



MGT. 443 POWER AND INFLUENCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

(Rev. 16-Oct-06)

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OVERVIEW

This course is a multidisciplinary overview of the issues of power, influence, conflict, and dissent in and out of work organizations. We will draw on multiple perspectives to explore how power and influence are gained, maintained, used, abused, and lost in the pursuit of social objectives. The goal is to strike a balance--both in readings and in class discussions--between theoretical perspectives and applications. Applications of power and influence will also be drawn from cases, guest speakers, video excerpts, and your own experiences. The course will be managed as a graduate seminar, with heavy emphasis on classroom discussion of readings, cases, and issues. I intend to use my power to influence students to attend regularly and participate actively.

SOURCES FOR READINGS

Readings are drawn from these materials available at the Vanderbilt Bookstore:

- R.B. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice* (4th ed). Allyn and Bacon, 2001.
- S.D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*. Vintage, 1971
- A *ClassPak* of required readings.

And:

- Online readings linkable through course web page (see below).

COURSE WEB PAGE

A Web page for the course, <http://www2.owen.vanderbilt.edu/bruce.barry/mgt443/>, contains a day-by-day course outline and a downloadable version of this syllabus. Many of the readings for this course are online, with links to them appearing on the Web page. Unless otherwise indicated, online readings are required readings. I may also add new links to relevant articles or destinations as we go along.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADES

- **Class Participation** (45% of course grade)

Much of the value of the course follows from exposure to the ideas and insights of others, both in readings and in class discussion. For this reason I put *substantial* weight in grading on in-class participation. It is essential that you come to class prepared to share your own ideas and insights about the readings and the subject under discussion. The quality of your class participation is more important than quantity, although some of the latter is necessary to gauge the former. Good contributions to class discussion are perceptive, relevant, and focused -- they respond to the current flow of the discussion, and enhance it.

If you are not comfortable making a commitment to read assigned materials, attend class, and participate actively, then you should consider finding another elective.

- **Everything Else** (55% of course grade)

In the spirit of the theme of the course, I am empowering you to make choices about how you wish to meet the requirements that will comprise the 55% of your grade that is not based on class participation. Starting on page 4 I list a collection of written deliverables of varying form and grade-weight. In some cases there are even options within a single deliverable for different weights depending on how you tackle the assignment.

Your obligation is to undertake and complete some combination of deliverables of your own choosing that sums to 55% in weight. You can elect any combination you like. There are only two rules:

- [1] *No ex post facto substitutions*: A deliverable, once turned in, will count toward your grade. You may not opt later (e.g., after seeing a grade) to pile on extra deliverables in order to cancel out earlier deliverables.
- [2] *Almost everything is negotiable*: You may propose alternative deliverables or alterations to the scope (and, accordingly, the grade weight) of existing deliverables in order to tailor course requirements to your interests, whims, and desires. I must agree to such proposals before you turn in a novel or modified deliverable. Only two things are not negotiable: the 45% weight for class participation, and the prohibition on substitutions in rule #1.

Descriptions of the eligible deliverables begin on page 4, organized into three categories (brief, medium-length, and project-length).

- ▶ *An at-a-glance summary of possible deliverables in chart form is provided in an Appendix on the last page of the syllabus.*

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING WRITTEN WORK IN THIS COURSE

The papers you write for this class, like other forms of written communication produced by managers, should be precise, organized, logical, and appropriately supported. (But: incident papers and reaction papers can also have a reflective flavor.) I look for the following when I read your papers:

- Your analysis should be thesis-driven, which is to say it should be perfectly clear to the reader what argumentative point you are making. Arguments should be justified using relevant readings and other class materials. References should be explicit and appropriately cited.
- Your analysis should be specific, with the rationale behind positions taken or refuted clear and unmistakable. Minimize the possibility that the reader will think "I wonder why he/she thinks this..." Don't assume anything on the part of the reader.
- Incorporate the implications of your analysis. Go beyond the obvious to consider relevant tradeoffs in any course of action. What if your assumptions are wrong?
- Value the quality of your own ideas. Bring in your own creative thinking when possible. Avoid transparent, simplistic attempts to glue concepts onto applications.
- Pay attention to style. Papers should be thoughtfully organized, with main points clear, and the flow of argument easy to discern. Errors of spelling, grammar, and syntax are inexcusable. Turn in a clean, clear, readable paper. Please.

