# MOR 472: Power, Politics, and Influence

**Fall 2021**

**Professor: Dr. Christopher Bresnahan Office: HOH 417**

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Lecture Class T/H, 10-11:50 a.m. / JFF 328

Office Hours: Via Zoom. Please contact for appointment times.

# Introduction and Course Objective

Power, Politics, and Influence is an elective course designed to help you become knowledgeable about power as well as help you develop the skills and strategies necessary to make a significant impact throughout your life and career. Courses on power are among the most sought-after electives in top universities due to the fact that power is a reality in organizational life and because those wishing to achieve significant goals and/or advocate big ideas must attend to power dynamics in order to succeed. The focus of this course is to help you get a head start on your path to power and influence. You will learn how to recognize and deal effectively with the power dynamics you encounter throughout your career as well as think deeply about the particular approach to power and influence that is the strongest fit for you. It is also designed to be a fun and interactive course.

# Learning Objectives

Although a popular elective, this course is not for everyone. It requires a high level of commitment and engagement, both inside and outside of class. It is a good fit for those who have a passion to make a difference and who are willing to explore new and challenging ideas along the way.

* Global Objective
  + Gain knowledge, skills, and strategies related to power that help you to become highly effective and impactful in your career of choice.
* Detailed Objectives
  + Learn to *see* the world differently. After the course, you will be able to recognize power dynamics and assess the effectiveness of various decisions that people (including yourself) make. You will also be able to identify alternative actions and opportunities that would have been more/less likely to lead to power.
  + Learn to *act* differently. After the course, you will have a personal strategic plan that will help you identify and develop your own personal path to power. The path that you choose will be a good fit for you based on your individual strengths, professional goals, and personal values. You will also have new skills, such as acting and speaking with power, that you tried out throughout the class and that you will continue to hone throughout your career.
  + Develop a healthy *respect* for power and how it can change people. After the course, you will know the benefits as well as the costs and pitfalls associated with the pursuit of power. This understanding will be incorporated into your personal plan for developing power.

# Required Materials

* *Power: Why Some People Have It – And Others Don’t*, Jeffrey Pfeffer, HarperCollins 2010
* Course Reader.

**Prerequisites:** None

**Course Notes:** Class information is available through your Blackboard account.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grading Summary:** |  | | |
| **Components** |  |  | **% of Grade** |
| **SELF-REFLECTIVE ASSIGNMENTS (5)** |  |  | 15.0% |
| **GROUP PROJECT (paper + presentation)** |  |  | 30.0% |
| **CLASS PARTICIPATION** |  |  | 15.0% |
| **TESTS Mid-Term** |  |  | 20.0% |
| **Final Exam (Paper)** |  |  | 20.0% |
|  | **TOTAL** |  | 100.0% |

# ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING DETAIL

*Self-Reflective Assignments (15%).* Individual, self-reflective writing assignments will be assigned 5 times throughout the semester. These assignments are an integral part of the course and designed to help you explore the content of the course in the context of your own plans, objectives, values, and experiences. Previous experience suggests that, if taken seriously, these self-reflective assignments are among the most useful aspects of the course. The assignments are due ideally (in written, *not* electronic form) at the *start* of the class for which they are assigned. Late papers will not be accepted, unless in the case of a true emergency, when cleared before class with the instructor. If for some reason you must miss class, you must submit your assignment electronically before it is due. The schedule (and descriptions) of the assignments is listed at the end of this syllabus.

*Group Project (30%).* The group project is described in an addendum at the end of the syllabus. The goal of the project is to have you explore the ideas of the course in a real-world setting.

Learning by doing and learning through intensive involvement results in greater mastery and retention of the material than more passive forms of learning. I encourage you to take the group project seriously and have some fun with it to explore the ideas of the course. You may wish to use the group project to study people in other countries—to test whether or not the principles learned in the class are generalizable. You may wish to use the group project to build relationships in sectors or industries where you want to work, as well as to learn more about interesting people. LATE PROJECTS WILL NOT BE GRADED AND WILL EARN ZERO CREDIT.

