

MGMT 772 — POWER AND POLITICS IN ORGANIZATIONS (Spring 2014)

Professor Samir Nurmohamed, Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00-1:30 pm, JMHHG50

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

“If you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

These famous words articulate one of the many tensions of holding power. Regardless of whether you have an appetite or disdain for it, power plays an important role in the life of organizations. Power helps people accomplish their goals, and pursue what they care about. At the same time, power can be used in ways that hurt others, either directly or indirectly.

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the power dynamics in organizations. The course is designed so that you will learn concepts that are useful for understanding, analyzing, and harnessing power. But beyond discovering ways to extend your own power, influence and political skill in organizations, we will also uncover lessons about ways in which power and politics can blind you, and how to navigate situations in which you are up against powerful people. Using a range of theoretical and business articles, cases, exercises, assessments and simulations, we will extract a variety of lessons about power and politics in organizations. Topics include political skill, influence, issue selling, change management, networks, hierarchy, political conflict, corruption, coping with intolerable bosses, speaking up, redemption, and downsizing. Students will be expected to conduct fieldwork for both their group project and final paper.

This course is designed for students aiming to develop their leadership, general management and career skills through a better understanding of power and politics, and relates to other courses on these topics in the Management department. Thematically, this course highlights how your relationships with organizational stakeholders and an understanding of the organizational context are crucial to successfully navigating the political terrain of organizations. Organizations are inherently political arenas that require social astuteness, and an understanding of the “rules of the game.” Students who are interested in the topic of influence from a judgment and decision-making lens rather than from a leadership and organizational perspective may wish to consider OPIM 693.

TEXT AND READINGS

The coursepack is available on Study.Net. Some of the readings and exercises are not in the coursepack (i.e., they will be posted online or handed out in class), but you will be told about them throughout the semester. It is crucial that you complete the assigned readings and exercises thoroughly *before* class on the day shown in the schedule (listed at the end of the syllabus). We will not have time to discuss everything covered in the readings in class, but you are responsible for and expected to know the material.

COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING

Your overall grade is based on the components below:

<u>Components</u>	<u>Grade Value</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>
A) Class Contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participation- Assignments	30%	--
B) Group Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Progress Plan- Final Report- Final Presentation	5% 20% 10%	February 27 April 22 April 22-29
C) Personal Development Plan	35%	April 10

A) Class Contribution

A critical component of the success of this course depends on *you*. Although the obligation to speak up can be intimidating to some, this class relies on informed engagement for learning. To accomplish this goal, there are two components to your class contribution grade: (1) participation and (2) assignments.

Participation

You should be prepared to contribute to class discussions throughout the semester by raising issues that are relevant to the current focus of the class. Preparation and engagement are crucial to effective class contribution. You are expected to attend every class session having read and thought about the assigned material. You should always be prepared to contribute to the class discussions and demonstrate your preparation by asking questions whenever necessary and integrate the vocabulary and concepts from the readings into your class comments. A contribution to class discussion is a comment that possesses one or more of the following properties:

- Uses logic, evidence, and data to support conclusions, and is more than an expression of an opinion or feeling;
- Shows curiosity, creativity, and the willingness to experiment;
- Takes into consideration the ideas already offered by others, and moves the analysis forward to generate new insights; and/or
- Helps others feel safe about participating.

Comments that are vague, repetitive, unrelated, disrespectful of others, or without sufficient foundation are discouraged and will be evaluated negatively. High quality class contribution involves knowing when to speak and when to listen or allow others to speak. I will undertake “supportive cold calling” to encourage balanced involvement, to ensure appropriate preparation and attention, and to elevate the quality of in-class discussions.

If you will be absent or late you are expected to inform me via email prior to class. Because participation is central to the course, absences and a lack of preparation will seriously affect your grade.

This class is “unplugged.” Once class commences, all electronics (e.g., computers, cell phones, tablets, pagers, etc.) should be turned off and put away. If you need to use a device because of a language or disability issue, you need to secure my permission and the permission of Student Disabilities Services at the beginning of the term. The misuse of an electronic device (e.g., surfing the internet or messaging others) will adversely affect your class participation.

Lastly, this class does not depend only on you, but also on me. I will be disappointed if there is a problem in the classroom—particularly one that could be remedied—but nobody shares it with me. To benefit our class, I will ask you to provide feedback to me during the semester on what is going well and what we can improve. Although I cannot guarantee that I will satisfy all of your suggestions, I will try my best to address them.

I have articulated these expectations, rules, and norms because I believe that if we abide by them, we will create a better and more supportive learning environment.

