



**MGMT 784.001: Power and Influence in Organizations**  
 Jones Graduate School of Business  
 Rice University  
 Fall 2021

**Instructor:** Professor Siyu Yu  
**Office:** McNair Hall 243  
**Phone:** (510) 408-8634  
**Email:** siyu.yu@rice.edu

**Faculty Coordinator:** Kerry Lawrynowicz  
**Phone:** (713) 348-2267  
**Email:** kerrylaw@rice.edu

**Office hours:**

*By appointment:* I will have selected times available for students who would like to meet individually. Please email me regarding these times.

**Course location:** MCN 318

**Course meeting time:** 12:30PM - 2:00PM Tuesday & Thursday (26-OCT-2021 - 7-DEC-2021)

**Course website & materials:**

Handouts, announcements, and course materials will be posted on Canvas. You are expected to check the site regularly for announcements and upload assignments to the site (when indicated).

## COURSE DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES, AND PEDAGOGY

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 power and influence are key mechanisms by which things get done.

For those considering careers in management, it is important to be able to diagnose situations as opportunities to exercise power and influence in order to form and implement new strategies. In addition, managers are usually on the receiving end of these processes. An astute manager 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.

Specifically, in this course, you will learn concepts that are useful for understanding, analyzing, and harnessing power. But beyond discovering ways to extend your own power, influence and political skill in organizations, we will also uncover lessons about ways in which power can blind you, how to navigate situations in which you are up against powerful people, how teams navigate hierarchical structures, and the implications of societal power inequality. Using a range of theoretical and business articles, cases, exercises, assessments and simulations, we will extract a variety of lessons about power and influence in organizations. Topics include power, influence, persuasion, networks, hierarchy, political conflict, biases, and structural inequality.

The course relies on a mix of cutting-edge business research, biographical and business case studies, in-class exercises, simulations, and videos. The exposure to the development and use of

power in many different social settings and at various points in history allows a comprehensive analysis of power and influence in organizations. The readings supplement the course material. The assignments in this course aim to help you reflect on your own personal approaches towards managing power and influence. Importantly, they are designed to help you consolidate the new knowledge you acquire from the course, and provide you with an opportunity to apply them effectively.

## READINGS

Required readings can be found:

- On the Canvas website for the course
- The course schedule indicates where each reading is located and the date by which it should be read.
- Some of the assignments and exercises are not in the course pack (i.e., they will be posted online or handed out in class), but you will be told about them throughout the semester. We will not have time to discuss everything covered in the readings in class, but you are responsible for and expected to know the material.

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

**Contribution to class discussion      70%**  
**Class preparation, engagement, and professionalism      30%**

Participation is an essential part of the course and is important for your own learning experience and the learning experience of your classmates. Class participation will be evaluated based on demonstrated preparation through involvement in class discussion and group exercises, and completion of any short assignments or memos (if assigned). You are expected to be prepared for and actively participate in class.

**Contribution to class discussion (70%).** You should be prepared to contribute to class discussions throughout the semester by raising issues that are relevant to the current focus of the class. Preparation and engagement are crucial to effective class contribution. You are expected to attend every class session having read and thought about the assigned material. You should always be prepared to contribute to the class discussions and demonstrate your preparation by asking questions whenever necessary and integrate the vocabulary and concepts from the readings into your class comments. A contribution to class discussion is a comment that possesses one or more of the following properties:

- Uses logic, evidence, and data to support conclusions, and is more than an expression of an opinion or feeling;
- Shows curiosity, creativity, and the willingness to experiment;
- Takes into consideration the ideas already offered by others, and moves the analysis forward to generate new insights; and/or
- Helps others feel safe about participating.

Comments that are vague, repetitive, unrelated, disrespectful of others, or without sufficient foundation are discouraged and will be evaluated negatively. High quality class contribution involves knowing when to speak and when to listen or allow others to speak. I will undertake “supportive cold calling” to encourage balanced involvement, to ensure appropriate preparation and attention, and to elevate the quality of in-class discussions.

**Class preparation, engagement, and professionalism (30%).** You are expected to be fully engaged with pre-class assignments, in-class exercises and case discussions throughout the semester.

A note on readings & cases. You will be a valuable contributor to class only if you come prepared. You are fully expected to complete all of the readings and come to class prepared with insights and questions for the in-class discussion. We will engage in several case analyses as a class, and it is important to everyone’s learning experience that you read the case thoroughly and think about the events critically *before* we discuss the case in class. This does not mean you have to bring complete answers or a memory for all the details of the case. It does mean you need to bring questions and opinions (which you are prepared to defend). Dates are provided for each case in the course schedule. This is the date on which we will discuss the case, so you will need to read the case before that date.