*Class Participation (15%).* You will only get out of this course as much as you are willing to put into it. Your class participation grade will reflect both class attendance and the quality of your involvement in the class’s activities and discussions. Near-perfect, on-time attendance is expected. You are expected to come to class prepared for discussion, by having read that day’s required reading. You are also expected to speak during class and make frequent contributions to the

discussion. Since I frequently cold call, please avoid embarrassment by telling me before class if you are not prepared. And if you are uncomfortable with class participation, please let me know at the beginning of the term and I will work with you to help you overcome this barrier. Some of your class participation score will also come from your group’s presentation of one of the assigned cases. Finally, at the end of some class sessions I will ask you to spend 3-5 minutes jotting down some “take-away” lessons from that day’s session. You will hand these in on your way out of class. They will not be formally graded, but they will be an important check on your class attention, an opportunity for you to crystallize that day’s information, and a feedback mechanism for me regarding your digestion of the course material. Missing more than two class sessions will dramatically affect your final grade. Please plan accordingly.

*Midterm (20%).* The midterm will contain a mix of multiple- choice and short essay questions. Students who attend frequently and engage actively in the course should expect to do well.

*Final Exam (Paper) (20%).* The final exam will be in the form of a paper (roughly 10-15 pages) and will be due at the time of the final exam. The paper will consist of two parts. Part 1: During the semester, select a group, organization, or social setting and develop a goal of gaining power and influence (due in class on September 14). After selecting the group, set a measurable objective for gaining power and influence (i.e., what will it look like if you succeed?). Next, use as many skills and tactics from the class as you can (including at least one that you rarely use and are uncomfortable with) to achieve your objective. In your paper, describe your objective as well as your thoughts and feelings prior to, during, and after your attempt to use these tactics to gain power and influence. Describe whether you were successful or not (either way is fine, so long as you learned from the experience). Summarize what you learned from your experience. Part 2: Using both (1) your above experience and (2) the ideas and concepts from the class, write out a strategic plan for yourself as to how you will use the material to build your own path to power. What are you going to do, specifically, for instance, as part of your job finding process? What are you going to do as you enter your new organization? What other things are you going to do to build influence, or, for that matter, not do? In other words, how do you plan to put the ideas and concepts to work for you in your own life? Which ideas or concepts are you deliberately choosing NOT to put into practice, and why? You will also be discussing this topic with the professor of record around this time.

# MARSHALL GUIDELINES

**Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus*and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

**Students with Disabilities:**

USC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. If you have a disability which may impact your performance, attendance, or grades in this course and require accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Services and Programs ([www.usc.edu/disability](http://www.usc.edu/disability)). DSP provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to your TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS (Grace Ford Salvatori Hall) 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Email: ability@usc.edu.

**Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. https://equity.usc.edu/

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/

*USC Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/

*Diversity at USC – https://diversity.usc.edu/*

Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/)

**No recording and copyright notice**

No student may record any lecture, class discussion or meeting with me without my prior express written permission.  The word “record” or the act of recording includes, but is not limited to, any and all means by which sound or visual images can be stored, duplicated or retransmitted whether by an electro-mechanical, analog, digital, wire, electronic or other device or any other means of signal encoding.  I reserve all rights, including copyright, to my lectures, course syllabi and related materials, including summaries, PowerPoints, prior exams, answer keys, and all supplementary course materials available to the students enrolled in my class whether posted on Blackboard or otherwise.  They may not be reproduced, distributed, copied, or disseminated in any media or in any form, including but not limited to all course note-sharing websites.  Exceptions are made for students who have made prior arrangements with DSP and me.

