

MGMT 272 — POWER AND POLITICS IN ORGANIZATIONS (Fall 2018)

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

“If you want to test a [person’s] character, give [him/her] 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 organizations. Power enables 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 concepts that are useful for understanding, analyzing, and navigating power dynamics in organizations. But beyond discovering ways to extend your own power in organizations, we will also uncover lessons about ways in which it can blind you, and how to navigate situations in which you are up against powerful people. Using a range of scholarly articles, cases, exercises, assessments and simulations, we will extract a variety of lessons about power and politics in organizations. Topics include political skill, diagnosing power, building coalitions and networks, speaking up, responding to intolerable bosses and incivility, and using power responsibly. Students will be expected to engage in field research for their some of their coursework and final paper, and the course requires that students submit assignments for almost 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. It also 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 OID 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 following components:

Components	Grade Value	Due Dates
1) Class Contribution		
A. Preparation Assignments	35%	----
B. Participation	15%	----
2) Personal Development Plan		
A. Progress Plan & Feedback Session	5%	September 13 and 18
B. Final Paper	45%	October 2

1) Class Contribution

A critical component of the success of this course depends on *you*. This class relies on informed engagement for learning. Furthermore, 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 other parts of the course). To accomplish this goal, there are two components to your class contribution grade: (A) preparation assignments, and (B) participation.

A) Preparation Assignments

The first part of your class contribution grade is comprised of short preparation assignments that will usually need to be completed on Canvas prior to every class in which we meet. Preparation assignments are designed to help you acquire a deeper understanding of course concepts, as well as prepare for classroom discussion. These preparation 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 or class discussion. Similar to the business world, work must be delivered on time. Therefore, you will only be eligible to receive full credit for a preparation assignment if it is submitted by the deadline (i.e., submissions submitted after the deadline will receive zero credit—no exceptions will be made). Your lowest preparation assignment grade will be dropped when calculating your final grade.

B) Participation

High quality class contribution involves knowing when to speak and when to listen or allow others to speak in classroom discussion. 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 concepts from the readings into your class comments. A contribution to class discussion is a comment that features one or more of the following properties:

- i) Uses logic, evidence, and data to support conclusions, and is more than an expression of an opinion or feeling;
- ii) Shows curiosity, creativity, and the willingness to experiment;
- iii) Takes into consideration the ideas already offered by others, and moves the analysis forward to generate new insights; and/or
- iv) 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, late or need to leave early, 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 a distraction to your peers and can hinder learning (Burns & Lohenry, 2010; Kuzneoff & Titsworth, 2013). The repeated misuse of an electronic device can reduce your grade by a full letter grade (e.g., a B+ would become a C+).

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. I will also hold several lunches and/or dinners to get to know you better as students. 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 have learned over the years that if we abide by them, we will create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

2) Personal Development Plan (PDP)

The purpose of the PDP is to help you develop and chart your political strategy as you enter your career. Furthermore, it serves as a mechanism for understanding how people currently working in sectors and organizations you are interested in have built power via concepts related to the course and navigated social/moral dilemmas when exercising power in their careers.

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 PDP 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 PDP, 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 and integrate these insights with course concepts, case examples, and class exercises to chart your own strategy.

A) Progress Plan and Feedback Session

To help guide your PDP and enable me to provide you advice in the context of your career, you will sign up for one of the two class sessions on either September 13 or September 18 to meet with me during the course. You must sign up for the session in advance on Canvas. In preparation for this feedback session, you should bring a printed copy of your progress plan. Your progress plan should include the following information: a 2 sentence summary of your short and long-term goals, a description of 2-3 topics from the course you are applying to your PDP, a rationale for the 3 people you are planning to interview, and what you have learned from your interviews thus far. For feedback purposes, you are also welcome to include sample questions you are planning to use for your interview at the end of your progress plan. Your progress plan should be double-spaced and no longer than 4 pages (Times New Roman, 12-point font; your sample questions does not count towards this limit). Based on this progress plan, I will give you some in-person feedback that will be helpful for developing your final PDP, and you will also learn from your classmates during this session on what you can improve.

B) Final Paper

Based on what you have learned in the course and in your informational interviews, you will submit your PDP, 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., choosing where to start, building networks, 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. Your goal should be to have a coherent strategy that is supported from topics discussed in the course and what you heard from your interviewees;
4. Ethical and social dilemmas (i.e., 2-3 potential dilemmas) that you might encounter as you implement your strategic plan 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. Appendix: Semi-structured interview protocol that you used to guide your conversations with each interviewee.