Assignments

The second part of your class contribution grade is comprised of short assignments that will be announced throughout the semester either in advance or in class. Most of these assignments will require you to log into Canvas before 8 am on the day of class, and respond to one of the “Preparation” questions listed in the Course Outline at the end of this syllabus. More details will be provided on these assignments during the semester.

B) Group Project

The purpose of your group project is to examine and analyze the conditions of a “powerless” group in Philadelphia, and offer strategies on how the group can improve their conditions. Your group will gain access to and study a group that lacks power or influence. You will conduct a fieldwork project investigating aspects of power and politics that is pertinent to them. I will assign students to groups for this project.

Your project is intended to help you develop an understanding of what it is like to lack power. There will be times in your careers in which you are denied opportunities, prevented from acquiring resources, and have few allies. When in this position, you are likely to experience economic, social, and psychological consequences, but you must learn how to grow and rebound from these circumstances. Therefore, by examining groups who are “powerless,” you will gain a deeper understanding of power and discover strategies that can help you cope and develop from these difficult situations.

Your group will gather first-person data from relevant political actors, including members of the disadvantaged or disenfranchised group, individuals who are attempting to improve the situation, and other stakeholders who are pertinent to the group. You will need to visit the group on-site, and attend meetings and/or events. You may take notes, audio, pictures, or video to help your analysis (but you must receive consent from the group’s pertinent stakeholders if you do this). In addition,

you will need to obtain and study archival materials that describe the group. These materials may come from the group or from other outside sources (e.g., the press, analysts, consultants, etc.).

In your analysis, you will focus on three main questions:

1. What are two major problems facing your group? What factors are responsible for these problems?
2. Who are the relevant people or groups that are involved in dealing with your group? What power strategies have these individuals used to help the group? What and who are the sources of resistance? What power strategies have these individuals used to prevent the group from achieving its goals?
3. How “successful” has each side been? Why? What are your criteria for evaluating success and failure? How can people working on behalf of the group be more successful in the future? What concrete strategies can you develop to help the powerless group advance its interests?

Your final grade for your group project is based on three parts: a progress plan, a final report, and your class presentation. I have provided a brief description of each part:

1. **Progress plan:** short description (no more than a page) of the group under examination, project planning (e.g., what has been done, what needs to be done), and assessment of whether your project is on track. All groups are required to set up a short (15-30 minute) meeting with me by Session 11 to discuss your project ideas and progress to date. You will also give a short in-class presentation on Session 13 where you will present your progress, and receive your peers’ feedback in developing your project.
2. **Written report** (maximum 10 pages: 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1-inch margins on all sides).
3. **Final presentation** to the class as if classmates are key stakeholders to your group. As part of your final presentation, you should prepare a one-page executive summary of your project that your classmates can read in advance of your presentation.

Your report and final presentation should include the following key components:

1. Overview of the group you are studying and the two major problems on which you are focusing;
2. Description of your inquiry (data collection procedures);
3. Findings (from research): analysis of the problems which you identified (e.g., description of political context, relevant actors and/or interests, their power bases, critical events and issues, change management, issue selling, networks, hierarchy, the strategies and tactics they used and/or are using, evaluations of effectiveness); and
4. Concrete recommendations for improving the conditions of the group on which you are focusing.

Both the written report and class presentation (with your one page executive summary) will be evaluated on the quality of your analysis, the appropriate use of course concepts, the logic presented, and the substantiation of your conclusions. I will provide more details on the group project as the course unfolds.

C) Personal Development Plan

The purpose of the Personal Development Plan is to help you develop and chart your political strategy as you enter your career. Furthermore, it will allow you to see how people currently working in sectors and organizations you are interested in have built power, leveraged their networks, employed influence tactics, achieved success, and/or recovered from failures.

As part of your development plan, you will conduct informational interviews (at least three) with professionals who are currently in careers that you are interested in pursuing. From these interviews, you will learn about their strategies for dealing with issues pertinent to power and politics using course concepts, case examples, and class exercises. For example, you may want to consider how they built their sources of power and what dilemmas arose as they implemented their strategies over time.

Based on what you have learned in the course and in your informational interviews, you will create a Personal Development Plan, which should include the following:

1. Overview of your career goals;
2. Description of your strategic plan for developing power (e.g., building networks, using influence tactics, etc.) as you start your career (i.e., before taking your job and in your first year on the job). You should develop and detail a strategy that fits the political environment in which you will be working (i.e., consider both the formal and informal rules of the environment);
3. Ethical and social dilemmas that you might encounter as you implement your strategies and how you might handle these dilemmas; and
4. A “top 10 list” of notes to yourself about power and politics that you want to remember a year from now.

