

EW MBA W254: Power and Politics in Organizations Spring 2019

Contact Information:

Instructor: Cameron Anderson

- anderson@haas.berkeley.edu

GSI: Daron Sharps

- daron@berkeley.edu

Technical support 24/7

- For course site (bCourses/Canvas) issues, click the Help link in the bottom right corner of any course site page to access bCourse/Canvas how-to guides.
- If for any reason an issue arises during the duration of this course, the Haas Digital department is happy to help. To submit a support ticket simply email helpdesk@haas.berkeley.edu and include detailed information about the issue you're experiencing and someone from Haas Digital support will get back to you shortly to help troubleshoot.

Office Hours:

Unless otherwise notified, all office hour sessions will be conducted in the same Zoom classroom as we use for our weekly live sessions.

Instructor: Cameron Anderson

Cameron will be available online from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm (PST) on Tuesdays and by appointment.

GSI: Daron Sharps

By appointment only: daron@berkeley.edu

Contact your instructor or GSI to establish specific, *by appointment* office hours.

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 aspiring leaders, it is important to be able to diagnose organizational politics in order to form and implement new strategies. In addition, leaders are usually on the receiving end of these processes. An astute leader 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.

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
4. Understand the role of power in building cooperation and leading change in organizations

These skills will be invaluable throughout your career.

Textbook Information

There will be two texts used in this class:

- Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't by Jeffrey Pfeffer (referred to as Pfeffer's *Power*)
- Compelling People: The Hidden Qualities That Make Us Influential by John Neffinger and Matthew Kohut (referred to as *Compelling People*)

There will also be selected readings that you'll access via the course's [study.net](#) reader

Class Requirements & Grading:

You will be evaluated on three types of work:

- 30% — Participation in live class and online discussions
- 30% — 3 Assignments (10% per assignment)
- 40% — Final Paper

Participation in Live Classes

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 the live sessions prepared to share your perspective with others and to test your analyses against those of your classmates.

To participate fully in the live classes, you must:

1. Be present, prepared (i.e. having completed all "Before Live Class" activities and resources) and arrive on time
2. Participate in the discussions as appropriate or when called upon
3. Participate in live polls and the other session activities

Quality participation counts more than quantity, although some of the latter is necessary to gauge the former. Quality includes, among other things:

- Action recommendations based on rigorous diagnosis
- Insightful and constructive critiques of others' contributions
- Integrative comments across cases and/or courses
- So called "stupid questions" that no one else is willing to take the risk to ask

Participation in Online Discussions

Your contributions to the weekly discussion forums play a key role in determining your overall Participation grade within this course. This page explains more concretely what is expected of you.

You can contribute to the instructor-created forums, which you'll see listed and linked in each week's Overview page, or you can check the Yellowdig page to see if there are any student-created forums for the week to which you could also contribute.

For each week, you can satisfy the minimum requirement for participation in a few ways:

1. **You can contribute more deeply to one forum within a week.**
By "more deeply," we mean at least two substantive contributions within one forum (2+ robust paragraphs in length, that display beyond-rudimentary engagement with the weekly material, critical thinking, thoughtful insights and follow-up questions, useful resources, and other characteristics of this nature). These contributions can be an initial posts or responses to others' posts within the forum.
2. **Or, you can spread your contributions across multiple forums within a week.**
For example, this could mean five posts that are smaller-to-moderate in length. Each post would have similar merit and qualities as to what is described above but would simply be shorter in length.
3. **Finally, you could create a discussion question of your own in combination with one of the two options above.**
Has a particular question come to mind as you've made your way through a week's

material? Did something said in the live class ignite an interesting, perhaps unanticipated, train of thought? Is there feedback relevant to a week's material you wish you could receive from your peers, such as their experience dealing with *topic xyz* in the workplace? If so, or if inspiration strikes in any other way, create your own forum!

Final Paper

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 (and beyond). It will give you an opportunity to apply the concepts and lessons of this course to your current or next position.

Note: If you are not employed or have not yet secured employment, you can also write the paper about the type of job you will likely take after graduation, or about the different types of jobs you are choosing between. We can discuss various possibilities for a topic, so please reach out to me (Cameron) or GSI (Daron) if you have any questions or concerns!

Your paper should address the following five questions:

1. What are the power dynamics inherent in your current (or future) job? (How is power distributed? How political is the environment? What are sources of power?)
2. What sources of power and influence do you (will you) need to be effective?
3. Do your current sources of power and influence fit the requirements of the job?
4. What are the ethical dilemmas for which you need (will need) to be vigilant?
5. What is your plan for developing the sources of power, influence skills, and partnerships necessary to be effective:
 - a. Now — which for some of you will mean before taking the job?
 - b. By this time next year?
 - c. Within the next five years?

Interviews:

As part of this assignment, you are required to conduct three informational interviews with people who are qualified to speak about the political environment of your current/future job. Even if your paper focuses on your current job, I would like you to interview three people who can provide new insights into this topic. You can identify potential interviewees using at least the following two sources:

1. Your existing contacts
2. The Haas alumni network

Final papers should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, and be no longer than 10 pages. **The paper is due by Thursday, May 9th.** 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.

I (Cameron) will grade the final papers, and I am the only human being who will read them. Upon request, your paper can be deleted immediately after grading it.

Please contact your instructor or GSI if, at any point, you have questions about the final.

When ready, submit your paper to this assignment.

Assignments

The first assignment is due in Week 3; the second assignment is in Week 5; the third assignment spans parts of Week 5 and Week 6. Look for the assignment instructions and dropboxes linked on each of the relevant week pages.