

MBA257

Power and Politics in Organizations

Section 2
Fall 2007
Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:30 - 6:00pm
Room C220 Cheit

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Course description

This course is designed for individuals interested in learning more about the art and science of influence in organizations. Many people are ambivalent, if not disdainful, of those who seek to wield power and influence at work. But organizations are fundamentally political entities, and power and influence are key mechanisms by which *things get done*.

For those considering careers in management, it is important to be able to diagnose organizational politics in order to form and implement new strategies. In addition, managers are usually on the receiving end of these processes. An astute manager knows how to anticipate moves that others will make, how to block or avoid them when they have undesirable consequences, and how to help these moves succeed when their consequences are beneficial.

The course aims to provide you with “political intelligence” in a sense. After taking this course, you will be able to: (1) diagnose the true distribution of power in organizations, (2) identify strategies for building sources of power, (3) develop techniques for influencing others, and (4) understand the role of power in building cooperation and leading change in organizations. These skills will be invaluable throughout your career.

Course requirements

You will be evaluated on three types of work: (a) the quality of your contributions to class discussions (35%); (b) your performance on a final paper (35%); and (c) three brief memos (30%).

Participation (35%)

Much of what you gain from this course will be an exposure to the ideas and insights of other students. As such, it is essential that you come to class prepared to share your perspective with others and to test your analyses against the analyses of your classmates.

With regard to participation, quality counts more than quantity, although some of the latter is necessary to gauge the former. Quality includes, among other things: (1) action recommendations based on rigorous diagnosis; (2) insightful and constructive critiques

of others' contributions; (3) integrative comments across cases and/or courses; and (4) so called "stupid questions" that no one else is willing to take the risk to ask.

Final paper (35%)

There is no final exam for this course. Instead, there is a paper designed to help you strategize for the next few years of your career (as well as beyond). It will give you an opportunity to apply the concepts and lessons of this course to your first position after graduation, or your current position if you are now employed. (Note: You can also write the paper about the type of job you will likely take after graduation, or about the different types of jobs you are choosing between, if you have not yet secured employment.)

Your paper should address the following five questions:

1. What are the power dynamics inherent in your current/future job?
2. What are the kinds of political and ethical dilemmas for which you will need to be vigilant?
3. What sources of power and influence will you need to be effective?
4. Do your current sources of power and influence fit the requirements of the job?
5. What is your plan for developing the sources of power, influence skills, and partnerships necessary to be effective: (1) currently / before taking the job, (2) during your first months after graduating, and (3) by the end of your first year after graduating?

Final papers should be typed double-spaced (12-point font) and be no longer than 10 pages. The paper is due December 13th. Your grade will reflect the breadth and depth of your analysis and the creative insights you offer. Penalties will be exacted for papers that exceed the length limit and/or are late.

It will not be easy to write a paper that adopts a prospective temporal focus. For some of you, how can you analyze a position that you have not yet held? One way to do so is to talk to people who are already there so that you can "get it straight from the horse's mouth." As part of this assignment, you are required to conduct three informational interviews with people who are either currently in the position you seek or are qualified to speak about the political environment that surrounds it. You can go about identifying potential interviewees using two sources: (1) your existing contacts, and/or (2) the Haas alumni network.

Due: December 13th

****Note:** Again, if you have not settled yet on your post-graduate employment, I am very flexible on the topic of the final paper. You can write the paper about the type of job you will likely take, or about the different types of jobs you are choosing between. I want the paper to be maximally useful for you.

Memos (30%)

During the course of the semester, you will need to draft three written memos. I expect these three written assignments to be relatively brief (each memo is limited to 500 words ~ 2 pages double-spaced). As a set, they are intended to help you reflect and digest the course concepts. They have also proved useful for preparing the final paper.

MEMO A: Describe a situation you have faced in your career that relates to a point we discussed in class. I don't want you to regurgitate what we have covered in class. Instead, apply the concepts we have introduced to dissect a particular episode or relationship you now better understand.

The purpose of this memo is to present thoughts and reactions to the material covered in a given class. The criteria for this assignment are similar to the criteria for a good comment in class. That is, the memo should be relevant, concise, and extend the analysis of the class material in a useful way. In writing this memo, you should assume that we share the common ground of the class experience and start from there. Don't waste time summarizing the case or the class discussion.

I want to encourage you to think about and apply the material in the class and to force you to organize your thoughts on paper. I find that I understand things much better when I force myself to write them down clearly. I hope this memo will give you an incentive to do this sort of clarifying.

Due: October 4th at the beginning of class

MEMO B: What are your goals, with respect to power and influence, for the next five years of your career? For the following five years? (e.g., What position(s) would you like to attain? What broader goals do you have that will require some degree of power and influence?)

