

Instructor: Sylvia Flatt, PhD

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Office Hours: Saturday after class AND by appointment (Zoom or phone call)

Class: Saturday, 1:30-5:00 PM

Credits: 2

UC-Davis GSM

MGB 490B 001: Organizational Politics

Course Description

***Note:** Students enrolled in this course are not permitted to take the 3- or 4-unit course, "Power and Influence in Management" due to a substantial overlap in course content.*

Organizations are political institutions that use power and influence to make decisions and implement initiatives. While organizational politics is often perceived negatively with many trying their best to avoid it and a few enjoying the political game, in essence we all have to manage an organization's political environment. This course analyzes the inherent power dimension associated with politics as a means to navigate the subtleties of political situations and diagnose an organization's political landscape by thinking and acting politically.

Syllabus: "It's all politics." We have either heard this statement or said it ourselves, but what does this mean? While this phrase is implicitly negative, organizational politics can also be constructive and a way to plan and manage ourselves in organizations. Organizations are political institutions and managers need to acquire resources to get things done and manage effectively. Even if you prefer not to play politics, you still need the political skills to manage and work in organizations. This course analyzes organizational politics by reviewing its inherent relationship between power (which is at the root of why organizational politics is presumed negative) and politics, analyze organizational political landscapes, and develop political skills to define and achieve objectives. Lastly, we assess whether narcissists hold an advantage in playing organizational politics.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the relationship between power and politics in organizations.
2. Explain how power and politics can be used constructively and destructively.
3. Develop political skills to facilitate initiatives and decision making.
4. Analyze the subtleties of political situations to diagnose the political landscape.
5. Assess narcissists in organizational power and politics.

Required Course Material

HBSP Course pack (cases and articles) link: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1176810>

Selected chapters and articles will be posted to Canvas (as noted in the Course Outline).

Evaluation

Assignment Type	Percentage (Points)
In-Class Participation (includes active participation in group activities)	10% (10 points)
Written Assignment: Case Reviews (4): Case Review 1 (20%) Case Review 2 (20%) Case Review 3 (20%) Case Review 4 (10%) [Individual; or Team of 2 for 2 out of 4 Case Reviews]	70% (70 points)
Final Paper (Your Political Path) [Individual]	20% (20 points)
Total	100% (100 points)

1) Participation: Evaluation based on the **quality** of contributions in class discussions.

3) Written Assignments (guides for each will be posted to Canvas):

- Written Assignment: Four Case Reviews (Format: single space, 12 point font, 1 inch margins; assignment will be posted to Canvas). *Note: these written assignments may be completed individually or in teams of 2.* If you decide to collaborate with a colleague on these assignments, you can only do so for 2 out of 4 of the assignments. (Format : one to 1.5 pages (dependent on assignment), single spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, citations, and sources). Be sure to review the posted Assignments.

- Final Paper: This is a self-reflection of your political self and path. The full assignment will be posted to Canvas. This assignment is a self-reflection AND interpretation of your actions using readings from this course. This is two pages, single-spaced, 12 font, one inch margins, with citations, and sources. The outline and guide will be posted.

- **All written assignments must incorporate and apply course concepts to provide evidence to your arguments to receive full credit points; and should include citations and sources. Also, citations and sources are *expected* for all written assignments.**

Note: All Case Reviews are Due by 1:30 PM, when class begins.

Course Policies

Tips for Preparing for Case/Class Discussions

- The obvious: Read the assigned materials; review the assignment questions for clues as to what issues require special attention.
- Read the case more carefully, taking notes that sort information, data and facts, and observations into relevant categories that will inform your answers to the discussion/preparation questions.
- Apply concepts from the readings to analyze the case and answer the discussion/preparation questions.
- Crunch the numbers: Perform some quantitative analyses; look for patterns in the numbers.
- Finally, prepare notes to guide your participation in class discussions on the assigned questions or other issues judged to be critical to a firm's apparent dilemma.

When preparing for class discussions, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the point that I am trying to make? Why is this issue/point important?
- Is my comment relevant/linked to the discussion? Do my comments go beyond a mere recitation of the case facts, and are the implications clearly drawn?
- Am I providing evidence of analysis or merely expressing my opinion?
- Did my comment contribute to the class' understanding of the issues?
- Am I listening to the other participants?

Successful students

- Attend and Actively read and prepare for each session.
- Make thoughtful contributions to the learning environment throughout the course.
- Participate fully and responsibly in class discussions.
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner in all engagements.

Attendance & On Time Policies

Your attendance is expected for **all** sessions. Why is this critical? In this course, each student is a member of a community of learners who educate each other through case analysis and discussion. There are only five (5) sessions; therefore, missing a session comprises 20% of the class missed.

An absence from class negatively affects your learning. On the rare, urgent occasion when work, family emergencies, or illness require you to miss a class session, let me know. If you miss a session, you are required to turn in a Parity Assignment = a write up of the assignment questions for the missed class session. A hard copy of the parity assignment is due at the subsequent class session. Parity assignments are not substitutes for in class participation or participation exercises. Note: excessive absences do lower your grade. Missing 1 or more sessions may lower your overall course grade by at least one whole grade (causing an "A" to change to a "B"). Assignments are due at the beginning of class for each session. Late submissions may be subject to point deductions if there are no extenuating circumstances.

