2178: Power and Influence in Organizations and Politics
Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University
Spring 2010
Tuesday, 6:45 – 8:25 p.m.

Professor Joe Magee
email: joe.magee@nyu.edu
Office: Puck 3059, Phone: 212-998-7490
Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. or by appointment

Prerequisites
• 1020: Managing Public Service Organizations
• Completion of equivalent of two full-time semesters

Course Goals and Objectives
Organizations are political entities, and politics happen in an organizational context. Power and influence are behind much of what is accomplished in both organizations and politics. Power is the driving force behind social change and the production of public goods; however, many dreams have gone unrealized and political careers have been shattered because of an insufficient understanding of the dynamics of power and influence.

The goal of Power and Influence in Organizations and Politics is to develop your understanding of power and techniques of analyzing influence processes. After you have completed the course, you will be able to identify more effectively the reasons for others’ behavior and influence events toward the ends that you desire. You also will have confronted what power means to you and the role you would like it to play in your career.

Course Format
During each session, our goals will be to understand the meaning of particular aspects of power or influence and to explore effective and ineffective strategies related to those aspects. We will accomplish this by discussing key concepts introduced in the readings, analyzing related cases about individuals and/or organizations, engaging in exercises, and writing analytic and reflective essays.

Preparing for Class
The readings in your course packet provide key insights into behavior and its impact on other people and on performance. To be sure you have grasped the point of each piece, ask yourself:

• What is the author’s main argument?
• What are the key concepts and principles introduced?
• How does this matter for an organization?
• What are the implications for the kinds of challenges I face as a leader, a manager, a policy analyst, an urban planner, or a financial analyst?
• How can I apply this to my organization, my job, and/or my career?

The cases provide concrete situations to which you should apply the concepts introduced in articles. They are of primary importance for class discussion.
**Grading**
Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements:

- 25% Class participation
- 30% Reflection papers
- 45% Final paper

**Class Participation:** 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.

Because this is the first time this course has been taught at Wagner and your career interests are so varied, I would like to work together with you to create a *Power and Influence Toolbox* as the course progresses. During the last 15 minutes of each session, we will discuss practical and effective personal, organizational, and political action strategies based on the course material. I will facilitate this process, but our collective engagement will help distill our discussions to their critical elements. During the final session we will review the *Toolbox*, integrating all that we have learned into prescriptive advice for practitioners of management and politics. This will be one of your contributions to future generations of Wagner students.

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.

**Reflection Papers:** The three reflection papers are designed to encourage you to relate the class material to your own life and career. In writing the papers, you should assume that we share the knowledge of the class readings and discussions. Do not waste space regurgitating what we have read before class or discussed during class. Rather, use the space to reflect on how the material applies to you. The guidelines for each one are listed in the syllabus under the session when it is due. Each one should be 2 pages and should follow the formatting guidelines for all written assignments. Please hand them in at the start of the appropriate session.

**Final Paper:** You have two options for the final paper; one must be completed individually, the other must be completed in teams of three students. If you choose to do the team paper, you are responsible for forming the team yourselves and letting me know the names of the members of your team by Session 3. The paper should be 5 – 10 pages in length and should follow the formatting guidelines for all written assignments in this class.

1. **Individual paper:** Choose an organization (a student club, a department, a small organization, an agency) of which you are a member (a volunteer or a paid employee). Using concepts from class, try to influence some issue or outcome. Keep notes as the process unfolds to avoid any bias due to memory or hindsight. Write an analysis of your experience. The analysis should include the following components: a) What are you trying to accomplish?, b) How are you trying to influence the situation?, c) What did you do? What was effective and why? What was not effective and why?, d) Integrate your
experience with concepts from class (i.e., Was it consistent with what we learned in
class? Why or why not?), and e) What lessons can you derive from this experience with
power?

2. **Team paper**: Using concepts from class, analyze the influence of organizations and/or
politicians in an election or in the formation or implementation of a policy. The use of
power is more visible (and more interesting) when there is opposition, resistance, or
conflict, so it would be wise to look for a contentious issue. This paper should involve
original research including, but not limited to, searching the media (e.g., newspapers,
magazines, television, radio), journals and books in the library, and conversations or
interviews with the people involved. The analysis should include the following
components: a) What were the parties trying to accomplish, b) How did they try to
influence the situation? What was effective and why? What was not effective and why?,
c) Integrate your observations with concepts from class (i.e., Was it consistent with what
we learned in class? Why or why not?), and d) What recommendations would you make
for any of the parties going forward?