For many of you, this may be a difficult memo to write because you are not used to adopting a long-term perspective in thinking about your career path. Nevertheless, identifying a set of long-term goals is a necessary first step in taking a course such as this. Having no clear set of goals is like having no clear sense of direction. Although you may struggle with this endeavor, please be patient with it and give it your best effort.

Due: November 1st at the beginning of class

MEMO C: Think about the three interviews you have conducted for your final paper. Why did you choose these individuals? What are some primary insights you gained from these conversations? Think also

about the interviewees themselves, and why they might have the perspectives they do. What aspects of their backgrounds, jobs, experiences might have shaped their views of their job's political dynamics?

In your final paper, you do not have to review each of the points outlined in this memo. Instead, the purpose of this memo (and the interviews themselves) is to strengthen your understanding of the political environment that you will face in your next position. Indirectly, these points will likely inform your thinking about the position and how you go about writing the final paper.

Due: November 29th at the beginning of class

Required course materials

Course reader, which is available on Study.net.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey. Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations. Harvard Business School Press.

Cialdini, R. B. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion. New York: William Morrow.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

I: Navigating the Political Arena

WEEK 1

Tuesday, August 28th – Introduction

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 1, “Decisions and Implementation.”

Thursday, August 30th – A Profile of the Naïve Politician

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 2, “When is Power Used?”
Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 3, “Diagnosing Power and Dependence”
Jick, T. & Gentile, M. “Donna Dubinsky” *HBS case*

Case: Donna Dubinsky and Apple Computer, Inc.

1. Why was Donna Dubinsky initially successful at Apple Computer? (1981-1984)
2. How and why did things begin to unravel?
3. How did Dubinsky react and why?
4. What should she have done differently?

Video: In the second half of this class, we will watch a short video in which Donna Dubinsky explains her actions.

II: Identifying Power Bases

WEEK 2

Tuesday September 4th and Thursday September 6th – Resources

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 4, "Perspectives on Where Power Comes From."
Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 5, "Resources, Allies, and the New Golden Rule."
Caro, TPB, Ch. 10, "The Best Bill Drafter in Albany,"
Caro, TPB, Ch. 11, "The Majesty of the Law,"
Caro, TPB, Ch. 12, "Robert Moses and the Creature of the Machine."

Case: Robert Moses

Video: Excerpts from Rick Burns' "New York"

1. What were Moses' sources of power?
2. What tactics did Moses use to develop these sources of power?
3. What sources of power did Moses lack? What sources of power did his opponents have? Why weren't they more effective against him?
4. If you had been an opponent of Moses (for instance, a wealthy Long Island land owner, or an upstate Republican), what might you have done to oppose him more effectively?
5. There are many different opinions about Robert Moses. Some hail him as an unselfish hero. Others criticize him for destroying New York's ethnic neighborhoods. What is your opinion? Is Moses a model or a monster?

WEEK 3

Tuesday September 11th – Networks

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 6, "Location in the Communication Network."
Valley, "Heidi Roizen" *HBS case*

Case: Heidi Roizen

1. What steps did Roizen take, over various jobs, to develop a network? To maintain it?
2. What are the strengths of Roizen's network as we see it at the end of the case? The weaknesses?
3. What suggestions would you give Roizen for adjusting and maintaining her network as she becomes more involved as an Internet venture capitalist?
4. What has made Roizen so successful?

Video: A conversation with Heidi Roizen

Thursday September 13th – Alliances

Readings: Hill, L., "Amelia Rogers at Tassani Communication" *HBS case*

Case: Amelia Rogers at Tassani Communication

1. What is going on here? Why did Burns call Johnson? Why did Johnson call Rodgers?
2. What should Rogers do? Should she speak to Burns? Should she speak to Paglia? (Please be specific about the influence strategy and tactics she should use)

WEEK 4

Tuesday September 18th and Thursday September 20th – Improvisation

Speaker: Roy Jenkins

Mr. Jenkins was a staff writer for "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," where he won two Writers' Guild Awards, and received two Emmy nominations. He has also a writer/producer on the Spike TV network's "Most Extreme Elimination Challenge." He was a member of the Groundlings main company from 1995 to 2000 and has directed both the Sunday and the Main Companies. Film credits include "A Night at the Roxbury," "Anchorman," "Thank You for Smoking." and the Farrelly's Bros. not-yet-released "The Heartbreak Kid" starring Ben Stiller. Television credits include "Mad TV," "Suddenly Susan," "Significant Others," "Free Ride" and "Campus Ladies." He is a graduate of Yale University where he was a member of the Whiffenpoofs.

