

MGMT 272 — POWER AND POLITICS IN ORGANIZATIONS (Fall 2015)

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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, and the course requires that students submit assignments for every class session.

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. Please note that the readings and preparation questions are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING

Your overall grade is based on the components below:

Components	Grade Value	Due Dates
A) Class Contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assignments- Participation	30%	--
B) Group Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Progress Plan- Final Report- Final Presentation	5% 20% 10%	October 6 December 1 December 1-8
C) Personal Development Plan	35%	November 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) assignments and (2) participation.

Assignments

The first part of your class contribution grade is comprised of short assignments that will usually be completed on Canvas prior to every class in which we meet. These assignments will usually require you to log into Canvas before 8 am on the day of class, and respond to one of the questions listed on Canvas that relate to the readings (you will receive no credit for an assignment if you submit it after the deadline, no exceptions). More details will be provided on these assignments during the semester.

Participation

High quality class contribution involves knowing when to speak and when to listen or allow others to speak. 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. 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. Please consult the Class Contribution rubric on Canvas for further information on how it is assessed.

If you will be absent or late you are expected to inform me via email prior to class. Also, any excused absences must be reported through the course absence report system (e.g., Penn InTouch or the undergrad/MBA program office). You should also note that this class is “unplugged.” Once class commences, all electronics (e.g., computers, cell phones, tablets, pagers, walkie-talkies, 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) is disrespectful and a distraction to yourself and others (Burns & Loheny, 2010; Kuzneoff & Titsworth, 2013). Because participation is central to the course, absences, a lack of preparation, or the misuse of an electronic device can seriously affect your grade (i.e., it can result in LT/D/F grades in the course even if you pass all other parts of the course).

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 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.

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.

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.).

Your report should include the following key components:

1. Overview of the group you are studying, why they are powerless, and the 2-3 major challenges on which you are focusing your analysis;
2. Description of your inquiry (data collection procedures);
3. Analysis and findings (from your research): you will want to analyze the relevant stakeholders in terms of their sources of power, and the effective and ineffective power and politics strategies that they are using. You should apply the most appropriate course concepts to the challenges that you have identified and ensure that you are supporting your analysis with the data that you have collected from your research;
4. Concrete recommendations (i.e., short and long term) for improving the conditions of the group.

You are responsible for finding an appropriate organization to investigate in the early stages of the course and having it approved by me. You are encouraged to visit me during office hours if you have any questions about the project as it involves a substantial time commitment and group effort. 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. You should have selected and met with the stakeholders in the group that you are investigating at least twice prior to this session. All groups are encouraged to meet with me prior to Session 12 to discuss your project ideas and progress to date. You will also give a short in-class presentation where you will present your progress, and receive your peers' feedback in developing your project.
2. **Written report** (maximum 15 pages: 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1-inch margins on all sides) that provides a comprehensive analysis of the group studied. Your cover page, executive summary and any appendices and references do not count towards this limit.
3. **Final presentation** to the class that will focus on the single, most interesting "puzzle" you found during the course of your research, and how what you learned in the course could help solve it. You should draw on course concepts in a creative manner to come up with a sensible solution that should aim to "knock our socks off." As part of your final presentation, you should distribute the one-page executive summary of your project that your classmates can read in advance of your presentation.

Your written report will be evaluated on the quality of your analysis, the appropriate use of course concepts, the use of first-person data to support your analysis and recommendations, the substantiation of your conclusions, and the interestingness and novelty of your project. You should draw on material covered in the course. A range of concepts from the course can be used effectively to diagnose your organization and offer recommendations. Your presentation will be graded on the interestingness of your puzzle and the substance of your solution.

Please note that your group will receive one grade for your project. If multiple members of a group believe that particular individual(s) deserve lower grades due to their lack of involvement, I will consider this possibility and reserve the right to give these individual(s) a lower grade. However, it is your responsibility to resolve any conflicts, not mine. I will provide more details on the group project as the course unfolds, including an annotated outline for your report and the rubric used for evaluating your project.

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.

This can be a challenging assignment because it forces you to project yourself into the future. However, even if you change your goals or your interests change over time, creating a personal development plan enables you to set a range of short and long-term goals, and contemplate how power and politics are likely to impact your career objectives.

As part of your development plan, you will conduct at least three informational interviews 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.

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 the people you interviewed;
3. Exposition 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) and transition into your future goals. You should develop, detail, and analyze a strategy that fits the political environment in which you will be working;
4. Ethical and social dilemmas (e.g., 2-3) that you might encounter as you implement your strategies and the concrete steps you will take to handle these dilemmas; and
5. A “top 10 list” of notes to yourself about power and politics that you want to remember a year from now (on your cover page).
6. Semi-structured interview protocol that you used to guide your conversations with each interviewee.

