

# COURSE TITLE: Power & Influence

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Subject Area:	Power and Influence in Organizations
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Course Code:	B7531-100
Term:	Spring
Credit Value:	3

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## FACULTY BIO

Professor Eric Abrahamson is the Hughie E. Mills Professor of Business Management at Columbia Business School. He holds degrees from New York University (Ph.D. and M.Ph. Beta Gamma Sigma). After teaching at New York University, Professor Abrahamson joined the Columbia Business School faculty in 1989. He has also been a visiting faculty member who has taught at London Business School, INSEAD, and at New York University.

Professors Abrahamson's teaching focuses on the ethical use of power and influence in and across organizations. In his applied scholarly work, Professor Abrahamson is internationally recognized for his research and teaching on innovative techniques for strategic planning, management, and leading innovation and change. He is an active in executive education and consulting in companies across the world.

Professor Abrahamson is the author of two books directed at general audiences. His book, *Change without Pain*, was published by the Harvard Business School Press. The Book was awarded the top business books of the year ranking by Strategy and Business and was ranked by them as a best book on the topic of Change Management. Professor Abrahamson's most recent book, *A Perfect Mess*, 2007, has been widely publicized and used globally, having been translated into seventeen languages. Professor Abrahamson's work has been featured in managerially oriented publications, most recently in *Fast Company*, *Fortune*, the *Harvard Business Review*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, the *Economist*, *Fortune*, and the *Sloan Management Review*, as well as many foreign publications.

## COURSE SUMMARY

Power is the ability to get people to do something they did not want to do and make them happy that they did it. Power and influence processes are pervasive and important in organizations, so leaders need to be able to understand power and to act on that knowledge. Organizations are fundamentally political entities, and power and influence are key mechanisms by which things get done. Therefore, this course has five objectives: 1) to increase students' ability to diagnose and analyze power, understanding why some have more power than others and grasping the strategies and tactics by which power is employed; 2) to expose students to effective and appropriate methods of influence; 3) to explain how power and influence can be used to build cooperation and promote change in organizations; 4) To use power, politics, and influence, in a way that advances both your interests and the ones of the firm in which you are (or will be) employed, as well as its stakeholders.

I am a firm believer that you must immediately put to use what you learn in the classroom and put in place structures to do so in the long run. Otherwise, you will tend not to integrate what you learned during the course and to forget it gradually. Objective 5), therefore, is twofold. First, for you to start, immediately, applying the

learnings from this course to your current (or next) work situation. Your goal should be to start or refine, even during this block week, how you work to attain, in an interrelated fashion, not only your current job responsibilities but also your political objectives. Your goal should be to employ proactively power, politics, and influence, in a way that advances your interests and that of your firm and its stakeholders. Second, to set up an infrastructure that will allow you to be a better technician and politician at work over the long term.

I divide the course into five sections, which we will cover during each subsequent day of this block-week course. The first section (day one) introduces the concept of power, as well as its use; that is, the ethical deployment of political tactics to attain your political objectives. We will then focus on how to set both your political and technical goals. The second section, (day two), explores the circumstances under which power and influence will be more prominent at your job. We then focus on how you can map out the political landscape of your job in a way that will guide you in achieving your political objective at work. During the third section (day three), we will explore seven key bases of power. We will diagnose whether you have sufficient bases of power to reach your political objective. The fourth section, (day four) focuses on understanding the use of political tactics, and how you might use them in at work, to exert the influence necessary for you to attain your political objective. The last section (day 5) focuses on how to set up an infrastructure that will allow you to be a better technician and politician at work over the long term.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Specify clearly your political objectives
2. Map out the political landscape in a way that guides you in achieving your political objective
3. Diagnose whether you have sufficient bases of power to reach your objective
4. Use political tactics necessary to either garner more power or to use your power to attain to exert the influence necessary to attain your political objective
5. Do, and have started doing, both your technical and political job, proactively and ethically, in the shorter as well as the longer run, to attain your political and technical objectives throughout your career.

## ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

I will ask you to adhere strictly to a few out-of-class norms bearing on timeliness in submitting well-prepared assignments and arriving to class on time. I will also ask you to adhere strictly to a few in-class norms bearing on the non-use of electronic devices and displaying nameplates during class. Otherwise, I think you will find me to be a Professor, who is very responsive and flexible in how I run the course to maximize the attainment of its objectives.

PLEASE NOT THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO THE PRE-WORK FOR THIS CLASS BEFORE IT STARTS. IN PARTICULAR, YOU MUST COME TO THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS. WITH A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL OBJECTIVE THAT YOU WANT TO PURSUE CURRENTLY IN YOUR CURRENT JOB, OR HAVE ALREADY STARTED PURSUING. IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY MAKING A CAREER SWITCH, THEN ARTICULATE YOUR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR NEXT JOB OR FOR YOUR SEARCH FOR SUCH A JOB. THIS CLASS REQUIREMENT SHOULD NOT dictate YOUR CHOICE OF THIS GOAL, BUT RATHER BY WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT AND PRESSING POLITICAL OBJECTIVE. YOU WILL DEVELOP HOW TO DIAGNOSE AND ACT UPON THIS POLITICAL OBJECTIVE DURING THIS BLOCK WEEK. Therefore, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT REACHING THIS OBJECTIVE IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO YOU.