POWER, INFLUENCE, AND THE HONOR CODE

Students are bound by the Honor Code for all work completed in this course. Specifically:

- For individual assignments, the work you turn should be entirely your own completed without the assistance of others.
- Assignments identified as group work are to be completed by only members of the group, and it is expected *all* members of the group will have contributed. Your name on a group deliverable indicates that you have contributed your share, and that all others whose names appear on it have contributed theirs.
- Written work must use appropriate citations in some consistent format to signify when arguments or analyses rely on the ideas or insights of others (including classpak readings).
- It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is, and what it means to properly cite the work of others. Plagiarism also occurs if you submit uncredited material that was used by you or someone else in a prior version of this or another course at Vanderbilt.
- Any use of analyses or any other material in any format from other sections of this course or a similar course taught at any time in the past, at Vanderbilt, other universities, or the Internet, is a violation of the Honor Code. This includes the use of materials in multiple classes without consent of the instructors.

• **BRIEF DELIVERABLES** •
(these are all individual endeavors)

Option: Incident Essay

Weight: 15%

Length: ~1250 words

Due: Friday, Nov. 3 (end of week 3)

Identify and describe a compelling example of the use of political power in organizations, either based on your own personal experiences, on incidents you have witnessed, or on events that have happened to people you know. Regardless of source, the events you describe must be based on fact and first-hand knowledge. Describe the incident; then, *drawing on concepts covered in the course*, explain and interpret how power and influence were involved, and discuss whether the incident was avoidable or should have been handled differently.

Option: Reaction Paper

Weight: 10% for brief form; 15% for expanded form

Length: <1000 words for brief

~1500 words for expanded

Due: 7 days following the class you are writing about

A brief reaction paper is a short essay (2-3 double-spaced pages) in which you present thoughts and reactions to the material covered in the readings and in class for a given topic. The reaction paper is a concise and coherent statement that *integrates* (finds common themes, compares/contrasts, etc.) and *extends* (considers the theme you are writing on in relation to other contexts, situations, issues) readings and class discussion. An expanded reaction paper is a lengthier meditation that goes into greater detail, or perhaps goes off on more tangents.

You may write up to two reaction papers (in any combination of brief and expanded).

Option: Deviant-for-a-Day Paper

Weight: 15%

Length: ~1250 words

Due: anytime before last day of class

The objective is to violate some basic aspect of your self image for an entire day, without telling anyone why you are doing this deviant action, and to observe both how others react to you and how you respond to this experience. Write a brief report that thoughtfully addresses the following issues:

- What I did to make myself a deviant and why I chose that particular approach.
 - How various people responded to me.
 - How I felt and what I thought before and during this experience.
 - What I learned from this experience - about myself and about conformity/deviance.
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Option: Case Brief

Weight: 5%

Length: ~500 words

Due: in class on the day of case discussion

Write a brief (a single-spaced page or so) analysis of the issues raised in the syllabus study questions for any of following cases. Use course concepts to justify your reasoning. You may do up to two of these.

- "Launching the War on Terrorism" (due in class on October 31)
- "Matt Leeds" (due in class on November 7)
- "Will She Fit In?" (due in class on November 9)
- "The Best of Intentions" (due in class on November 14)
- "A Blogger in Their Midst" (due in class on November 16)
- "Gilman Roberts" (due in class on November 28)

• **MEDIUM-LENGTH DELIVERABLES** •

(mixture of individual and group endeavors -- see specifics below)

Option: Film Festival Paper

Weight: 15% if done in a group (maximum size=3)
20% if done individually

Length: ~2000 words

Due: Friday, Nov. 17 (end of week 5)

Rent, watch, and write about one or more feature-length films as case studies in power and influence within and/or between organizations. Your review essay should do more than simply chronicle the use of power and influence. An excellent paper will adopt some analytic theme, such as comparing/contrasting multiple films, or perhaps assessing how power and influence are portrayed in relation to the context of relevant real-life situations, or providing an in-depth treatment of a particular character, or pursuing some other theme.

Here is a list of possible films from which to choose:

<i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i> (1939)	<i>Six Degrees of Separation</i> (1993)	<i>Minority Report</i> (2002)
<i>All the King's Men</i> (1949)	<i>The War Room</i> (1993)	<i>Adaptation</i> (2002)
<i>Executive Suite</i> (1954)	<i>City Hall</i> (1996)	<i>The Cooler</i> (2003)
<i>Bridge on the River Kwai</i> (1957)	<i>Gattaca</i> (1997)	<i>Control Room</i> (2004)
<i>The Manchurian Candidate</i> (1962)	<i>Wag the Dog</i> (1997)	<i>Eternal Sunshine...Mind</i> (2004)
<i>King Rat</i> (1965)	<i>Primary Colors</i> (1998)	<i>Napoleon Dynamite</i> (2004)
<i>The Candidate</i> (1972)	<i>Bulworth</i> (1998)	<i>Crash</i> (2004)
<i>All the President's Men</i> (1976)	<i>Talented Mr. Ripley</i> (1999)	<i>Hitchhikers Guide...Galaxy</i> (2005)
<i>Norma Rae</i> (1979)	<i>Election</i> (1999)	<i>Enron:Smartest Guys...Room</i> (2005)
<i>Marie</i> (1985)	<i>With a Friend Like Harry</i> (2000)	<i>Thank you for Smoking</i> (2005)
<i>American Dream</i> (1990)	<i>The Contender</i> (2000)	<i>The Road to Guantanamo</i> (2006)
<i>Bob Roberts</i> (1992)	<i>State and Main</i> (2000)	<i>The Devil Wears Prada</i> (2006)
<i>Barbarians at the Gate</i> (1993)	<i>Business of Strangers</i> (2001)	<i>Jindabyne</i> (2006)

