

OB 6331 - POWER AND POLITICS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Richard Harrison

Course Objectives

Management or administration involves getting things done, and getting things done requires developing and exercising power and influence. This course has as its objectives: (1) increasing your understanding of power and political processes - where power comes from, the conditions under which it is used, strategies for power and influence; (2) developing your clinical skills in seeing and recognizing power and influence in action; (3) recognizing ethical issues associated with the use of power; (4) having you think about your own views of power and influence, including what strategies and tactics you are comfortable with; and (5) learning how you can exercise power effectively (or not) to accomplish managerial objectives and advance your career.

Required Texts:

Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Managing with Power*. Harvard Business School, 1992.

Robert Hoyk and Paul Hersey, *The Ethical Executive*, Stanford Business Books, 2008.

Course Structure

Class will be conducted in a mixed discussion and lecture format, relying on active student participation in class. Discussions will be based on the Pfeffer text, on the Hoyk and Hersey book, on supplemental cases, and on personal experience. Class members will also prepare a paper on the analysis of organizational power (described below) and will form groups of four to five members to facilitate class discussions and to make a group presentation in the final class period. There will also be a take-home exam due by email on November 5 in lieu of a class meeting.

Grading: Grades will be determined as follows (no pluses or minuses):

Take-home Exam	25%
Term Paper	40%
Group Final Presentation	15%
Class Participation	20%

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 6:00-7:00p.m., after class, and by appointment. Office: SOM 4.214.
Contact: harrison@utdallas.edu.

Academic Honesty

Work submitted for credit should be the work of the class member alone (or the group for group assignments). You may consult library materials, web resources, and other informational sources, but may not receive assistance from others in writing individual papers and the exam. Cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records are expressly prohibited by UTD (see the appendix to this syllabus for additional information, including possible sanctions).

Sign up for electronic access to course communications. Send an email message to my teaching assistant (to be determined), with the subject line “**OB 6331 Student.**” Most cases must be purchased as a “course packet” because they require royalty payments. The link to one public-domain case (Chipco) and the associated discussion questions are attached to this syllabus. The sign-up process will facilitate any additional communications outside of class as the need arises, such as for the November 12 discussion of the Bartz firing.

Schedule of Assignments

- 8/27 Introduction
- 9/3 Pfeffer film; March film on leadership; H&H Intro and Part I
- 9/10 Pfeffer, Ch. 1-2
- 9/17 Pfeffer, Ch. 3-4; H&H Part II; Symantec Case
- 9/24 Pfeffer, Ch. 5-6; Rondell Data Corporation Case
- 10/1 Pfeffer, Ch. 7-8; Jeffrey Sonnenfeld Case (A & B)*
- 10/8 Pfeffer, Ch. 9-10; Star Distributors, Inc Case (A & B)
- 10/15 Pfeffer, Ch. 11-12; Chipco Case
- 10/22 Pfeffer, Ch. 13; Standard Financial Services Case
- 10/29 Pfeffer, Ch. 14-15; Federal Radar Case; Take-home exam distributed
- 11/5 Examination: Take-home exam due by email; no class meeting
- 11/12 Pfeffer, Ch. 16; Thomas Green Case; Bartz firing discussion
- 11/19 Enron film; H&H Parts III-IV
- 11/26 Fall Break (no class)
- 12/3 Pfeffer, Ch. 17-18; Term Papers Due
- 12/10 Group Presentations

* Sonnenfeld discusses recovering from career catastrophes in Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward, “Firing Back: How Great Leaders Rebound After Career Disasters,” *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1), January 2007, pp. 76-84. However, according to the terms of the license from Harvard, electronic access to this article through UTD is for individual use only and is not intended for use as assigned course material.

Term Paper

The term paper may be either (1) a political analysis of an actual organization; or (2) a conceptual or theoretical paper on some aspect of power and politics in organizations, covered in more depth than in class, such as political aspects of race or gender in organizations, the politics of board oversight of corporations, or ethical dilemmas in the use of power. Most students choose option 1, which is discussed in the next paragraphs; students interested in option 2 should discuss the topic with me to be sure it is appropriate for the course.

For option 1, the topic should be a real organization. It could be a business firm, a non-profit, a government organization (e.g., the City of Richardson, the Dallas School Board, the Centers for Disease Control, or some part or agency of a foreign government), UTD, etc., or some part of the organization such as a division or the Dallas or regional office of a larger organization. An important need here is access to information about the organization, which could come from personal knowledge, key informants, press reports, web sites, and/or other sources. Keep in mind that you are unlikely ever to get all the information you would like to have and will need to do the best you can with whatever information you can find; public organizations generally disclose much more information than businesses, which is especially helpful for students who are not employed. Since I will evaluate your paper primarily on your application and use of course material and ideas, it is desirable to choose an organization or part of an organization that has some degree of structural differentiation (multiple subunits rather than work groups) because a substantial portion of the course addresses power issues among structural subunits and their managers.