Over and above being evaluated on your adherence to class norms and the quality of your prework, you will be evaluated on three types of work: 1) your performance on a final paper (45% of the grade); 2) the quality of your contributions to class discussion of the course material, as well as the quality of preparatory exercises for class (20% of the grade); and on 3) four self-reflective short memos (Practicum memos 1, 2, 3, and 4; each constituting

5% of the grade). The final paper will give you the opportunity to review and consolidate your learning. This paper will largely consist of integrating Memos A and B, as well as material from the last part of the course.

Class participation is an important part of the learning process in this course, so it is an important part of your evaluation. A contribution to class discussion is a comment that: 1) offers a novel and relevant insight to the issue; 2) builds on the preceding discussion and moves the analysis forward to generate new insights; 3) if it includes a personal anecdote or experience, it does so in a way that helps to illuminate the ideas being discussed; and 4) uses logic, evidence, and creativity, and is more than merely an expression of an opinion or feeling.

Given that there are so few classes, I will not accept absences, other than in the case of unavoidable and catastrophic conditions.

Submit all assignments, including the four practicum assignments as well as the final paper via CANVAS (the Columbia Business School courseware). It records the date and time of submissions. It is my policy not to accept late assignments during block week courses. I make rare exceptions for tardy assignments only if you notify me ahead of time and tardiness is due to circumstances outside of your control. I expect you to tell me when you will be able to turn in the assignment at your earliest opportunity, and to meet that revised deadline.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Assessment Table:

Assessment type	Deadline	Weighting	Group/ Individual	Formative/ Summative	The requirement to pass? Y/N	Submission Information
Pre-work for the class						
Class participation	Throughout the five days	20%	Individual	<b>Formative</b>	Y	See instructions below
Practicum memos	Four due dates specified below	20%	Individual	<b>Formative</b>	Y	See instructions below
Assignments	Due date specified below	10%	Individual	<b>Formative</b>	Y	See instructions below
Final Paper	Due date specified below	50%	Individual	<b>Summative</b>	Y	See instructions below

### Minimum requirements to pass this course:

- 1) Minimum 50% in the weighted final numerical score AND
- 2) Minimum 50% in the aggregate of the individual components

### Plagiarism Declaration

All students completing this course should be aware that in submitting any assignment for this course, you agree to the following declaration:

“I certify that the coursework that I have submitted is entirely my unaided work and that I have read and complied with the School’s guidelines on plagiarism and referencing as set out in the School Handbook.

I understand that the School may make use of plagiarism detection software and that my work may, therefore, be stored in a database which is accessible to other users of the same software.”

Students should be aware that, where plagiarism is suspected, a formal investigation may be carried out under the School’s Student Disciplinary Procedure. This may result in penalties ranging from mark deduction to expulsion from the School.

## READING LIST

(Optional, but highly recommended reading from) Jeffrey Pfeffer’s, *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations*. Harvard Business School Press.

You should download all other materials from Canvas, the Columbia Business School courseware.

## TEACHING METHODS

Teaching/contact hours: 32.5

Suggested independent study hours: at minimum 10

I will use the following teaching methods this course:

1. Lecture(s)
2. Seminar(s)
3. Project(s)
4. In class simulations

## COURSE STRUCTURE

As indicated in the "Course Summary" section, I divide the course into five sections, which I will cover during each subsequent day of this block-week course. The first section (day one) introduces the concept of power, as well as its use; that is, the ethical deployment of political tactics to attain your political objectives. We will then focus on how to set both your political and technical goals. The second section, (day two), explores the circumstances under which power and influence will be more prominent at your job. We then focus on how you can map out the political landscape of your job in a way that will guide you in achieving your political objective at work. During the third section (day three), we will explore seven key bases of power. We will diagnose whether you have sufficient bases of power to reach your political objective. The fourth section, (day four) focuses on understanding the use of political tactics, and how you might use them in at work, to exert the influence necessary for you to attain your political objective.

## OTHER

As mentioned above, other than the fact that I don't accept late assignments, absent extraordinary circumstances, and the few class norms listed below, I think you will find me to be a Professor who is very responsive and flexible in how I run the course to maximize the attainment of its objectives.

### NAME PLATE

Please display your nameplate, during every class session, to help me and your classmates learn your name. If you forget your nameplate, then write your name on a piece of paper and display it in a clearly visible fashion.

### ARRIVING LATE TO CLASS

Many students report being distracted by students trooping in late or disappearing and reappearing at random while class is in session. I would ask you always to arrive to class on time and not to absent yourself during class. If you are late, or if you have to absent yourself during class, I would ask you to do so as quietly and discreetly as possible, to avoid distracting your classmates.

### ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

For every class, I expect you to turn off all laptops, cell phones, wireless connections, and any other electronic devices during class time. I make one exception for students who use their laptops to take class note. Failure to use your laptop in any other way (email, browsing, etc...), I consider as a violation of class norms as it is distracting to other students.

### FEEDBACK

I love teaching, especially when the class is going well. I am disappointed if there is a problem in the classroom – particularly one that I could remedy – but nobody has shared it with me. Please give me feedback before the end of the block week, whether positive or negative, on your learning experience in this class. If there is some aspect of the class that you do not appreciate (and which you think could be improved) or that you appreciate (and which you think there could be more of), please bring this issue to my attention as soon as possible. You can do so either by speaking to me directly or by relaying the issue through the class teaching assistant. I guarantee that you will find a sympathetic ear, that I will be very grateful to you for bringing the issue to my attention. I cannot guarantee that I will satisfy all of your suggestions as I have learned that responding to certain suggestions to satisfy a few students can end up frustrating many more. I do guarantee, however, that I will make every effort to take your concern seriously, and to do whatever I can to address it.