These six areas should be covered in your PDP. 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 (e.g., quotes) 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. Papers must be submitted on Canvas in time for the deadline (i.e., the start of class; 10:30 am for MGMT 272 or 12:00 pm for MGMT 772). Unless an exception is made, final paper submissions after the deadline will drop your grade by a full letter grade (e.g., a B+ would be converted into a C+). For each additional day it is late, it will be dropped additional letter grades. If your final paper is late by more than three days, you will receive a zero on the paper.

Please note: for all components of your grade, any grading inquiries must be raised within 5 days of the grade being posted.

CODE OF CONDUCT, ETHICS AND WELLNESS

1. You should be prepared and on time for all class sessions (see class contribution section).
2. You are encouraged to collaborate and obtain feedback from classmates during the course, but all submissions (e.g., preparation assignments, PDP) must be completed independently.
3. Class discussion should stay in class to ensure that we maintain a safe and open learning environment. I am a proponent of viewpoint diversity, but debates must also be conducted respectfully. I encourage students to visit www.openmindplatform.org to discover ways to cultivate their intellectual humility and openness.

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, 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

Lastly, the University of Pennsylvania offers numerous services and initiatives for wellness. Any member of the Penn community can use these services. More information can be found by calling 215-898-HELP.

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

COURSE OUTLINE

#	Date & Topics	Materials	Preparation for Class and Assignments
1	August 28 #poweritup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-semester survey on Canvas - McGinn & Lingo, "Power and Influence" (focus on p. 1-15) 	<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 complete the survey.
2	August 30 Diagnosing Power: Where to Start?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Khazan, "Finding Your Passion' is Awful Advice" - Pfeffer, "Choosing Where to Start" - 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. - Apply McGinn & Lingo's framework (i.e., personal, relational, and positional power) to Rinaldi's situation. Based on your analysis, what should she have done differently?
3	September 4 Power Play(ed): Alliances, Coalitions and Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pfeffer, "Power Play" - Stern & Westphal "Flattery Will Get You Everywhere" - In class: Galbraith and Company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on what we learned last class and from today's readings, 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. Why are these strategies valuable to you?
4	September 6 Managing Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bendersky, "How to Get Ideological Opponents to Work With You" - Case: WWF vs. Bret Hart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on the Bendersky reading for today, what could Bret Hart have done differently when managing his relationship with Vince McMahon?
5	September 11 Networks & Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 prior to class. Using the readings and simulation overview, discuss two lessons on networks that you will try to implement in the simulation.
6	September 13	PDP Progress Plan – Feedback Sessions (see syllabus, 2A)	
7	September 18	PDP Progress Plan – Feedback Sessions (see syllabus, 2A)	
8	September 20 Dealing with Intolerable Bosses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pearson and Porath, "Workplace Incivility" - Podcast clip: Steve Raucci 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflecting on the reading on incivility, think about an instance of incivility that you have seen or heard about from a friend. Consider the ways in which you can adapt the tactics you have

			learned in this course to either prevent, stop or deal with 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.
9	September 25 Losing Power and Redemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vozza, “Why Embarrassment Can Be A Good Thing” - Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld (A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many of us have a need for social esteem as we want to be liked and popular, and this makes us afraid of failing publicly. Your task is to do something that makes you unlikeable, humiliating or embarrassing in front of others. You will want to describe what you did, how it made you 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.
10	September 27 The Leftovers: Tribal Psychology, Underdogs and Other Recent Advancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Podcast Clip: Tribal Psychology - Nurmohamed, “What Behavioral Science Tells Us About Power” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach a concept you learned from the podcast and/or reading you had today to someone you think would benefit from it (it could be a family member, friend or colleague). What questions were left unanswered from that discussion? <p>Also, find one article related to article from the news on an individual, group, or organization viewed as an underdog, and bring it to class.</p>
11	October 2 With Great Power I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, “Preserving Employee Morale During Downsizing” - In class: OMGW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No preparation assignment due—it is recommended that you use this time to finalize your Personal Development Plan and have a classmate give you feedback on your paper. <p style="text-align: center;">DEADLINE: Personal Development Plan (see syllabus, 2B)</p>
	October 4		Fall Break—NO CLASS

12	October 9 With Great Power II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In class: OMGW Exercise (continued) - GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How has your understanding of downsizing changed based on the exercise you did in the last class? Provide 2-3 takeaways that you want to remember for moving forward.
13	October 11 #poweritup Capstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case: Glanton (Part A—to be distributed prior to session) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using one of the frameworks you have learned in this course, analyze what Glanton has done either effectively or ineffectively in terms of building his power.
	#poweritup Capstone (Field Trip)	<p>Please note: We will plan to meet at a location in Center City for a “field trip” that relates to the capstone of the course. It will cost you approximately \$15 to participate, and it will be approximately 1.5 hours in length. More details to come.</p>	
14	October 16 #poweritup Capstone	<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 go 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.

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/Drake, 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)