

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

Professor Samir Nurmohamed, Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00-1:30 pm, JMH 370

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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:

Components	Grade Value	Due Dates
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%	October 7 December 2 December 2-9
C) Personal Development Plan	35%	November 11

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. 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. 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 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 usually be completed on Canvas in advance of class for that day. 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, and why does it make this group powerless? 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 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 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 10 pages: 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1-inch margins on all sides) that provides a comprehensive analysis of the group studied.
3. **Final presentation** to the class as if classmates are key stakeholders to your group. 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 report and presentation should include the following key components:

1. Overview of the group you are studying, why they are powerless, and the 2-3 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);
4. Concrete recommendations (i.e., short and long term) for improving the conditions of the group.

Both the written report and class presentation 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, and the substantiation of your conclusions. 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. I will provide more details on the group project as the course unfolds, including an annotated outline for your report.

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 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.

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. Analysis 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. Examination of ethical and social dilemmas (e.g., 2-3 scenarios) that you might encounter as you implement your tactics and the concrete steps you will take to handle these dilemmas;
5. A “top 10 list” of notes to yourself about power and politics that you want to remember a year from now.

These five 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, 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.

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 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</i>
1	August 28 Course Introduction	– Pre-semester survey on Canvas	– Complete the pre-semester survey AT LEAST 2 days prior to the first class
2	September 2 The Art and Science of Power	– Harrison, “What can you learn from Machiavelli?” – Political Tendencies Assessment (on Canvas)	– Having read the Harrison piece, why are so many in business fascinated with Machiavelli’s perspective on power? – How does Machiavelli’s perspective relate to your implicit assumptions about power and politics in organizations?
3	September 4 Issue Selling	– Ashford & Detert, “Co-Creating Change in Organizations” – Oren, “Gore vs. Bush: Why It’s All Greek to Me” – Stern & Westphal “Corporate Sweet Talk” – <i>In class:</i> Issue Selling at Penn	– 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 9 Hidden Influence	– 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	– 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.

#	<i>Date & Topics</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
5	September 11 Diagnosing Power	– McGinn & Lingo, “Power and Influence” (focus on p. 1-13)	– Apply McGinn & Lingo’s framework (i.e., personal, relational, and positional power) to Green’s situation. How would you

		- Case: Thomas Green	evaluate his sources of power, and how would you evaluate his understanding of the power that is available to him?
6	September 16 Power Play(ed)	- Pfeffer, "Power Play" - <i>In class</i> : Galbraith and Company	- 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. Why will these fit your approach and perspective on power and politics?
7	September 18 Navigating the Political Terrain	- Pfeffer, "Choosing Where to Start" - Case: Martha Rinaldi	- 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.
8	September 23 Chasing Power	--	- No Assignment Due—it is recommended that you use this time to prepare for your Group Project Progress Plan
GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced			
9	September 25 Change Management and Networks I	- Battilana & Casaciara, "The Network Secrets of Great Change Agents" - Cross, Nohria, & Parker, "Six Myths about Informal Networks" - Simulation Overview (to be posted on canvas) - <i>In class</i> : Change Management Simulation	- 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 30 Change Management and Networks II	- Meyerson, "The Tempered Radicals" - Goulston, "Be More Interested than Interesting" - <i>In class</i> : Change Management Simulation Wrap-Up	- 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 ineffective in the simulation. Based on your experience, what have you learned from playing this simulation? How did Meyerson's article improve or inhibit your effectiveness? In the future when you find yourself leading change, what will you do differently?
11	October 2 Political Conflict	- Edmondson & Smith, "Too Hot to Handle"	- What caused the conflict between McMahon and Hart? How did it erupt?

- Case: WWF vs. Bret Hart
- 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 7 Group Project Progress Feedback Sessions (in class presentations—see syllabus, B. Group Project)

DEADLINE: Group Progress Plan (see syllabus, B. Group Project)

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
13	October 14 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 16 Authority and Obedience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kramer, "The Great Intimidators" - 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 Kramer's analysis of "Great Intimidators" relate to the tactics that Raucci used? What enables his version of Great Intimidators to succeed at what they do?
15	October 21 Dealing with Intolerable Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bies & Tripp, "Two Faces of the Powerless: Coping With Tyranny in Organizations" - Case: Bradford, "Dealing with a Toxic Boss" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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?
16	October 23 Speaking Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pearson and Porath, "Workplace Incivility" - <i>In class:</i> OmniPresence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflecting on the reading on incivility, think about an instance of incivility that could arise in your career. 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 28 Managing Group Differences	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Assignment Required—it is recommended that you have a draft of your personal development plan completed and swap it with a classmate for feedback.
GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced			
18	October 30 Losing Power and Redemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sonnenfeld & Ward, “Firing Back” - Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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?
19	November 4 Is There an Advantage to a Disadvantage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld (continued) - Gladwell, “How David Beats Goliath” - Keinan, Avery, and Paharia, “Capitalizing on the Underdog Effect” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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? <p>Also, find one article from the news on an individual, group, or organization viewed as an underdog, and bring it to class.</p>

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
20	November 6 With Great Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peterson, “Don’t take the wrong paths to power” - Deresiewicz, “Solitude and Leadership” 	<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 11 Virtuous Downsizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, “Preserving Employee Morale During Downsizing” 	<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?

GUEST SPEAKER: To Be Announced

DEADLINE: Personal Development Plan (see syllabus, C. Personal Development Plan)

22	November 13	- Case: Richard Glanton (to be	- How did Barnes attempt to protect his collection from others?
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#	<i>Date & Topics</i>	<i>Materials</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
	Capstone: The Foundation I	distributed in class)	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 18 Capstone: The Foundation II	– Case: Richard Glanton (Part B—to be distributed in class) – Zaller, “Who Speaks for Matisse?” (optional)	– 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.
24	November 20 The Art and Science of Power Revisited	--	– Complete the end of semester survey (details to follow via Canvas)
25	November 25 November 27	Group Project Working Session— NO CLASS TODAY (American) Thanksgiving— NO CLASS TODAY	

Group Presentations

#	<i>Date & Topics</i>	
26	December 2	DEADLINE: Presentation dates for each group will be determined in class (see syllabus, B. Group Project). All written reports for the group project are due on the first day of presentations (December 2).
27	December 4	
28	December 9	