

Power and Politics in Organizations (MGMT 272, Spring 2018)

Professor Payal Sharma, Mondays/Wednesdays, 3:00pm-4:30pm, SHDH 107

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Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide an understanding of power and politics in organizational life. Its content will highlight how your relationships with organizational stakeholders and an understanding of the “rules of the game” are crucial to successfully navigating the political terrain of organizations. Using a range of class and contemporary theoretical and practical perspectives, we will together uncover variety of lessons learned across themes including acquiring power, power versus influence, and the intersection of power and workplace topics including empowerment, conflict, and gender. The course further incorporates experiential exercises, guest speakers, and fieldwork – hence will facilitate your personal and professional development, as well as the development of leadership, general management and career skills. It is designed to be complementary to other courses offered in the Management department.

Text and Readings

There are two sources of readings for our course: (1) a coursepack available for purchase on study.net on Canvas; and (2) a book called *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations* Jeffrey Pfeffer (1993), available from the bookstore or other outlet of your choice. Additional readings will be posted on Canvas. Please note that readings should be completed prior to coming to each class.

Course Evaluation and Grading

Individual	Class Engagement	10 points
	Strategy Memos	30 points
	Personal Development Plan	15 points
Team	Team Project Proposal	10 points
	Team Presentation	15 points
	Peer Assessment	5 points
TOTAL		85 points

Class Engagement

High quality class engagement involves, but is not limited to, the following:

- Showing up to class having completed the readings and assignments
- Arriving to class sessions on time and not leaving early
- Actively participating in exercises, activities and discussions
- Answering questions about the readings, lecture content and activities and asking questions
- Periodically sending me interesting and relevant articles via email
- Demonstrating professionalism regarding all matters of the course

High quality class contribution further involves use of logic, evidence, and data to support conclusions, and is more than an expression of an opinion or feeling. I encourage you to demonstrate curiosity, creativity and a willingness to experiment and have an open mind throughout the course. It is also important for your learning to take into consideration the ideas already offered by others, and moves the analysis forward to generate new insights; and/or help other students to feel safe about participating and speaking.

Comments that are vague, repetitive, unrelated, disrespectful of others, or without sufficient foundation are discouraged and will be evaluated negatively. I will further use “supportive cold calling” to encourage balanced involvement, to ensure appropriate preparation and attention, and to elevate the quality of in-class discussions.

Strategy Memos

As noted on the Class Schedule at the end of this syllabus, there are five (5) strategy memos due throughout our semester – however, your three (3) highest earned grades only will be used for course evaluation purposes. Thus it is up to you decide which of the memos you would like to submit (this is your choice entirely and you do not need to inform me ahead of time which memos you will turn in). Please see the Strategy Memos file on Canvas for the discussion questions for each assignment.

Strategy memos are due in person, in hard copy only, at the start of the designated class session. No electronic or late submissions are accepted, and you must be present in class to turn in your assignments yourself.

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, 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 plan now 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 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 plan which covers the following topics:

1. What are 2 of your career goals?
2. Who did you interview for this assignment? Provide a clear and coherent description of your informants.

3. What was your semi-structured interview protocol? Provide the questions that you used to guide the conversations with your informants.
4. What is your strategic plan for developing power as you begin career? This can include tactics including building your network as you start your career and transition into your future goals.
5. What are 2-3 ethical and/or social dilemmas you might encounter as you implement your strategies? What concrete steps can you take to handle these dilemmas?
6. What are 2-3 lessons learned that you want to remember a year from now to help you as you move forward in your career?

Your earned grade will reflect the quality of your analysis, appropriate use of course concepts, logic, use of interview data, substantiation of conclusions, clarity, and interest. Please be sure to draw on, and integrate, course materials as well as data from your interviews to support your ideas.

Team Project

The purpose of this project is to examine and analyze the conditions of a “powerless” organization, unit or team in Philadelphia, and offer realistic and implementable strategies on how to improve its conditions. It is up to your team to find ways to gain access to, and study, the setting and people.

This project is intended to help your team develop an understanding of the feelings and experiences which accompany lacking 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, yet it is critical that you learn how to understand, recover from, and even leverage these circumstances as important opportunities. Therefore, by examining groups who are “powerless,” your team will gain a deeper understanding of power dynamics, and discover strategies that can help you in your own experiences.

This project offers your team an opportunity to engage in fieldwork, whereby you will gather first-person data from relevant political actors, including members of the disadvantaged or disenfranchised setting, individuals who are attempting to improve the situation, and/or other pertinent stakeholders. You will need to visit the setting on-site, establish meaningful relationships with the involved parties, and demonstrate value to them of your efforts in order to facilitate their engagement and participation. Other aspects of your fieldwork may include attending meetings and/or events, or participating in their organizations’ activities.

Field site and data collection:

Your team will need to gather data such as by taking notes, pictures, or video to help your analysis. Please remember your team must receive consent from the stakeholders for such efforts. In addition, your team will need to obtain and study archival materials that describe the group. These materials may come from the setting or from other outside sources (e.g., the popular press, analysts, consultants, etc.).

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.

Project proposal components:

1. Overview of who your team is studying, why they are powerless, and 2-3 major challenges on which you are focusing your analysis;
2. Description of data collection procedures;
3. Roles of team members (who will do what to ensure an appropriate division of labor)
4. Timeline of project and short-term goals.

Please note that your team will turn in its Project Proposal on the designated date listed on the Class Schedule, then each team will present your progress in class, and receive feedback from other students and myself in developing your project.

Team presentation components:

In addition to including the project proposal components,

- Analysis and findings. As examples, analyzing relevant stakeholders in terms of their sources of power, and the effective and ineffective power and politics strategies that they are using; applying appropriate course concepts to the challenges identified; and ensuring analyses are supported with data and findings.
- Short and long-term recommendations which are easily implementable, for improving power and politics-related dynamics.
- Executive summary (one page) for distribution to your classmates during your presentation.