A general analysis of the organization for some time period is a possibility. Or you may prefer to focus on particular events in the organization, such as a merger, a reorganization, a change in leadership, or the handling of a crisis.

The paper should include (1) a diagnosis of power at some level of the organization, using the matrix approach presented in class, with a brief description of your methodology (if the paper focuses on an event, a “before and after” diagnosis may be useful) and a discussion in appropriate places of how your diagnosis is related to other aspects of your paper; (2) a discussion of political strategies and tactics used by organizational subunits and/or managers; (3) other class-related issues as relevant, such as political dynamics, sources of power, and conditions for the use of power; and (4) recommendations for how some person(s) – this could be you – or subunits could have better managed their political situation or could do so in the future. Recommendations should be linked to the analysis presented in the paper.

There is no specified page requirement. I’ve seen great ten-page papers, and poor ones that were much longer. The average has been around 15 pages, not counting attachments. The paper should be double spaced in font size 12 with one-inch margins, printed on only one side of the page, and stapled in the upper left-hand corner (no covers or binders). All papers will be treated as strictly confidential, and will be returned only under specific instructions from you; papers not picked up will be stored securely for some time and then destroyed.

Appendix: Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, and sabotage. Forms of academic dishonesty relevant for this course include: failure to contribute to a group project (determined by the unanimous consent of the other group members); downloading or using text from the Internet or other sources without proper attribution; unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing the take-home exam and the term paper; and submitting a substantial portion of the same academic work more than once (for example, from papers for other classes) without written authorization from the instructor.

Students found responsible for academic dishonesty will, at a minimum, receive a zero for the affected course component. Sanctions will be administered only after a student has been found officially responsible for academic dishonesty, either through waiving his/her right for a disciplinary hearing, or being declared responsible after a hearing administered by Judicial Affairs and the Dean of Student's Office. The School of Management also reserves the right to review a student's disciplinary record, on file with the Dean of Students, as one of the criteria for determining a student's eligibility for a scholarship.

Investigative Procedures

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System, Part 1, Chapter VI, Section 3, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the Course Syllabus, Page 8, University's Handbook of Operating Procedures. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SSB 4.400, 972/883- 6391).

Under authority delegated by the Dean of Students, a faculty member who has reason to suspect that a student has engaged in academic dishonesty may conduct a conference with the student in compliance with the following procedures:

- (i) the student will be informed that he/she is believed to have committed an act or acts of academic dishonesty in violation of University rules;
- (ii) the student will be presented with any information in the knowledge or possession of the instructor which tends to support the allegation(s) of academic dishonesty;
- (iii) the student will be given an opportunity to present information on his/her behalf;
- (iv) after meeting with the student, the faculty member may choose not to refer the allegation if he/she determines that the allegations are not supported by the evidence; or
- (v) after meeting with the student, the faculty member may refer the allegations to the Dean of Students along with a referral form and all supporting documentation of the alleged violation;
- (vi) the faculty member may not impose independent sanctions upon the student in lieu of a referral to the Dean of Students, but may recommend sanctions if the allegations are substantiated.

If the faculty member chooses not to meet with the student and instead forwards the appropriate documentation directly to the Dean of Students, he/she should attempt to inform the student of the allegation and notify the student that the information has been forwarded to the Office of Dean of Students for investigation.

If an allegation of academic dishonesty is referred to the Dean of Students, the student remains responsible for all academic exercises and syllabus requirements until the matter is resolved, and may remain in class if the student's presence in the class does not interfere with the professor's ability to teach the class or the ability of other class members to learn. The Dean shall proceed under the guidelines in the Handbook of Operating Procedures, Chapter 49, Subchapter C, which specifies student rights in the investigation and provides for a hearing if the allegation is disputed. If the allegation is substantiated, the Dean will determine appropriate sanctions.

CHIPCO Case

Please read the article on cultural framing by Howard-Greenville and Hoffman in the *Academy of Management Executive* (2003). The article includes a case study of “Chipco” beginning on page 76, which will serve as the basis for discussion.

Link to the article: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4165957.pdf>

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you describe the culture at Chipco? Why did it embrace environmental goals?
2. What was the traditional role of the Envirosystems group, and how much influence did it have in the past?
3. What political tactics did Envirosystems use to influence work on the HAP emissions reduction project?
4. More generally, what are the advantages and limitations of using cultural framing as an influence tactic?