A note on attendance, pre-class assignments, in-class exercises, case discussions, and participation. You cannot participate if you don’t come to class, so in this sense attendance is associated with your participation grade—i.e., *if you frequently miss classes and/or never speak it is extremely unlikely you will receive a final grade in the A.* In-class exercises and case discussions are valuable only if the related pre-class assignments are completed.

It is hard to distinguish between what absences should and should not be excused. To deal with this, I use the following “leave” policy: You have one personal/sick day to use at your discretion. This means that your participation grade will be unaffected if you were to miss one in-class exercise or case discussion.

In the case of unexpected prolonged absences due to personal emergencies, please notify me beforehand of your absence. I may request some sort of documentation after the emergency in order for us to make arrangements for the missed time.

Professionalism: I care a great deal about fostering honest in-class discussion and aim to make the class atmosphere as relaxed and psychologically “safe” as possible. This is by design. I firmly believe that students are most likely to truly learn and engage in the course material in this type of environment. And, it’s the most fun, too! Even in this environment, we cannot forget our obligations to treat each other with respect and courtesy. These obligations include, but are not limited to the following:

- Refraining from using electronic devices of any kind other than computers/laptops/tablets etc. (unless directed to do so for class purposes)
- Not being disruptive by coming late to class or engaging in personal conversations with classmates during class.
- Never using racial, ethnic, religious, or any other prejudicial slur.

- Following instructions by, for instance, not emailing assignments that are supposed to be uploaded and not emailing someone with a question that is answered in this syllabus.
- Informing me and/or your group members well in advance of any issues.

I include professionalism as part of your grade simply to ensure that we remember these obligations. If you were to engage in unprofessional behavior (which I do not anticipate any of you will do), your professional grade will suffer accordingly.

### **GRADING POLICY**

At Rice, we strive to create courses that challenge students intellectually and that meet the Rice standards of academic excellence. To ensure fairness and clarity of grading, the Rice JGSB faculty have adopted a grading guideline for elective courses and the course average GPA should fall between 3.50 to 3.80.

In line with Grading Guidelines for the Rice JGSB, the process of assigning of grades is intended to be one of unbiased evaluation. This means that students are encouraged to respect the integrity and authority of the professor's grading system and discouraged from pursuing arbitrary challenges to it. If a student feels that an inadvertent error has been made in the grading of an individual assignment or in assessing an overall course grade, a request to have that grade re-evaluated may be submitted. Students must submit such requests in writing to the professor within 7 days of receiving the grade, including a written statement of why he or she believes that an error in grading has been made.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, CONDUCT, AND BEHAVIOR**

Integrity is critical to the learning process and to all that we do here at Rice. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the Rice Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the Rice community.

Students are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. Please familiarize yourself with the following:

- Rice's Code of Student Conduct (<https://sjp.rice.edu/code-of-student-conduct>)

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the

Disability Support Services Office in the Allen Center verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend.

### **POTENTIAL SYLLABUS CHANGES**

I reserve the right to change the syllabus and schedule as necessary. Any changes to the syllabus, due dates, course requirements or grading requirements will be made as far in advance as possible and announced both in class and via email. All students will be held responsible for completing all course components.

