry of one just and good man, the people were contented under his rule. But when this ceased to be the case, laws were invented which should speak with all, at all times, in one and the same voice. This, then, is manifest, that those of whose justice the mass of
the people had an exalted opinion used to be chosen as rulers. If in addition these same persons were thought wise, there was nothing that men did not expect to obtain under their administration. Justice is, therefore, by all means to be cherished and held fast, at once for its own sake—else it would not be justice—and for the increase of one’s honor and fame....

13. Let him, then, who would obtain genuine fame discharge the duties of justice.

Notes

1. Latin, dolorum faces,—the torches, or cautery, of sorrows.
2. These men were hardly robbers in the ordinary sense of the word; but they carried on for many years guerilla warfare, and, as is generally the case in such warfare, their forays were fully as much predatory as murderous. They were called robbers because they were barbarians. But Bardylis is termed by Diodorus king of the Illyrians, having Pyrrhus, king of Epeirus, for his son-in-law; and Viriathus seems to have been a patriotic chieftain, whose prime aim was to resist the Roman supremacy.
Weekend Glory
by Maya Angelou
(1928–2014)

Some clichy folks
don’t know the facts,
posin’ and preenin’
and puttin’ on acts,
stretchin’ their backs.

They move into condos
up over the ranks,
pawn their souls
to the local banks.
Buying big cars
ey can’t afford,
ridin’ around town
actin’ bored.

If they want to learn how to live life right
they ought to study me on Saturday night.

My job at the plant
ain’t the biggest bet,
but I pay my bills
and stay out of debt.
I get my hair done
for my own self’s sake,
so I don’t have to pick
and I don’t have to rake.

Take the church money out
and head cross town
to my friend girl’s house
where we plan our round.
We meet our men and go to a joint

where the music is blue
and to the point.

Folks write about me.
They just can’t see
how I work all week
at the factory.
Then get spruced up
and laugh and dance
And turn away from worry
with sassy glance.

They accuse me of livin’
from day to day,
but who are they kiddin’?
So are they.

My life ain’t heaven
but it sure ain’t hell.
I’m not on top
but I call it swell
if I’m able to work
and get paid right
and have the luck to be Black
on a Saturday night.
Guiding Questions

The best questions arise from careful listening (to the author, oneself, and others), and from the spontaneity of wonder

Cicero, “On Fame”
- How does Cicero define fame?
- For what ought people be honored, according to Cicero?
- Is Cicero correct in linking honor and fame to virtue?
- What other qualities inform honor, rightly understood?
- What gets in the way of the qualities worthy of honor, according to Cicero?
- What in your own conception of honor is missing from Cicero’s account

Maya Angelou, “Weekend Glory”
- Read the poem aloud: What words, images, and/or feelings does the poem evoke in you?
- What vision of glory does the poem express?
- Would Cicero embrace or critique Angelou’s weekend glory?
- What are the virtues espoused by the poem?
- What does your weekend glory look like?

Edward Kienholz, The Portable War Memorial
- Set a timer and look at the image for 3 minutes: What do you see? What feelings does the image evoke?
- What does this image suggest about the glory of war? Of peace?
- Is this a celebration or a critique of honorable virtues?

General questions for the week
- What do we mean by glory and honor, singly and together? Are they the same as fame?
- What aspirations and pitfalls do honor and glory introduce?
- Do we need to re-evaluate our contemporary assessment of what bring glory and honor?
- For what qualities or actions would you like to be honored?
General Principles for Participants

• Read the text(s) to be discussed in their entirety (ideally twice)
• Make notes about what you understand, don’t understand, agree or disagree with
• Focus comments and conversation on the ideas expressed in the shared text(s), not on outside knowledge
• Seek to understand your fellow participants, not to persuade them
• Be freely authentic and morally present
• Listen to the text, to others, and to yourself

General principles for discussion leaders:

• Hold the space for honesty and vulnerability: be honest and vulnerable yourself
• Ask questions, don’t teach: the aim is shared understanding and meaning, not agreement
• Be attached to the conversation: avoid rigidly following your planned order of questions
• Make sure every voice is heard: don’t move too quickly to fill the silence
• Start and end on time: end not with conclusions but with questions you’re taking away

Format:

• Match the texts to the time allotted (Each text can productively stimulate 20-40 minutes of discussion, and can be read discussed individually or together in one sitting, depending on the time available; it is better to end with more to be said, rather than straining to fill the time)
• Begin with introductions:
  • name (if not everyone is well known to one another)
  • what is on your heart and mind?
  • the person speaking chooses the next person
• Set the frame:
  • remind participants to enjoy the gift of time and conversation by avoiding other distractions
  • revisit the key general principles above
• It always helps to read a passage aloud
• Layer your questions: be patient, each layer builds upon the next
  • What does the text say? (sometimes we read the same thing different ways)
  • What does the text mean? (sometimes we interpret the text differently)
  • What does the text mean to me? (sometimes we apply the texts to ourselves differently)
  • What does the text mean for us? (we may have different understandings of what the text means for living in community)
  • What does the text mean for society? (we may have different approaches to what the text implies for action in society)

Some helpful tips to keep the conversation going (for discussion leaders and participants):

• “say more about that”
• “where do you see that in the text?”
• “how is that related to what N said earlier?”
• “do you think that’s true?”
• “do others see it the same way?”
• “what did you see in the text that we haven’t addressed?”