Grading Policy

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following percentages.

A	93+	C	72-74.9
A-	89-92.9	C-	69-71.9
B+	85-88.9	D+	66-68.9
B	81-84.9	D	63-65.9
B-	78-80.9	D-	60-62.9
C+	75-77.9	F	0-59.9

Rights and Responsibilities

All participants in the course, instructor and students, are expected to follow the UC Davis [Principles of Community](#), which includes affirmation of the right of [freedom of expression](#), and rejection of discrimination. The right to express points-of-view without fear of retaliation or censorship is a cornerstone of academic freedom. A diversity of opinions with respectful disagreement and informed debate enriches learning. However, in this course, any expression or disagreement should adhere to the obligations we have toward each other to build and maintain a climate of mutual respect and caring. You are expected to take UC Davis's [Code of Academic Conduct](http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf) (<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>) as seriously as we do. You were given this code of conduct with explicit explanations of violations (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, etc.) and your responsibilities in regard to them during orientation, and you signed a statement affirming that you understand it. Academic conduct violations will not be tolerated, and your instructor will not hesitate to turn violators over to Student Judicial Affairs. If you are uncertain about what constitutes an academic conduct violation, please refer to the code above, contact your instructor, or refer to the [Office of Student Judicial Affairs](#).

All material in the course that is not otherwise subject to copyright is the copyright of the course instructor and should be considered the instructor's intellectual property.

Statement on Accommodations

UC Davis is committed to educational equity in the academic setting, and in serving a diverse student body. All students who are interested in learning about how disabilities are accommodated can visit the [Student Disability Center](#) (SDC). If you are a student who requires academic accommodations, please contact the SDC directly at sdc@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-3184. If you receive an SDC Letter of Accommodation, submit it to your instructor for each course as soon as possible, at least within the first two weeks of a course.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness

UC Davis has many resources to help in case of emergency or crisis. While reviewing campus [Emergency Information](#), you may want to register for UC Davis Warn Me and Aggie Alert, which will give you timely information and instructions about emergencies and situations on campus that affect your safety. If there is an emergency in the classroom or in non-Davis locations, follow the instructions of your instructor.

Disclaimer

Unexpected events might require elements of this syllabus to change. Your instructor will keep you informed of any changes.

Course Outline

Week	Dates	Topics/Unit	Readings/Resources	Instructional Activities/Assignments
1	7-6-24	-Introduction to course & syllabus -Relationship between power and politics	1) Canvas: Pfeffer (2010): Ch. 1. 2) HBSP: Lingo and McGinn (2001), Power and influence. 3) HBSP: Kaiser, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Lusk (2017), Playing office politics without selling your soul. 4) HBSP: Thomas Green: Power, Office Politics and a Career in Crisis	-Review syllabus and readings for class discussion. -Complete Perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP) Survey (see Canvas)
2	7-20-24	-Thinking Politically and Diagnosing the Political Landscape	1) HBSP: Heifitz and Linksy (2006), Think Politically. 2) HBSP: Heifitz, Grashaw and Linksy (2009), Diagnosing the Political Landscape. 3) HBSP: Parikh: How Facebook Tries to Prevent Office Politics (2016) [Needs VPN] 4) HBSP: Martha Rinaldi: Should she stay or should she go?	-1-1.5 pages: Case review on Martha Rinaldi case (due: 7-20-24)
3	8-3-24	-Using political skills	1) HBSP: McAllister, Ellen, Perrewe, Ferris and Hirsch (2015), Checkmate: Using political skill to recognize and capitalize on opportunities in the 'game' of organizational life. [Needs VPN] 2) Canvas: Ferris and Davidson (2010), chapters 1-3. 3) HBSP: Navigating Organizational Politics: The case of Kristen Peters (A&B)	-Complete 'Political Savvy Quiz' (see Canvas) -1-1.5 pages: Case review on Kristen Peters case (due: 8-3-24)

4	8-17-24	<p>-Acting politically -Losing power and redemption</p>	<p>1) Canvas: Pfeffer, chs. 10-11. 2) HBSP: Heifitz, Grashaw and Linksy (2009), Act Politically. 3) HBSP: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld: The fall from grace (A). 4) HBSP: Jeffrey Sonnenfeld: The road to redemption (B).</p>	<p>-1-1.5 pages: Case review on Sonnenfeld case (due: 8-17-24)</p>
5	8-31-24	<p>-Acting with Power -Are narcissists more effective at organizational politics?</p>	<p>1) Canvas: Pfeffer (2010), ch. 7. 2) Canvas: O'Reilly & Pfeffer (2021) Organizational power and politics: The narcissist's advantage, <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>, 182 3) Canvas: O'Reilly & Pfeffer (2021), Why are grandiose narcissists more effective at organizational politics? Means, motive, and opportunity. <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>, 172. 3) Ben-Hur & Bolton, Will Elon Musk's narcissism be his downfall? IMD Business School, October 2018. 4) HBSP: Elon Musk: Saving the fate of Tesla 5) Course wrap-up</p>	<p>-1 page: Case review of Elon Musk (due: 8-31-24) -Final Paper due (tentative date: Sunday, 9-1-24)</p>