These four areas should be covered in your Personal Development Plan. Papers must be double-spaced and no longer than 10 pages (Time New Roman, 12-point font). Your grade will reflect the quality of your analysis, appropriate use of course concepts, logic, and substantiation of conclusions, clarity, and interest.

ETHICS AND USE OF PRIOR MATERIALS

Personal integrity and professionalism are fundamental values of Wharton and the University of Pennsylvania community. To help ensure that these values are upheld and to maintain equitability in the evaluation of your work, this course will be conducted in strict conformity with the Academic Honor Code. Please be aware that violation of the honor code is a serious violation. You are required to do original work, and with the exception of the group project, all assignments in this class must be completed independently unless otherwise specified. If you have any questions about any of the policies listed in this syllabus, please let me know.

Please note that this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1: **Influence: In this section of the course, we will explore direct and indirect influence techniques that can be used to enhance your effectiveness in navigating power and politics in organizations.**

#	<i>Date & Topics</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
1	January 16 Course Introduction	----	- Complete the pre-semester survey AT LEAST 2 days prior to the first class (details to follow via Canvas)
2	January 21 The Art and Science of Power	- Harrison, "What can you learn from Machiavelli?" - Kramer, "The Great Intimidators" - Grant, "In the Company of Givers and Takers"	- Why is power so fascinating to people? - Why are so many in business fascinated with Machiavelli's perspective on power? - How do Kramer's and Grant's respective articles relate to your implicit assumptions about power and politics in organizations? Can their perspectives be reconciled?
3	January 23 Influence: Verbal Tactics	- Cialdini, "Science of Persuasion": http://youtu.be/cFdCzN7RYbw - Orren, "Gore vs. Bush: Why It's All Greek to Me?" - <i>In class:</i> Who Plundered Steiny-D? Exercise	- Which of Cialdini's principles do you believe is most effective? Why? - Use an example from your own life that illustrates one of Cialdini's principles of influence in action. - How does the discussion of Aristotle in Orren's article relate to Cialdini's principles of influence?
4	January 28 Influence: Non-Verbal Tactics	- Cuddy, "Power Posing": http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are.html - Grant, "Power of Powerless Communication": http://youtu.be/n_ffqEA8X5g - Stern and Westphal, "Corporate Sweet Talk"	- What assumptions do Cuddy and Grant each make about exercising influence and power? - What are the major differences between each of their perspectives? Are there any similarities? - Which approach do you prefer? Why?
5	January 30 Issue Selling	- Johnson, "Issue Selling in the Organization" - Floyd & Woolridge, "Dinosaurs or Dynamos? Recognizing Middle	- Is successful verbal and non-verbal tactics necessary and sufficient for attaining power in organizations? - How is issue selling similar to/different from persuasion? - How do you build the case for an issue in an organization?

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation
		Management's Strategic Role" - In class: Issue Selling Exercise	

Part 2: Politics: In this section of the course, we will examine a variety of bases of power and explore how you can effectively emerge as a leader and build your political skill.

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation
6	February 4 Diagnosing Power	- McGinn & Lingo, "Power and Influence: Achieving Your Objectives in Organizations" - Case: Thomas Green	- How well did Green manage his boss? - What could Green have done better? - What would you recommend for Green to do next?
7	February 6 Navigating the Political Terrain	- Pfeffer, "Power Play" - Scott-Morgan, "The Unwritten Rules of the Game" - Case: Gary Loveman and Harrah's Entertainment	- How would you describe the rules of the game at Harrah's before Loveman's arrival? How did Harrah's corporate culture affect his ability to implement change? - Using Pfeffer's "Power Play" as a guide, how did Loveman advance his agenda? - How did Loveman's status as an outsider help or hinder his efforts?
8	February 11 Hierarchy	- Kraus, "Status Hierarchy: Do We Need Them?" - In class: T.M.B. Exercise	- In what ways do status hierarchies help versus blind those seeking greater power? - If hierarchy did not exist in organizations, would people still be focused on attaining power? Why or why not?
9	February 13 Networks and Making Connections	- Battilana & Casaciaro, "The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents" - Goulston, "Be More Interested than Interesting" - Case: Managing Xerox's Multinational Development Center	- How would you evaluate Clendenin in terms of Battilana and Casaciaro's "network secrets?" - What should Clendenin do next? - If you were Stoughton, how would you respond to your boss?
10	February 18 Change Management I	- Klein, "The Unpersuaded" - In class: Change Management Simulation	- How does change management relate to issue selling and networks? - What can you learn from the ways in which politicians institute change?