Many other films are possible; please clear films not on this list with me in advance. For more information and these or just about any other film (plot summaries, reviews, cast information, etc.), consult the exhaustive Internet Movie Database at <http://www.imdb.com/>.

Option: Influence Professional Analysis

Weight: 15% if done in a group (maximum size=3)
20% if done individually

Length: ~2000 words

Due: Friday, Dec. 1 (end of week 6)

The objective of this project is to experience how "influence professionals" do what they do. You will accomplish this by placing yourself in situations that allow you to observe or experience the actions of one or more influence professionals. Your tangible goal is to write a paper that analyzes the use of influence tactics within the setting or settings you choose.

I am quite flexible on the contours of this assignment:

- You can focus on a single type of influence professional, or for that matter a single individual, or alternatively you can compare/contrast more than one individual or type.
- You can gather data by placing yourself in a position to be influenced by the influence professional under study, or by watching them do their thing on others, or perhaps by interviewing the professional under study. Ideally, you will undertake some combination of these.
- The term "influence professional" can be construed rather broadly, although the burden is on you to convince the reader that the person(s) under study is in some sense an influence professional. Check with me beforehand if you are not sure.

Two rules:

- [1] The "data" must be "primary" - based on first-hand contact and observation.
- [2] Be an ethical anthropologist: Although unobtrusive participant-observation is okay, avoid deliberately misrepresenting yourself to your subject, or otherwise directly misleading anyone regarding the nature of your involvement in their universe.

• **PROJECT-LENGTH DELIVERABLES** •

(these are group endeavors; maximum group size=4)

Option: Powerlessness Project

Weight: 25%

Length: ~3000 words

Due: last day of class (December 7)

The focus of this project is on "powerlessness." I want you to investigate and analyze the conditions of powerlessness associated with a real, functioning group that is "disadvantaged" or in some way struggling against the currents of power. Your paper should describe the group you select, recap the methodology of your investigation, analyze the target group's goals and structure, and develop strategies for that group to gain power and improve their conditions.

Here are some guidelines to help you select a target group to study:

- The decision as to whether or not a group qualifies as "powerless" is yours, not mine. In fact, power and powerlessness are relative constructs, and part of your job here is to come to grips with your own model of power and apply it to the organization you choose to study.
- Select an identifiable, formal group or organization, not just a demographic or otherwise distinct category of people (for example, choose the Association for Left-Handed Individuals, not just simply "humans who are left-handed.")

Proposal Requirement: If you are doing this project, you must submit a brief proposal that: (a) identifies the students in your group, (b) describes the target organization to be studied, (c) briefly justifies your rationale for studying this group and (d) gives a hint of your expectations about what you will find. Proposals are due on **Friday, November 3** (end of week 3).

Option: Some Other Project

Weight: 25%

Length: ~3000 words

Due: last day of class (December 7)

I invite you to propose any other project-length deliverable that you think is appropriate and relevant to the subject matter of the course, and suitably challenging to justify assigning it 25% of the course grade. Here are some possibilities:

- Create a Harvard-like case study (real or invented) of an organization, subunit, or individual that focuses on power, political, and/or influence dynamics. This entails writing both the case and an analysis of it. Consult me for details and examples.
- Write a research paper profiling and analyzing some notable current or historical figure or event that entails prominent dynamics of power, politics, and/or influence.
- Develop an influence campaign to accomplish some social or political objective.

Proposal Requirement: I would like to know in advance the nature of any project you decide to undertake. Please submit a brief proposal that: (a) identifies the students in your group, (b) describes the project's scope and objectives, and (c) outlines your methods and/or research sources. Proposals are due on **Friday, November 3** (end of week 3).

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- An at-a-glance summary of possible deliverables in chart form is provided in an appendix on the last page of the syllabus.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

Oct. 17 **Course Introduction**

ONLINE: · *On the Uses of a Liberal Education*
 · *The Business of Business (Schools)*

BOOK: · Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, pp. 3-23

Oct. 19 **Models of Power**

CASE: What a Star-What a Jerk (Classpak #1). Case questions:
 - What, if anything, is Andy's problem?
 - What, if anything, should Jane do about Andy?