Team member assessment:

It is important to be a team player for this project as “free riding” is unacceptable. To help team members stay accountable, you will be asked to individually submit a team member evaluation form when the presentations are over. In this form, you will independently assess your fellow team members’ work on the project. I will review these forms when determining your individual course grades on the team presentation.

All team members will generally receive the same grade even though some might have worked harder than others; this is the nature of teamwork. It is up to you as team members to try to manage your work so that everyone contributes effectively and to sort out any issues that may arise. This includes resolving conflict which may arise as a result of working together. If multiple members of 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.

Format (for all assignments except Team Project Presentations)

- Cover page with assignment title, date, and your Penn ID # (please do not provide your name, to facilitate the blind grading process)
- Use of Times New Roman 12-point font
- Double-spaced, one inch margins all around
- Page numbers provided in upper right hand corner
- Written in prose where applicable (and to save space you do not need to list the question prompt – rather, simply provide your response)
- Page length: for Strategy Memos, 2 pages maximum; for Personal Development Plan, 10 pages maximum; for Team Project Proposal, 3 pages maximum

Teaching Philosophy

Individuals learn through a variety of ways. Thus, the course has been designed to foster your learning through different teaching methods such as lectures, case analyses, team work, and other experiential exercises. In addition, the course design incorporates four pillars which are supported by research on higher education conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, & Dolle, 2011):

1. *Analytic*. Developing conceptual thought and critical thinking skills
2. *Multiple framing*. Learning there are competing perspectives (for example, positive and negative impact of management phenomena), with different assumptions, to understand when sense-making of complex issues. Gaining comfort with ambiguity and unstructured circumstances.
3. *Reflective exploration of meaning*. Includes questions of purpose, personal reflection and significance. Encourages exploration of a wide range of possibilities.
4. *Practical reasoning*. Integrating the above three modes to solve actual problems in the real world.

Electronics

To help promote engagement with the course, all phones, tablets, computers, and other electronics must be turned off and put away *out of sight* during the entire duration of classes (unless you are instructed to do otherwise). Consistent with this policy, recent research finds that laptops impair the learning of other students (<http://bit.ly/laptopsinclass>). Hence the policy will be strictly enforced.

Ethics

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: www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html

Absences

All absences must be reported through the Course Absence Reports (CAR) system via Penn InTouch. You are responsible for making up class content and/or readings for days you miss.

Recommended strategies include:

- review and complete strategy memos;
- ask for notes from another student, such a team member;
- meet with another student to talk through the notes
- meet with myself in office hours to ask clarifying questions – well in advance of assignment due dates!

Note: This syllabus and the course schedule are subject to changes at my discretion. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via Canvas/email and will take precedence.

Class Schedule

Week	Day/Date	Readings and Assignments
PART 1: INTRODUCTION		
Week 1: Welcome	Wednesday 1/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Power Paradox (Canvas)
Week 2: Power and Influence	Wednesday 1/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Textile Corporation
Week 3: Diagnosing Power and Influence	Monday 1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2: When Is Power Used? • Chapter 3: Diagnosing Power and Dependence • Chapter 8: The Importance of Being in the Right Unit
	Wednesday 1/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Black Caucus Groups • <i>Due: Strategy Memo #1</i>
PART 2: DEVELOPING A POWER BASE		
Week 4: Individual	Monday 1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7: Formal Authority, Reputation, and Performance • Article: Cialdini, Reciprocation • Article: Do Chameleons Get Ahead
	Wednesday 1/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Lyndon Baines Johnson • <i>Due: Strategy Memo #2</i>
Week 5: Networks	Monday 2/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6: Location in the Communication Network • Article: Informal Networks • Article: Network Secrets of Great Change Agents
	Wednesday 2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Amelia Rogers • Case: Heidi Roizen • <i>Due: Strategy Memo #3</i>
Week 6: Leadership	Monday 2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: What Effective General Managers Really Do • Article: Power Play • Chapter 14: Changing the Structure
	Wednesday 2/14	
Week 7: Resources	Monday 2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: Where Does Power Come From • Chapter 5: Resources, Allies, and New Golden Rule • Article: Cialdini, Scarcity
	Wednesday 2/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Due: Team Project Proposal</i>
PART 3: POWER AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCES		
Week 8: Conflict	Monday 2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 12: Timing is (Almost) Everything
	Wednesday 2/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Power, Greed and Glory on Wall Street (Canvas) • Article: The Men, The Money and The Merger (Canvas) • <i>Due: Strategy Memo #4</i>
Week 10: Empowerment	Monday 3/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Shake It Baby (Canvas)
	Wednesday 3/14	
Week 11: Gender	Monday 3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Due: Personal Development Plan</i> (rough draft, optional)
	Wednesday 3/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Power of Talk (Canvas)

Week 12: Culture	Monday 3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Cialdini, Commitment • Article: Cialdini, Liking • Chapter 15: Symbolic Action
	Wednesday 3/28	
Week 13: Careers	Monday 4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article: Power and Influence
	Wednesday 4/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case: Katherine Graham • <i>Due: Strategy Memo #5</i>
PART 4: CONCLUSION		
Week 14: Team Projects	Monday 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Meetings
	Wednesday 4/11	
Week 15: Team Presentations	Monday 4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Due: Presentation Slides</i> (by midnight Sunday 4/15)
	Wednesday 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Due: Team Member Assessment</i> (in class)
Week 16: Power of Positive Psychology	Monday 4/23	
	Wednesday 4/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Due: Personal Development Plan</i> (final draft)

**Week 9*: Spring Break (No Class)