**Academic Integrity and Conduct**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include  the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own (plagiarism). Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences.  All students are expected to understand and abide by the principles discussed in the *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook ([www.usc.edu/scampus](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=gPabaWgd2MgAj3Eoy1KF3OV28kYwYR-lp7ZZeXvY4pI3TxP7AvfTCGgAdAB0AHAAOgAvAC8AdwB3AHcALgB1AHMAYwAuAGUAZAB1AC8AcwBjAGEAbQBwAHUAcwA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.usc.edu%2fscampus) or [http://scampus.usc.edu](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=YB0uKQ1iMtm13Bg2ZRXgDV_BzHOamIkYaXuCHOpyntw3TxP7AvfTCGgAdAB0AHAAOgAvAC8AcwBjAGEAbQBwAHUAcwAuAHUAcwBjAC4AZQBkAHUA&URL=http%3a%2f%2fscampus.usc.edu)). A discussion of plagiarism appears in the University Student Conduct Code (section 11.00 and Appendix A).

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](https://mail.marshall.usc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=4sD-FTGzMntjvDZN2PrQ29sp0Gw4eCOsDRKhfkAyRyE3TxP7AvfTCGgAdAB0AHAAOgAvAC8AdwB3AHcALgB1AHMAYwAuAGUAZAB1AC8AcwB0AHUAZABlAG4AdAAtAGEAZgBmAGEAaQByAHMALwBTAEoAQQBDAFMALwA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.usc.edu%2fstudent-affairs%2fSJACS%2f) . Failure to adhere to the academic conduct standards set forth by these guidelines and our programs will not be tolerated by the USC Marshall community and can lead to dismissal.

# COURSE READINGS/CLASS SESSIONS

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Dates** | **Topic** | **Assignments Due** |
| **1** | Tue 8/24 | Introduction to the course | **--** |
|  | Thu 8/26 | Beyond merit: The need for power | **--** |
| **2** | Tue 8/31  Thu 9/2 | Finding your mission: Power for what?  Class Treasure Hunt | **A1**  **--** |
| **3** | Tue 9/7 Thu 9/9 | Exerting power and influence (ELC)  Power and awareness of others | **A1**  **--** |
| **4** | Tue 9/14 Thu 9/16 | Adopting a growth (vs. fixed) mindset The Melian Dialogue | **A2**  Members of group due |
| **5** | Tue 9/21 | The world as it is vs. should be | **--** |
|  | Thu 9/23 | Power and commitment | **--** |
| **6** | Tue 9/28 Thu 9/30 | Bases of power  Networking your way to power | **--**  -- |
| **7** | Tue 10/5 Thu 10/7 | Power and Society  Establishing the right reputation | **A3**  Topic for final project |
| **8** | Tue 10/12 | ELC Exercise | **--** |
|  | Thu 10/14 | No Class | **--** |
| **9** | Tue 10/19 | MIDTERM EXAM | **--** |
|  | Thu 10/21 | Creating power through shared identity | **--** |
| **10** | Tue 10/26 Thu 10/28 | Acting with power  The psychology of influence | **--**  **--** |
| **11** | Tue 11/2 | The psychology of influence, cont. | **--** |
|  | Thu 11/4 | Building power by standing out | **A4** |
| **12** | Tue11/9 Thu11/11 | How and why power is lost (and kept)  Power through conflict: coming out ahead | **--**  **--** |
| **13** | Tue 11/16 | ELC class session | **--** |
|  | Thu 11/18 | The psychological effects of having power | **A5** |
| **14** | Tue 11/23 Thu 11/25 | Rebounding from setbacks  NO CLASS | **--**  **--** |
| **15** | Thu 12/3  Thu 12/5 | Presentations  Presentations; Work on final project | Group Project Due  -- |
|  | Thurs 12/12 | Final Exam | Final projects due at time |
|  |  |  | of scheduled final exam |
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|  |  |  |  |

**DETAILED SESSION INFORMATION**

# Reminders: Jeffrey Pfeffer’s “Power: Why Some People Have it – And Others Don’t” is a required text. Other reading assignments will be included in the course reader, which is also required, or a link will be provided in the syllabus and on Blackboard. Adequate preparation for class includes reading all assigned readings before that session’s class meeting.