11	February 20 Change Management II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maister, "Garbage Can Decision Making" - <i>In class</i>: Change Management Simulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the most important lesson that you have learned from the Change Management simulation? - How does "organized anarchy" contribute to both the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of organizational change?
12	February 25 Political Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edmondson & Smith, "Too Hot to Handle" - Case: WWE vs. Bret Hart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What caused the conflict between McMahon and Hart? How did it erupt? - Which type of conflict best describes the one between McMahon and Hart? - What could have been done differently to resolve the conflict? Was their conflict inevitable?
13	February 27	Group Project Progress Feedback Sessions	

DEADLINE: Group Progress Plan

Part 3 **The Dangers of Power and Politics: In this section of the course, we will examine how the acquisition of power can lead to an employee's downfall, along with seeking to understand how you can guard yourself against powerful people in your organization.**

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation
14	March 4 Power Paradox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jackall, "Moral Mazes" - Keltner, "The Power Paradox" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you believe that Jackall's portrayal of a "real organization" is accurate? - How does Jackall's portrayal fuel the realities and myths of how power should be exercised in organizations? - Based on Keltner's "power paradox," how can we remove our blinders when we are in positions of power?
15	March 6 Authority and Obedience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to the audio case, "Steve Raucci": http://www.thisamericanlife.org/audio-archives/episode/419/petty-tyrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze Raucci's power bases. - What techniques did Raucci use to maintain power? - Why did this happen? How could it have been prevented?
16	March 18 Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - George, "Note on Why Leaders Lose Their Way" - Gladwell, "The Talent Myth" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you believe that leaders lose their way due to their personality or the situation in which they find themselves? - How would you design a system to ensure that power is exercised

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation
		- <i>In class:</i> The Smartest Guys in the Room	responsibly? What checks and balances would you implement?
17	March 20 Standing Up to Power	- Gladwell, "Small Change" - Schell, "The Talk of the Town – Comment" - Case: Martha McCaskey	- Where should McCaskey draw the line based on what she is willing and not willing to do? - If you were McCaskey, would you remain in the organization or exit? If you were to remain, would you exercise voice or pledge your allegiance?
18	March 25 Dealing with Intolerable Supervisors	- Bies & Tripp, "Two Faces of the Powerless: Coping With Tyranny in Organizations" - Case: Bradford, "Dealing with a Toxic Boss"	- How does Bill fit into the profile that Bies and Tripp discuss? - What could Ned have done differently to handle the situation? - If you were in Ned's shoes, what would you do next?
19	March 27 Losing Power	- Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld	- What did Sonnenfeld do or not do to put his reputation at risk? - What is his reputational capital built on? - What are the main threats to his reputational capital and how should he deal with them? - What actions should Sonnenfeld take to restore and resurrect his reputation?
20	April 1 Redemption and Rebounding	- Sonnenfeld & Ward, "How Great Leaders Rebound After Career Disasters" - Kenrick, "Harry Potter, Rocky Balboa and Me" - <i>In class:</i> "So What's Your Story"	- How can you use redemption narratives to gain empathy and sympathy from others? - What are the hidden costs of constructing a redemption narrative in organizations?
21	April 3 The Advantages of Disadvantages	- Gladwell, "How David Beats Goliath" - Keinan, Avery, and Paharia, "Capitalizing on the Underdog Effect"	- Assignment for class: Find one article on an individual, group, or organization viewed as an underdog, and prepare to share it with the class. You should focus on the following: - Why are they viewed as an underdog? - How do they react to being seen in this manner? - What are its effects?

Part 4 Exercising Power Responsibly: In this section of the course, we will revisit what power and politics means for you as a leader in your organization.

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation
22	April 8 Virtuous Downsizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, “The Management of Organizational Justice” - Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, “Preserving Employee Morale During Downsizing” - <i>In class:</i> Downsizing Simulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you (or someone that you know) been part of a downsizing initiative? What worked effectively? What were its biggest challenges? - Which stage of the “decision to downsize” process is the most difficult to implement?
23	April 10 With Great Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deresiewicz, “Solitude and Leadership” - Peterson, “Don’t take the wrong paths to power” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you believe solitude can help you exercise power responsibly? Why or why not? - Describe one way in which your perspective on attaining power has changed since the beginning of the course.
DEADLINE: Personal Development Plan			
24	April 15 The Art and Science of Power Revisited	----	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the end of semester survey (details to follow via Canvas)
25	April 17	Group Project Working Session	

Group Presentations

#	Date & Topics	
26	April 22	Presentation dates for each group will be determined in class. All written reports for the group project are due on the first day of presentations (April 22).
27	April 24	
28	April 29	