<b>COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>Pre-class requirement (readings or assignments)</b>
10/26/21	Naïve Influence: Introduction to the Course & The Psychology of Power (1)	For many people, how well they navigate the workplace politics comes down to how well they manage their supervisors. In this session, we will first explore the psychology and philosophy of power. After reviewing research on how having or lacking power impact cognition, emotion, and behavior, we will discuss what it means to have and use power conscientiously. Later this session, we will turn to the case on Donna Dubinsky and Apple Computer. Our goal here is to re-examine the importance of power and political dynamics in the workplace. What does it mean to play politics? Can you get ahead without playing politics? How can you diagnose workplace politics?	NA
10/26/21	Naïve Influence: Introduction to the Course & The Psychology of Power (2)	For many people, how well they navigate the workplace politics comes down to how well they manage their supervisors. In this session, we will first explore the psychology and philosophy of power. After reviewing research on how having or lacking power impact cognition, emotion, and behavior, we will discuss what it means to have and use power conscientiously. Later this session, we will turn to the case on Donna Dubinsky and Apple Computer. Our goal here is to re-examine the importance of power and political dynamics in the workplace. What does it mean to play politics? Can you get ahead without playing politics? How can you diagnose workplace politics?	<p>Jick &amp; Gentile “Donna Dubinsky and Apple Computer, Inc. (A)” HBS case.</p> <p>Questions to think about prior to class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why was Dubinsky initially successful at Apple Computer? (1981-1984)</li> <li>2. How and why did things begin to unravel for Dubinsky? (1981-1984)</li> <li>3. How did Dubinsky react and why?</li> <li>4. What should Dubinsky have done differently?</li> <li>5. What were Debi Coleman’s advantages and weaknesses?</li> </ol> <p>*There are (B) &amp; (C) cases in the course pack. Those are only for your interests and not required for the class.</p>
11/2/21	Pathway to Power: Your Individual Predictors (1)	In this session, we will examine different forms of power in the workplace, and talk about driver to power from an individual lens. From a group-based exercise, you will learn factors that you can work on for your long-term advancement in the workplace.	Individual trait assessment (30 mins) (URL will be announced via Canvas)
11/4/21	Pathway to Power: Your Individual Predictors (2)	In this session, we will examine different forms of power in the workplace, and talk about driver to power from an individual lens. From a group-based exercise, you will learn factors that you can work on for your long-term advancement in the workplace.	NA

11/9/21	The Hidden Power of Networks & Networking (1)	A good network is to a leader what a trained body is to an athlete, the foundation of power and performance. It's not everything, but it is difficult to get much done without being in shape. Yet, many of us fail to build effective networks or network effectively. Most of us	Complete your network assessment (15-30mins) and bring your report to the class; prepare to discuss your report with your classmates. (URL will be announced via Canvas)
11/9/21	The Hidden Power of Networks & Networking (2)	are oblivious to the sheer range of benefits our social networks can provide, unaware of how networks can limit our opportunities, and clueless about what our own networks look like. In this session, we will examine what our networks look like. Do you have an effective network? What does it say about how well you network? In addition, if your network is your fitness, networking is akin to exercising—how you get in shape and stay in shape. Using this metaphor, we will discuss what it means to network effectively. What makes a good networker? What type of networker are you? Why do so many of us hate networking, and what can we do about it?	NA
11/16/21	Leading Organizational Change: Building A Powerful Coalition (1)	Perhaps the ultimate challenge for any leader is leading organizational change. From adopting new work practices, implementing new technology, or transforming the culture of the workplace,	A 5-min video & brochure introduction on the Networking and Influence Simulation (URL will be announced via Canvas)
11/18/21	Leading Organizational Change: Building A Powerful Coalition (2)	organizational change requires leaders to leverage relationships, align interests, and create a winning coalition to push through your agenda. In this double session, we will discuss the power and politics of coalitions. What are key tactics for building a winning coalition? What pitfalls should you look out for?	NA
11/23/21	Acting with Power: Persuasion and Resistance (1)	At the heart of workplace politics is resistance to influence and change. People resist change for a variety of reasons, both rational and seemingly irrational, even when they believe that the idea of changing is perfectly reasonable and necessary.	Hill, “Amelia Rogers at Tassani Communications (A)” HBS case  Questions to think about prior to class: 1. What is going on here? Why did

		Without managing such resistance and getting the buy-in of individual employees, change efforts can fail or falter, even after ideas are approved and implemented. In this session, our goal is to use an interactive exercise to explore and practice ways to reduce resistance and empower people to commit to change.	Burns call Johnson? Why did Johnson call Rogers? 2. What does Rogers know about the client? 3. Would you describe this as a political situation? Why? 4. What should Rogers do? Should she speak to Burns? Should she speak to Paglia? (Think in very concrete terms here).  *There is a (B) case in the course pack. That is only for your interests and not required for the class.
11/30/21	Acting with Power: Persuasion and Resistance (2)		NA
12/2/21	Power Hierarchy and Conflict Management (1)	Just as avoiding injuries is an integral aspect of staying in shape, managing conflict is an essential part of workplace politics. All your power can be lost with one mistake that sidelines you from an important client, project, or your own career. In this session we will examine various ideas for managing conflict, particularly in light of different power hierarchies in organizations. If time allows, we will also cover new challenges (in particular, on diversity, equity, and inclusion) related to power and politics in the workplace.	NA
12/7/21	Power Hierarchy and Conflict Management (2)		