**WEEK #1:**

**Tues Aug 24: Introduction to the Course**

Assigned readings:

* Course syllabus
* Pfeffer, Introduction: “Be prepared for power”

# Thurs Aug 26: Beyond merit: The need for power

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 1: “It takes more than performance”
* Case: Keith Ferrazzi

# WEEK #2:

**Tues August 31: Finding your mission: Power for what?**

Assigned readings:

* Case: John W. Dean, III, *Blind ambition: The White House years*. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1979, Ch. 1, “Reaching for the top, touching bottom.”
* Clayton Christensen (2010): ‘How Will You Measure Your Life?’ *HBR.* Link below: https://hbr.org/2010/07/how-will-you-measure-your-life

First Individual Assignment:

1. As noted earlier in the class, finding your mission is an important practice that can help lead to power and influence. Likewise, lacking a clear understanding of what your mission is can hinder your path to power. Please reflect on what you want to achieve in life and then write a 1-page essay that describes your current mission. Instead of focusing on abstract goals, such as “happiness” or “success” please provide answers to questions such as the following: What is the one thing you’d most like to achieve during your lifetime? What is a system or societal/political/social reality you’d like to change? What would it look like for you to be successful? What do you want people to remember you for when you’re gone?

\* Please submit to bbd before 11:59PM

**Thurs Sep 2: Finding your mission: Power for what?**

Class Exercise:

-Class Treasure Hunt will be distributed via bbd.

# WEEK #3:

**Tues Sep 7: Meet in the ELC**

# Thurs Sep 9: Power and awareness of others.

Assigned Readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 3: “Choosing where to start”

# WEEK #4:

**Tues Sep 14: The “growth mindset”**

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 2: “The personal qualities that bring influence”
* Article in the Chronicle of Higher Education: *Carol Dweck’s attitude: It’s not about how smart you are*. <http://chronicle.com/article/Carol-Dwecks-Attitude/65405/>

\*Note: use this link to access the article.

Second Individual Assignment (complete Part 1 of the assignment *before* you do the reading):

1. Write a one page essay about those aspects of your personality, skills and abilities, and “character” that you believe are and have been most important in helping you get ahead in life (both in the past and in the future). In other words, describe the personal attributes or qualities you possess that you believe will make you more effective in obtaining your goals.
2. After completing the essay, read Ch. 2 from Pfeffer’s *Power*. Make a list of the dimensions he highlighted in the chapter and rate yourself on those dimensions on a 1-5 scale, where 1 means you possess little of the attribute and 5 means you possess a lot of it.
   * Please submit to bbd before 11:59PM.

# Thurs Sep 16: The Melian Dialogue; Group Name and Members due

Assigned readings:

* “The Melian Dialogue”, from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book 5 (422-415 BC). \*Note: read this twice in preparation for class.

# WEEK #5:

**Tues Sep 21: The world as it is vs. should be**

Assigned readings:

* John Herman Randall, Jr. (1938). On the importance of being unprincipled.

# Thurs Sep 23: Power and Commitment; team meetings for topic

**WEEK #6:**

**Tues Sept 28: Bases of Power**

Assigned readings:

* Thomas Green: Power, Politics, and a Career in Crisis, W. Earl Sasser and Heather Beckham, Harvard Business School, 2008.

# Thurs Sept 30: Networking your way to power

Assigned readings:

* Ross Walker’s Path to Power, Jeffrey Pfeffer, Stanford OB-79, 2011.
* Malcolm Gladwell, “Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg,” *The New Yorker,* January 11, 1999.

# WEEK #7:

**Tues Oct 5: Power and Society**

Third Individual Assignment:

It is useful to think about how we spend our time, with whom, and how our contacts and networks are, or are not, consistent with where we might need to build our power base. Write a one- or two-page essay in which you consider the following questions:

1. With whom (other than family or significant others) do you spend the most time? Why?
2. Given your career ambitions and what you want to accomplish in your life, who (not necessarily by name, but by position or location in the social space) are the most important individuals for you to build relationships with?
3. What is the structure of your network? Do you occupy many “brokerage” positions? If so, which ones, and how have you come to occupy them? Do you have lots of “weak ties” or connections to people who can provide you nonredundant information? Are you central in any networks? Which ones?
4. Considering your answers to the above questions, what might you do differently if you wanted to increase your influence and build more efficient and effective social networks?