CLASSPAK: *Power and Influence: Achieving Your Objectives in Organizations* (Classpak #2)

BOOK: Cialdini, *Influence*, Chapter 1

WEEK 2

Oct. 24 **The Yin of Social Influence**

BOOKS: · Cialdini, *Influence*, Chapters 2, 3, 4
 · Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, pp. 24-80

Oct. 26 **The Yang of Social Influence**

BOOKS: · Cialdini, *Influence*, Chapters 5, 6, 7
 · Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, pp. 81-164

SEE ALSO ONLINE READING

WEEK 3

Oct. 31 Influence in Crisis Decision Making

CASE: Launching the War on Terrorism (Classpak #3).

Case questions:

- Evaluate the president's initial response to the attacks. How did his early actions affect the subsequent decision-making process?
- What is your evaluation of the president's leadership of the war cabinet's decision process? What would you advise him to do differently in leading decision-making processes with advisors?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

Nov. 2 **The Business of Political Influence**

SPEAKER: Bill Fletcher, Political Media Consultant,
Fletcher Rowley Chao Riddle Inc.

READINGS ARE ONLINE (PLUS LINK TO SPEAKER'S WEBSITE)

WEEK 4

Nov. 7 **Cultivating (In)effective Relationships**

CASE: Matt Leeds (Classpak #4). Case questions:

- How did Matt Leeds get into this mess?
- What should he do now?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

Nov. 9 **The Politics of Sex and Gender**

CASE: Will She Fit In? (Classpak #5). Case questions:

- What should Susan Carter do about the incident?
- What issues underlie Susan's decision about how (if at all) to respond/react to the incident?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

WEEK 5

Nov. 14 **The Politics of Race**

CASE: The Best of Intentions (Classpak #6).

Case questions:

- What issues are the involved in this dilemma?
- Should Cynthia give Steve the assignment?
- Should Steve accept the job if offered?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

Nov. 16 **Free Speech**

CASE: A Blogger in their Midst (Classpak #7).

Case questions:

- What are Glove Girl's sources of power?
- What should Will Somerset do about Glove Girl?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

WEEK 6

Nov. 28 **Power, Ethics, and Media**

CASE: Gilman Roberts (available online). Case questions:

- Diagnose the power and influence dynamics associated with the principal actors in the case. Who has power, and who doesn't?
- As the case ends, Roberts is struggling with Michaels's unwillingness to come clean, and more bad news may be coming out. What should Roberts do now? What are his options? Constraints?

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

Nov. 30 **Corporate Power and Influence**

CLASSPAK: *Assault of the Corporate Libertarians* (Classpak #8)

FILM: excerpts from *The Corporation* (we'll view in class)

SEE ALSO ONLINE READINGS

WEEK 7

Dec. 5 **Markets and Inequality**

READINGS ARE ONLINE

Dec. 7 **Rights Within and Beyond the Workplace**

READINGS ARE ONLINE

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SUMMARY OF DELIVERABLES
(complete a combination that sums to 55%)

BRIEF DELIVERABLES (INDIVIDUAL)

Option	Weight	Length*	Due	You Can Do
Incident Essay	15%	1250 words	Nov. 3	1
Reaction Paper (brief)	10%	1000 words	1-week after	2 (any combo)
Reaction Paper (expanded)	15%	1500 words	1-week after	
Deviant-for-a-Day Paper	15%	1250 words	anytime	1
Case Brief	5%	500 words	day of case	2

MEDIUM-LENGTH DELIVERABLES

Option	Weight	Length*	Due	You Can Do
Film Festival Paper - Group	15%	2000 words	Nov. 17	1 <i>film paper</i>
Film Festival Paper - Individual	20%	2000 words	Nov. 17	
Influence Professional - Group	15%	2000 words	Dec. 1	1 <i>i-prof. paper</i>
Influence Professional - Individual	20%	2000 words	Dec. 1	

PROJECT-LENGTH DELIVERABLES

Option	Weight	Length*	Due	You Can Do
Group Powerlessness Project	25%	3000 words	Dec. 7	1 <i>project</i>
Some Other Group Project	25%	3000 words	Dec. 7	

Keep in mind the two rules:

- [1] *No ex post facto substitutions*: A deliverable, once turned in, will count toward your grade. You may not pile on extra deliverables in order to cancel out earlier deliverables.
- [2] *Almost everything is negotiable*: You may propose alternative deliverables or alterations to the scope and grade weight of existing deliverables. I must agree to such proposals before you turn in a novel or modified deliverable.

* Regarding length: word counts are approximations, not hard and fast limits. It is okay to be a bit over or under. A double-spaced page of 12-point type with one-inch margins all around comes it at roughly 250 words (depending on how big the words you use are). In Microsoft Word, you can always check the word count of a document by opening the Tools menu, and clicking on Word Count.