The Groundlings is the premiere comedy troupe on the West Coast. Its alumni include Will Ferrell, Phil Hartman, Lisa Kudrow, Julia Sweeney, Jon Lovitz, Laraine Newman, Chris Parnell, Chris Kattan, Cheri Oteri, Maya Rudolph, Ana Gasteyer, and Kathy Griffin. They have provided improvisational training for over 30 years to companies like The Gap, Calvin Klein, NEC, Universal/MCA Records, Anderson Consulting, and universities like Stanford, UCLA, and the University of Wisconsin.

Note: This week will be divided up into two separate sessions to keep the sessions small. The first session will be held on Tuesday and the second session will be held on Thursday. **You only need to attend one of the two sessions (I'll let you know in class how you can sign up). BOTH SESSIONS WILL BE HELD IN S489.**

WEEK 5

Tuesday September 25th – Reputation and Performance

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 7, "Formal Authority, Reputation, and Performance."
Caro, TPTP, Ch. 13, "On His Way,"

Case: Lyndon Johnson – Part I

1. What things did Johnson do to build his reputation?
2. What was Johnson's formal authority? What did he do to obtain more authority?
3. How did Johnson think about effective performance in his job? What did performance mean to him?
4. What strategies did Johnson use to acquire resources useful for exercising power?

Thursday September 27th – Individual Attributes

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 9, "Individual Attributes as Sources of Power."
Caro, TPTP, Ch. 16, "In Tune."

Case: Lyndon Johnson – Part II

1. What are the sources of power that Johnson possessed or developed?
2. Which personal characteristics and aptitudes did Johnson demonstrate?
3. What structural or cultural sources of power did Johnson have or acquire?

WEEK 6

Tuesday October 2nd – Subunit Importance

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 8, "The Importance of Being in the Right Unit."
Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 14, "Changing Structure to Consolidate Power."
Friedman, "Black Caucus Groups at Xerox Corporation (A)", *HBS case*

Case: Black Caucus Groups at Xerox Corporation

1. Which sources of power were not available to black employees at the beginning of the case?
2. What different tactics did employees use to gain access to the different sources of power?
3. David Kearns has many constituencies to which he must answer. What position should Kearns take at the Toronto meeting?
4. As a leader of one of the black caucus groups, how would you approach the Toronto meeting? What is your most important goal at this meeting?

Video: Black Caucus Groups at Xerox Corporation

Thursday October 4th – Advice from the Field

(NO READINGS)

Speakers: In this session, three Haas MBA alumni will visit us to share their thoughts about acquiring and wielding power in one's career. In the first half of class, each speaker will be asked to comment briefly on a range of topics, including (1) How do you exercise influence even without authority (i.e., manage laterally or even upward)? (2) What can you do if you are in a relatively powerless unit? (3) What are some effective ways to build your network? (4) How do you manage others? In the second half of class, students will ask the members of the panel specific questions relating to each of the three topics and others that arise during the course of our discussion.

***REMINDER: Memo A is due at the beginning of Thursday's class.**

III: Strategies and Tactics for Acquiring and Exercising Power

WEEK 7

Tuesday October 9th – Power and Communication

Reading: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 13, "The Politics of Information and Analysis."
Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 15, "Symbolic Action: Language, Ceremonies,
and Settings."
Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why."

(No case)

Thursday October 11th – Nonverbal Communication and Detecting Deception

Reading: Wheeler & Nelson, "Nonverbal Communication," *HBS Note*

(No case)

WEEK 8

Tuesday October 16th – Leaderless Group Discussion

(NO READINGS)

Exercise: Compensation Committee Task

There is no preparation needed for this class. You will receive materials for the exercise at the beginning of the class. The first 20 minutes of class will be spent preparing for the exercise.

Thursday October 18th – How Group Members Acquire Power: Part I

(NO READINGS)

Video: *Twelve Angry Men*

This movie, which some of you may have seen before, focuses on the deliberations of a jury. Our objective in viewing it is to examine the myriad influence strategies used by the protagonist to change the opinions of other jury members and to exercise influence over the group.

WEEK 9

Tuesday October 23rd – How Group Members Acquire Power: Part II

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 11 “Interpersonal influence.”

Case: *Twelve Angry Men* (We will debrief the movie)

1. What are Henry Fonda’s sources of power?
2. Which tactics did he use to influence others?
3. Why was he effective?
4. What tactics did you use effectively in the Compensation Committee Task that you saw Fonda’s character use in the film? What tactics did you notice Fonda’s character use that you could have also used, but did not?