**Guidelines for Written Assignments**

One general guideline to consider is to favor depth over breadth. That is, papers covering fewer
topics tend to also display more thorough analysis than assignments trying to cover more topics.
Please do not seek extensions or exceptions to deadlines except in cases of emergency. Late
assignments will be deducted by 10% for every 24-hour period past the deadline.

**Formatting**: Written assignments should be submitted in 12-point font, left justified, with 1-inch
margins, numbered pages, and no longer than the page limit specified for the assignment.

**Readings**

**Required**

1. The course packet containing many required readings and all cases is available for
purchase at the Unique Copy Center, 252A Greene Street.
2. The remaining required readings are available via links on the course Blackboard
website.

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

As members of the NYU Wagner community, we are all expected to adhere to high standards of
intellectual and academic integrity. You can view our Academic Code at the following URL:
http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/. This is a good resource for issues of academic integrity,
especially regarding writing. For this particular course, written assignments should be the
product entirely of the student authors listed on the work submitted. Violations of these standards
will automatically result in all participating students failing the course and being remanded to the
discipline committee for further action.
Session 1: January 19  
*Power and Inequality I*

**Objectives**
- Explore the meaning of power
- Consider the distribution of power in society and how it relates to class

**Read (before class)**

**In Class**
- EXERCISE: *Star Power*
Session 2: January 26  

Power and Inequality II

Objectives

- Explore the meaning of power
- Consider the distribution of power in crises and disasters

Read (before class)


In Class

- CASE: *How New Orleans Drowned* (Hurricane Katrina) discussion
Session 3: February 2  The Motivations for, Sources of, and Uses of Power

Objectives
- Explore what motivates people, including yourself, about power
- Understand the various sources of power
- Begin thinking about how power is exercised

Read (before class)

In Class
- CASE: Henry Kissinger discussion
  1. What was the context or environment at that time, both in the country generally and in the Government department at Harvard, at the time Kissinger was a student? What opportunities did this environment present?
  2. What were Kissinger’s apparent goals while he was at Harvard, first as an undergraduate student and then as a doctoral student? What was he trying to accomplish?
  3. What did Kissinger do, what specific actions did he take, how did he spend his time, with what effects? Why were his actions apparently so effective?
  4. What bases of power was Kissinger able to develop?
  5. What personal strengths and weaknesses did Kissinger have? How self-aware was he of them? What did he do to capitalize on his strengths and mitigate his weaknesses?
  6. What is your personal learning from Kissinger’s experience at Harvard? How do you feel about your use of your time at Wagner when you think of what Kissinger did?

Due (in class; bring 2 copies to turn in)
- Reflection #1: Write an essay answering the following questions:
  1. What do you think of when you think of the words power, authority, and influence? What sorts of associations and attitudes do these terms evoke?
  2. How powerful and influential do you feel? Why?
  3. What do you think is a barrier to your acquiring and exercising more power and influence?
  4. How much power do you want in your career? For what reasons?

Henry Kissinger
Session 4: February 9  Resources and Allies

Objectives
- Understand the role of resources in power dynamics
- Explore the importance of interpersonal relationships in exercising influence

Read (before class)

In Class
- CASE: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York video

Robert Moses
Session 5: February 16  Social Networks and Allies

Objectives

- Understand the concept of social networks
- Explore different types of relationship and their roles in the influence process
- Understand how power plays out in relationships

Read (before class)


In Class

- CASE: Whitney Young discussion
- CASE: Barack Obama discussion

Whitney Young, Jr.  Barack Obama
### Session 6: February 23

**Individual Attributes, Reputation, and Performance**

**Objectives**
- Understand when power is used for influence effectively and ineffectively
- Understand the implications of dependence and interdependence

**Read (before class)**

**In Class**
- CASE: *Lyndon Johnson* discussion
  1. What are the sources of power that Johnson possessed or developed?
  2. What personal characteristics, interests, and aptitudes did Johnson demonstrate?
  3. What structural or cultural sources of power did Johnson have or acquire?

---

**Lyndon Johnson**
Objectives

- Understand how reputation evolves in relation to performance
- Consider reputation as a source of power

Read (before class)


In Class

- CASE: *Rudy Crew (Stealth Chancellor)* discussion
  1. What has Rudy Crew done during his career to get to where he is—to be as successful and visible as he has become?
  2. What about the job makes it so political?
  3. What personal qualities does Crew possess?
  4. What are his goals and objectives?
  5. How would you describe Crew’s leadership style and approach? What makes that approach work? What may be problematic?
  6. How has Crew obtained power? How has he exercised the power he has obtained?
  8. What are some of the advantages and costs of occupying such a visible position?