These six 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 cover page and interview protocol does not count towards this limit.). Your grade will reflect the quality of your analysis, appropriate use of course concepts, logic, use of interview data, substantiation of conclusions, clarity, and interest. You should draw on material covered in the course to chart your political strategy, and you will want to use data from your interviews to support your analysis

throughout your paper. More details will be provided in class and online, including an annotated outline for your plan and the rubric used for evaluation.

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. The University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity can be examined at the following website:

www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html

Please note that this syllabus and the course outline are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1: **Political Skill: 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 for Class and Assignments</i>
1	August 27 Course Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-semester survey on Canvas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the pre-semester survey AT LEAST 2 days prior to the first class. If you register for the course at a later date, it is your responsibility to still complete the survey.
2	September 1 The Art and Science of Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harrison, "What can you learn from Machiavelli?" - Magee and Galinsky, "Social Hierarchy" (focus on p. 351-358) - Political Orientation Assessment (on Canvas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having read the Harrison piece, why do you believe so many in business fascinated are with Machiavelli's perspective on power? - How does Machiavelli's perspective relate to your implicit assumptions about power and politics in organizations? - Drawing on the Magee and Galinsky reading, what are the two functions that hierarchy provides for individuals operating in organizational environments?
3	September 3 Issue Selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ashford & Detert, "Co-Creating Change in Organizations" - Stern & Westphal "Corporate Sweet Talk" - In class: ISP Exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After receiving the score and description of your political tendencies assessment from the last class, reflect on your political orientation. Which types of issue selling tactics do you think are most and least effective for you? Why? Would you like to change your political orientation in any way? Are there any aspects of political skill that make you wary?
4	September 8 Hidden Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - Goulston, "Be More Interested than Interesting" - In class: ISP Exercise (continued) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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? - How can you implement each of their tactics in your everyday life? When would they be most effective versus ineffective for you?

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 for Class and Assignments
5	September 10 Authenticity and Diagnosing Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McGinn & Lingo, “Power and Influence” (focus on p. 1-15) - Case: Thomas Green 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply McGinn & Lingo’s framework (i.e., personal, relational, and positional power) to Green’s situation. How would you evaluate his sources of power, and how would you evaluate his understanding of the power that is available to him?
6	September 15 Power Play(ed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giang, “Why Being Authentic is Holding You Back” - Pfeffer, “Power Play” - In class: Galbraith and Company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on the readings for today’s class, please detail two ways in which you plan on changing your strategies for building power and/or improving your job performance in your future career. How does this fit your approach to power and politics?
7	September 17 Navigating Your Political Terrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pfeffer, “Choosing Where to Start” - Scott-Morgan, “The Unwritten Rules of the Game” - Case: Martha Rinaldi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did Rinaldi make a mistake by choosing Potomac over Deep Dive? Apply principles from Pfeffer’s reading to inform what she should have done and/or could have done differently when making her decision. - Give an example of conflicting written and unwritten rules of the game that Rinaldi faces. What problems did this trigger for her and her colleagues?
8	September 22 Chasing Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Assignment Due—it is recommended that you use this time to finalize your group project organization and prepare for your Group Project Progress Plan
9	September 24 Change Management and Networks I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Battilana & Casaciario, “The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents” - Cross, Nohria, & Parker, “Six Myths about Informal Networks” - Simulation Overview (to be posted on canvas) - In class: Change Management Simulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please register for the change management simulation in advance of this class. Using the readings and simulation overview, discuss two lessons on networks that you will attempt to implement in the upcoming change management simulation.
10	September 29 Change Management and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meyerson, “The Tempered Radicals” - In class: Change Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please write a reflection on your experience in the Change Management Simulation. In this reflection, you should use course concepts to discuss what seemed to be effective versus

Networks II	Simulation Wrap-Up	ineffective in the simulation. Based on your experience, what have you learned from playing this simulation? How could Meyerson's lessons improve or inhibit your effectiveness? In the future when you find yourself leading change, what will you do differently?
11 October 1 Political Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Edmondson & Smith, "Too Hot to Handle" - Case: WWF 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?
12 October 6	Group Project Progress Feedback Sessions (in class presentations—see syllabus, B. Group Project)	
DEADLINE: Group Progress Plan (see syllabus, B. Group Project)		
October 8	Fall Break— NO CLASS TODAY	

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.