\* Please submit to bbd before 11:59PM.

# Thurs Oct 7: Establishing the right reputation

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 8: “Building a reputation: Perception is reality”
* Salley B. Smith, *In all his glory: The life of William S. Paley*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990, “The prince,” Chapters 10 and 13.

# WEEK #8:

**Tues Oct 12: ELC Exercise**

**Thurs Oct 14: NO CLASS, Fall Break**

# WEEK #9:

**Tues Oct 19: Midterm Exam**

# Thurs Oct 21: Creating power through shared identity

Assigned readings:

* Jerry M. Burger, Nicole Messian, Shebani Patel, Alicia Del Prado, and Carmen Anderson, “What a Coincidence! The Effects of Incidental similarity on Compliance,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30* (2004), 35-43.
* Case: James Richardson, Willie Brown: A Biography, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, Ch. 19, “The Play for Power,” and Ch. 20, “Drawing Lines,” the portion from pp. 275-284.

**WEEK #10:**

**Tues Oct 26: Acting with power**

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 7: “Acting and speaking with power”
* Joel Brinkley, “Birth of a Scandal and Mysteries of its Parentage,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1991, A11.
* “Oliver North, Businessman? Many Bosses Say That He’s Their Kind of Employee,”

*Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 1987, p. 35.

# Thurs Oct 28: The psychology of influence

Assigned readings:

* Robert B. Cialdini, “Harnessing the Science of Persuasion,” *Harvard Business Review,*

(October, 2001).

# WEEK #11:

# Tues Nov 2: The psychology of influence, continued

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 5 “Making something out of nothing: Creating resources”
* Pfeffer, Ch. 9: “Overcoming opposition and setbacks”

**Thurs Nov 4:** **Building power by standing out**

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 4: “Getting in: Standing out and breaking some rules”
* Case: Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A biography*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, Ch. 4, “Harvard: The ambitious student, 1947-1955”

Fourth Individual Assignment:

* Write an “aspirational obituary” in which you write down all the things you hope you will have achieved and done with your life once all is said and done. It can be in bullet point form if you prefer. When you finish, look over what you have written and then write answers to the following questions:
  + Given what I wrote, am I on the right track? Am I satisfied with the direction in which my career and life is currently headed?
  + Am I happy with the impact (both magnitude and quality) I’ve had in the world?
  + Am I creating a legacy I’m happy with?
  + What’s missing from my life, if anything? What might I need to do in order to achieve my aspirational obituary?
* Next, please prepare a one-page “development plan” that specifies what, specifically, you plan to do—both now and in the future—to develop skills and competencies in power and influence that you want to build.

\* Bring a hard copy of the assignment to turn in at the beginning of class.

* + Please submit to bbd before 11:59PM.

# WEEK #12:

**Tues Nov 9: How and why power is lost (and kept)**

Assigned readings:

* Case: Leslie Brinkman
* Pfeffer, Ch. 11: “How – and why – power is lost”

# Thurs Nov 11: Power through conflict: Coming out ahead

Assigned readings:

* Pfeffer, Ch. 10: “The price of power”

# WEEK #13:

**Tues Nov 16: ELC Session**

# Thurs Nov 18: The psychological effects of having power

Assigned readings:

* Fast, N. J., & Chen, S. (2009). When the boss feels inadequate: Power, incompetence, and aggression. *Psychological Science, 20,* 1406-1413.
* Fast, N. J., Sivanathan, N., Mayer, N. D., & Galinsky, A. D. (2012). Power and overconfident decision-making. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

Fifth Individual Assignment:

Write a one- or two-page essay addressing the following:

1. Write down the primary objective/legacy you most want to achieve in your career. In other words, what is the single most important impact you’d like to make?
2. Power and influence will, of course, be necessary for you to achieve your objective. However, as the assigned readings suggest, power can also sometimes get in your way. Given this, describe the ways that experiencing power could hinder you from ultimately achieving this goal?
3. Describe what will you do to protect yourself from these potential pitfalls.