- CASE: *Steve Barr (The Instigator)* discussion

Due (in class)

- Reflection #2:
  1. Describe two situations, contexts, or organizations: one in which you have flourished, and one in which you have had difficulty
  2. What aspects of your personality, skills, or abilities contributed to your feelings or outcomes in each setting?
  3. What about your relationship or social network contributed to your feelings or outcomes in each setting?
Session 8: March 9  Building Your Own Professional Network

Objectives

- Start thinking of your career as the formation of long-term professional relationships

Read (before class)


In Class

- CASE: Heidi Roizen discussion
  1. What steps did Roizen take, over the various jobs she held, to develop her network? To maintain it?
  2. What has made Roizen so successful to this point in her career?
  3. What are the strengths of Roizen’s network, as we see it at the end of the case? Any weaknesses?
  4. What suggestions would you give Heidi Roizen as she becomes more involved as an Internet venture capitalist?

- EXERCISE: Reciprocity Exercise

Network A

Network B

*************************************************************************** March 16: Spring Break***************************************************************************
**Session 9: March 23**

*The Production of Killing by Groups, Networks, and Organizations*

**Objectives**
- Consider how roles with different senses of legitimacy shape behavior
- Consider ethical issues in the use and abuse of power

**Read (before class)**

**In Class**
- CASE: *My Lai Massacre* discussion
- CASE: *Rwanda* discussion

---

Joe C. Magee © 2009, NYU Wagner 12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 10: March 30 Ethical Issues in Authority and the Abuse of Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand differences between men’s and women’s attitudes about and uses of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand different forms of discrimination and harassment in the workplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Read (before class)**


**In Class**

- **CASE: John Dean (Blind Ambition) discussion**
  1. What qualities do you think Haldeman and Nixon were looking for in their employees/staff? What made John Dean so attractive as a job candidate to them?
  2. What warning signs did John Dean have that this might not be the “dream” job he imagined? Why was Dean so ready, willing, and able to ignore these warning signs?
  3. How would you describe John Dean? What characteristics/attributes did he seem to possess? What was his perspective about his career? What were his professional goals?
  4. How was Dean recruited? Why did he take the job?
  5. How did Dean “negotiate” for the job or make himself “more attractive”? Do you think these strategies worked? Why or why not?
  6. What important (and almost obvious question) did John Dean never ask? Why do you think he failed to ask it?
  7. What qualities and/or behaviors eventually got John Dean into trouble?
  8. Although few of you may ever be asked to work in the White House, there may be important lessons in the Dean experience for everyone. What lessons can you draw for your own career and for yourself from this chapter?

- **CASE: Dr. Frances Conley (Walking Out on the Boys) discussion**
  1. What is similar, and what is different, about the power issues and dynamics faced by women versus men?
  2. What are the implications of the Conley case for women’s careers? The personal attributes or qualities necessary for success? The strategies they may want to employ?

![John Dean](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

![Frances Conley](https://via.placeholder.com/150)
Session 11: April 6  
Strategic Influence in Groups

Objectives

- Learn strategic influence tactics and processes in groups
- Consider leadership in dysfunctional groups

Read (before class)


In Class

- CASE: 12 Angry Men DVD (we will watch an abridged version of this film)

Due (in class)

- Reflection #3:
  1. Pick a political issue or social need that has not received the attention you would like.
  2. Using the concepts for this session and any others in the course, describe why or how you think this issue or need has not received higher priority and what could be done strategically to increase its recognition.

“12 Angry Men”
Session 12: April 13  

Information, Language, Symbols, and Agenda Denial

Objectives

- Learn about the role of information and language in power dynamics
- Consider how information is framed to shape agendas

Read (before class)


Before Class

- Find and bring to class an article related to the most recent healthcare debate that discusses at least one of the Cobb & Ross strategies for denying agenda access

In Class

- *12 Angry Men* (from prior week) discussion
- CASE: *Health Care Reform* discussion
- CASE: *Martin Luther King: I Have a Dream* speech
- Discussion of how to craft influential language and messages

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Session 13: April 20  
**Distributing Power: Community Organizing**

**Objectives**
- Discuss the importance of trust in community organizing
- Explore how power is shared to generate action and influence

**Read (before class)**

**In Class**
- CASE: *South Bronx Churches* discussion
- Discuss a technique called Power Mapping

Saul Alinsky
Session 14: April 27  Control and Constraints in Governing Cities

Objectives
- Understand the formal powers of mayors
- Consider the importance of networks in urban work

Read (before class)

In Class
- CASE: Kevin White (Governing the Ungovernable City) discussion
- CASE: Michael Bloomberg (The Untouchable) discussion

Joe C. Magee © 2009, NYU Wagner