#	<i>Date & Topics</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Preparation for Class and Assignments</i>
13	October 13 Power Paradox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jackall, "Moral Mazes" - Keltner, "The Power Paradox" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 you remove your blinders when you hold power?
14	October 15 Authority and Obedience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bies & Tripp, "Two Faces of the Powerless: Coping With Tyranny in Organizations" - Listen to the audio case, "Steve Raucci": http://www.thisamericanlife.org/audio-archives/episode/419/petty-tyrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What techniques did Raucci use to maintain power? How are these tactics similar to/different from what we have learned in the course? - How does Bies and Tripp's framework relate to Raucci's approach to maintaining power? What enabled Raucci to survive?
15	October 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kramer, "The Great Intimidators" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many of us have a neurotic need for social esteem as we want to

Abandoning Your Social Esteem	- Lillienfeld and Arkowitz, "A Dose of Narcissism Can be Useful"	be liked and popular, and this makes us afraid of others not liking us. Your task is to perform a humiliating behavior or two in the context of the readings. Do something that makes you unlikeable to others (and if that's too extreme for you, simply humiliate yourself by doing something silly in public). You will want to describe what you did, how it made yourself and others feel, and how you cleaned up the consequences (if at all). Be creative and brave—the possibilities are endless. If this sounds unpleasant, you are precisely the type of person who could benefit from this. You'll probably find yourself feeling scared at the beginning, but surprisingly liberated at the end.
16 October 22 Speaking Up	- Pearson and Porath, "Workplace Incivility" - In class: OmniPresence	- Reflecting on the reading on incivility, think about an instance of incivility that could arise in your career. Does it differ from Kramer's perspective on intimidators? Consider the ways in which you can adapt the tactics you have learned in this course to either prevent or stop incivility from occurring when you enter your job. Be concrete with your strategies, and consider the sources of power that you have available to you.
17 October 27 To Be Announced	- To Be Announced	- To Be Announced
18 October 29 Losing Power and Redemption	- Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld	- What did Sonnenfeld do or not do to put his reputation at risk in terms of his relational power. In hindsight, what would you have done differently if you were him?
19 November 3 Is There an Advantage to a Disadvantage?	- Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld (continued) - Sonnenfeld & Ward, "Firing Back: How Great Leaders Rebound After Career Disasters" - Keinan, Avery, and Paharia, "Capitalizing on the Underdog Effect"	- Please reflect on the Sonnenfeld case. What did he do effectively versus ineffectively? How did he rebuild his power after what had transpired? If you were in his shoes, what would you have done differently? Also, find one article from the news on an individual, group, or organization viewed as an underdog, and bring it to class.

Part 4 **Leading with Power: 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 for Class and Assignments
20	November 5 With Great Power I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, “Preserving Employee Morale During Downsizing” - Deresiewicz, “Solitude and Leadership” - Peterson, “Don’t take the wrong paths to power” - In class: <i>OMGW Exercise</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflect on the tactics that you have learned and the self-assessments that you have conducted in this course, and analyze one way in which you want to change your approach to power and politics as you move forward in your career.
21	November 10 With Great Power II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In class: <i>OMGW Exercise (continued)</i> - GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please reflect on the exercise from last class. In this reflection, you should discuss what you struggled with the most. Based on your experience, what lessons would you incorporate from the readings from the prior class, and what we have discussed in the course? What are 1-2 questions that you would like to ask about your experience in the exercise
			DEADLINE: Personal Development Plan (see syllabus, C. Personal Development Plan)
22	November 12 #poweritup Capstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case: Glanton (to be distributed prior to session) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did Barnes attempt to protect his collection from others? Why was it effective/ineffective? What did he overlook? - What strategies did Glanton use to magnify his power? How effective were his strategies in this context?
23	November 17 #poweritup Capstone: Field Trip (off-site)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case: Glanton (Part B—to be distributed prior to session) - Horn, “The Deal of the Art” (to be distributed prior to session) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you could have gone back in time, what would you have told leaders of the Foundation after Barnes’s death to prevent its relocation? Use tactics from the course to inform your response.
			Please note: We will plan to meet at a location in Center City for a “field trip” that relates to the capstone during our regular class time. It will cost you approximately \$15 to participate, and it will be approximately 1.5 hours in length. More details to come.

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation for Class and Assignments
24	November 19 #poweritup Capstone		- Complete the end of semester survey and come prepared with questions for our final discussion (details to follow via Canvas)
25	November 24 November 27		Group Project Working Session— NO CLASS TODAY (American) Thanksgiving— NO CLASS TODAY

Group Presentations

#	Date & Topics	
26	December 1	DEADLINE: Presentation dates for each group will be determined in class (see syllabus, B. Group Project).
27	December 3	All written reports for the group project are due on the first day of presentations (December 1). Please
28	December 8	bring handouts of your executive summary for your classmates.

Additional Readings: I have curated my coursepack from various sources (e.g., academic and practitioner journals, books, magazines, blogs, cases) because I want to ensure that my students gain an understanding of power and politics that reflects the breadth and depth of perspectives on the topic. However, for students who are interested in reading beyond this course or who are unable to register for this course, below is a selection of books that you may find useful. Also, I post many new articles that are related to my course on my Twitter feed (shameless plug: www.twitter.com/snurmo). You can search #poweritup to find these tweets and filter them out from my random musings on Kanye West, the Toronto Maple Leafs, and/or Michigan football:

- Power: Why Some People Have It—and Others Don't (Pfeffer)
- Give and Take (Grant)
- The Small Big (Martin, Goldstein, and Cialdini)
- Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader (Ibarra)