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 (30%); (b) your performance on a final paper (40%); and (c) three brief memos (30%).

Participation (30%)

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.

All class sessions will involve active discussion based on the readings and cases, with an emphasis both on theoretical questions and practical implications. You should be prepared to share your ideas and to listen to and interpret the issues presented by others. Keep in mind that your goal should be to contribute high quality, rather than high quantity, discussion comments and questions. High quality contributions reflect (a)
rigorous analysis or diagnosis, (b) integration across material, and/or (c) thoughtful recommendations for the characters in cases or your peers in the classroom.

Attendance and participation in each class session is expected. If you must miss a class, it is essential that you notify me at least 24 hours in advance so I can make arrangements for any in-class exercises.

Final paper (40%)

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 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.)

For part-time students, your paper should address the following five questions:

1. What are the power dynamics inherent in your current job?
2. What are the kinds of political and ethical dilemmas for which you need to be vigilant?
3. What sources of power and influence do 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?

For full-time students, you can write your paper about the type of job you will likely take after graduation, or about the different types of jobs you are choosing between. It will not be easy to write a paper that adopts a prospective temporal focus. As part of this assignment, you are required to conduct three informational interviews with people who are either currently in the position(s) you seek or are qualified to speak about the political environment that surrounds the position(s). You can identify potential interviewees using two sources: (1) your existing contacts, and/or (2) the Stern alumni network. Your paper should address the following five questions:

1. What are the power dynamics inherent in the job(s) you are considering?
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; 1-inch margins) and be no longer than 10 pages. 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.

Due: December 13 at the beginning of class
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: 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: September 27 at the beginning of class

MEMO B: 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 25 at the beginning of class

MEMO C: Describe two situations in your professional life, one in which you have flourished and one in which you have had difficulty. What
aspects of your personality, skills, or abilities contributed to your outcomes in each situation? What about your relationships or social network contributed to your outcomes in each situation?

Due: November 15 at the beginning of class

Required course materials

Available online through the NYU Professional Bookstore, http://www.bookstores.nyu.edu/professional.store/:

- Power and Politics Harvard Case/Reading packet.

Additional readings and other course materials will be provided on Blackboard or handed out in class.
COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

I: The Importance of Power and Influence

September 20: Introduction, A Profile of the Naïve Politician

Readings:
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 1, “Decisions and Implementation”
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 2, “When is Power Used?”
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 3, “Diagnosing Power and Dependence”
- Jick & Gentile “Donna Dubinsky”

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?

II: Acquiring Power

September 27: The Acquisition and Distribution of Resources

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

Readings:
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 4, "Perspectives on Where Power Comes From"
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 5, "Resources, Allies, and the New Golden Rule"

Video (in class): At the beginning of class, we will watch a short video in which Donna Dubinsky explains her actions in the case from last week.

Case (in class video):
- Excerpts from Rick Burns' “New York” about Robert Moses
  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, 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?

October 4: Starpower

Exercise: Star Power

There is no preparation needed for today's class.
October 11: Networks and Alliances

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 6, "Location in the Communication Network"
Valley, "Heidi Roizen" HBS case
Hill, "Amelia Rogers at Tassani Communications" 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?

Case: Amelia Rogers at Tassani Communication
1. What is going on here? Why did Burns call Johnson? Why did Johnson
   call Rogers?
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)

Video (in class): A conversation with Heidi Roizen

October 18: Reputation, Performance, & Individual Attributes

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 7, "Formal Authority, Reputation, and Performance"
Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 9, "Individual Attributes as Sources of Power"
Caro, TPTP, Ch. 13, "On His Way"
Caro, TPTP, Ch. 16, "In Tune"

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?