\*Please submit to bbd before 11:59PM.

# WEEK #15:

**Tues Nov 23: Rebounding from setbacks**

Assigned readings:

* Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld and Andrew J. Ward, “Firing back: How great leaders rebound after career disasters,” *Harvard Business Review*, January, 2007.
* Jeffrey Sonnenfeld: The fall from grace, Victoria Chang, Kimberly Elsbach, and Jeffrey Pfeffer, Stanford OB-34A, 2002.

# Thurs Nov 25: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving

# WEEK #16:

**Tues Nov 30: Presentations**

**Thurs Dec 2: Presentations, Work on final projects**

**\*Final individual projects due at time of scheduled final exam (Thurs, December 9th, before 11:59PM)**

GROUP PROJECT ASSIGNMENT AND INSTRUCTIONS

# You will be assigned to a group consisting of five people.

1. **No later than October 7, please let me know what your group has chosen as its focus for the project. Do so by bringing a paper to class on or before Oct 7.**

Your assignment is to do “field research” on how individuals obtain and exercise influence, as a way of seeing how the material from the class is, or could be, put into use. Power becomes more visible and is exercised more clearly where there is opposition, where something needs to get done and resistance must be overcome. Think carefully about that in choosing the focus for your project. There are two options for this paper:

1. Select an individual person, and analyze this person’s use of power. Your “subject” should be someone who is either a) relatively early in his or her career and is perhaps 5-10 years down the road from where you’re at, or b) someone who has already reached achieved a great deal of power as a means to achieve his/her purpose. Ideally, the person will be someone that you can interview in person and, even better, perhaps also gather some insights from talking to her or his colleagues and others. Past graduates from USC who are doing exceptionally well or, alternatively, who have had problems because of political issues, would be ideal as the focus of your analysis (please, no USC profs). If you have questions about whether or not a specific individual would be appropriate, please feel free to ask me after class or via email.
2. Select a specific issue which has two definitive sides to the issue. Political topics are perfectly acceptable for this specific assignment. Do a deep analysis around how both sides of the issue address their specific perspective, and how they exercise influence around their viewpoint. How do these coalitions influence others? What is their specific purpose as an organization, and what do you think their goals are? How do they go about creating support from others, and how did this organizational begin?

In thinking about how to write the analysis and do the project, you can (but don’t have to) use one or all of the organizing themes of the course as a guide. You could consider rating the person’s/orgs strengths and weaknesses in each dimension (e.g., purpose, manage the self, see the situation, etc.). You might want to articulate how this person overcame opposition and resistance. You could analyze how the organizational or individual prepared himself or herself for the path to power. You could illustrate how the person/org lost power, or, alternatively, what he/she/they did to hold onto power against significant opposition and challenges. You could analyze how some individuals/orgs established a domain, by acquiring resources, attracting allies, and so forth.

Length is *not* the defining characteristic of a good analysis. Try to concisely (using exhibits as needed) cover the material. Use analysis and insight, rather than lots of words, to convey what you have learned and discovered.

# Final written projects are due at the beginning of class on November 30, 2021.

1. **You must be prepared to present your findings to the class in a 10-15 minute presentation (feel free to be creative in how you choose to present) on November 30. Names will be drawn out of a hat that day to determine the order of the presentations, so it is critical to be ready that day.**

SOME GUIDELINES/HINTS TO MAKE THE ASSIGNMENT MORE INTERESTING, USEFUL, AND SUCCESSFUL:

# Try to use as many sources of information as possible—archives, interviews, public sources (if available). In other words, to the extent possible, triangulate to get the most valid information possible. In particular, the subject of your paper is likely to provide information that is at least unintentionally (and possibly intentionally) biased and self-serving.

* 1. **Please proofread your paper to eliminate typographical errors.**
  2. **Don’t just list some references at the back of the paper, or nowhere. If you have relied on sources, particularly published sources, and particularly if there is a direct quote, please provide a complete footnote as to the source.**