Thursday October 25th – Managing Crisis

Readings: Stewart, “The Kona Files: How an obsession with leaks brought scandal to Hewlett-Packard,” *New Yorker article*

Speakers: A panel of Hewlett-Packard insiders with detailed knowledge of HP’s “spying” scandal will visit our class. They will discuss the HP surveillance program in which journalists as well as HP’s own Directors were monitored. The session will largely center on Patricia Dunn, the protagonist in the *New Yorker* article. During the first part of the session, the panel will share their thoughts, and the rest of the session will be Q&A.

Case: Patricia Dunn at Hewlett-Packard

1. Did politics among board members play a role in this scandal (leading up to the leaks, throughout the investigation, or after the investigation)?
2. Should Patricia Dunn have handled the leaks differently? If so, how?
3. Were there ethical boundaries crossed? If so, when?
4. How would you have handled the leaks, the investigation, or the fallout of the scandal differently, if at all?

***Note. This session will be held Thursday, October 25th, at 8:15pm in the Wells Fargo Room (it is a joint session of MBA/EWMBA257-1 / MBA257-2).**

WEEK 10

Tuesday October 30th – Influence and Persuasion: Part I

Readings: Cialdini, Influence, Ch. 1, "Weapons of Influence."
Cialdini, Influence, Ch. 2, "Reciprocation."
Cialdini, Influence, Ch. 3, "Commitment and Consistency."

(no case)

Video: *The Principles of Influence*

In this video, Dr. Robert Cialdini discusses the Six Principles of Influence. It will give you an introduction to the topic straight from the original source – Dr. Cialdini conducted the research studies that underlie the lessons this week.

Thursday November 1st – Influence and Persuasion: Part II

Readings: Cialdini, Influence, Ch. 4, "Social Proof."
Cialdini, Influence, Ch. 5, "Liking."

(no case)

***REMINDER: Memo B is due at the beginning of Thursday's class.**

IV: Managing with Power

WEEK 11

Tuesday November 6th – Managing your Team: Part I

(NO READINGS)

Exercise: Tanagram

There is no preparation needed for this class. You will receive materials for the exercise at the beginning of the class. The first portion of class will be spent preparing for the exercise.

Thursday November 8th – Managing your Team: Part II

Readings: Kotter, "Relations with subordinates: Coping with dependence on a complex human system"

Case: Today we will debrief the Tanagram exercise.

WEEK 12

Tuesday November 13th – Leveraging your Team’s Capabilities: Part I

(NO READINGS)

Exercise: Murder Mystery

There is no preparation needed for this class. You will receive materials for the exercise at the beginning of the class. The first portion of class will be spent preparing for the exercise.

Thursday November 15th – Leveraging your Team’s Capabilities: Part II

Readings: Thompson, “Team Decision Making: Pitfalls, and Solutions”
Thompson, “Conflict in Teams: Leveraging Differences to Create Opportunity”

Case: Today we will debrief the Murder Mystery exercise.

WEEK 13

THANKSGIVING BREAK: Tuesday November 20th and Thursday November 22nd

Class will not meet this week. Please take this time to work on your final papers and finish your interviews if necessary.

WEEK 14

Tuesday November 27th – Star Power

(NO READINGS)

Exercise: Star Power

This session will be held in the Wells Fargo Room. There is no preparation needed for today's exercise. You will receive all the materials and instructions in class.

Thursday November 29th – How Power is Lost

Readings: Kramer, "The Harder They Fall," *HBR Article*
Auletta, "Power, Greed and Glory on Wall Street."
Auletta, "The Men, the Money, the Merger."

Case: Lehman Brothers

1. What did Glucksman do to orchestrate Peterson's ouster?
2. What happened to Glucksman's power base once he took over?
3. How did Glucksman's personality traits help lead to his fate?
4. What should Glucksman have done differently?

***REMINDER: Memo C is due at the beginning Thursday's class**

WEEK 15

Tuesday December 4th – Encountering Ethical Issues Part I

Readings: Kotter, J., “Excerpts from Blind Ambition” *HBS case*

Case: Blind Ambition

1. How did John Dean get into this mess?
2. How could he have avoided this situation? Be specific.
3. Could this ever happen to you?

Thursday December 6th – Encountering Ethical Issues Part II and Wrap-Up

Readings: MWP, Ch. 18, "Managing with Power."

We will finish discussing ethical issues and also wrap up the class, discuss your final papers, and revisit our ambivalence toward using power. You should spend some time both thinking alone and talking with other class members about your feelings toward managing power and what that implies for your choice of a job and a place to work.

***REMINDER: The final paper is due on December 13th.**