Part II:
5. What are the sources of power that Johnson possessed or
   developed?
6. Which personal characteristics and aptitudes did Johnson
   demonstrate?
7. What structural or cultural sources of power did Johnson have or
   acquire?
October 25: Formal Structure, Informal Networks, & Subunit Performance

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

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*  
Pfeffer, “Pacific Gas and Electric” *Stanford GSB 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 (in class):  
Black Caucus Groups at Xerox Corporation

Case:  
Pacific Gas and Electric  
1. What was the environment in which PG&E was operating?  
2. What power advantages did engineering possess? What advantages did the lawyers possess?  
3. Why did the lawyers take over so completely at PG&E?  
4. If you had been in engineering or operations, what might you have done to retain more of your power?

III: Exerting Influence

November 1: Change Simulation

There is no preparation needed for today’s class.

November 8: Conflict in Negotiations and Groups

Reading:  
Keros & McGinn, “Basil ‘Buzz’ Hargrove and de Haviland, Inc.” *HBS case*

Case:  
Basil ‘Buzz’ Hargrove and de Haviland, Inc.  
1. What are the crucial issues facing Buzz Hargrove at the end of the case?  
2. Why was Hargrove unable to convince Gray and the rest of the bargaining committee to support what Hargrove believed was an excellent proposal from de Havillard management?
3. Compare and evaluate Hargrove’s and Gray’s sources of power. How do these different power bases affect the events we see unfolding in the case?

4. If you were in Hargrove’s position at the end of the case, what would be your action plan for getting the proposal accepted?

**Video (in class):** Hargrove and de Havilland

**Exercise:** Murder Mystery

**November 15: Communicating for Influence I: Strategies for Audiences**

*REMINDER: Memo C is due at the beginning of class.*

**Reading:**
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 10 "Framing: How We Look at Things Affects How They Look"
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 13 "The Politics of Information and Analysis"
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 15, "Symbolic Action: Language, Ceremonies and Settings"
- Ridout & Fenn, “Job Corps” *HBS case*

**Case:** Job Corps

1. What interpersonal influence tactics does Bill Kelly use to try to save Job Corps? How does he use the concepts of reciprocity and consistency (from the Cialdini reading for this week)?
2. How does Kelly use data to make his case at the congressional hearings? How does he use stories?
3. Do you see any influence or presentation strategies that could have backfired for Kelly?

**Exercise:** Kidney Transplant Dilemma

**November 29: Communicating for Influence II: Interpersonal Strategies**

**Reading:**
- Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 11 “Interpersonal influence”
- Tannen, “The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why” *HBR article*

**Exercise:** Lie Detection

**Exercise:** Performance Appraisal Exercise

**Reading (after class):**
- Wheeler & Nelson, “Nonverbal Communication in Negotiation” *HBS note*
IV: Managing Your Career

December 6: Beginnings and Endings I: Seizing Place and Time

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 12, "Timing is (Almost) Everything"
          Kramer, “The Harder They Fall” HBR article
          Auletta, "Power, Greed and Glory on Wall Street" Times article
          Auletta, "The Men, the Money, the Merger" Times article

Case: Lehman Brothers
      1. What did Glucksman do to orchestrate Peterson's ouster?
      2. What was favorable, and what was less favorable, about
         Glucksman's timing in his ousting Peterson?
      3. What happened to Glucksman's power base once he took over?
      4. How did Glucksman's personality traits contribute to his fate?
      5. What should Glucksman have done differently?

In class: We will be visited by a panel of graduates from Stern who will talk about their
experience with career choices and developing and using power and influence on the
job.

December 13: Beginnings and Endings II: Encountering Ethical Issues

*REMINDER: Your final paper is due at the beginning of class.

Readings: Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 16, "Even the Mighty Might Fall: How Power is Lost"
          Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 17, "Managing Political Dynamics Productively"
          Pfeffer, MWP, Ch. 18, "Managing with Power"
          Dean, “Reaching for the Top, Touching Bottom”
          Dean, excerpts from “Blind Ambition” HBS case (continuation of Reaching
          for the Top…) (on Blackboard)

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?

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 thinking about your feelings toward managing
power and what that implies for your career.