

UCI Paul Merage School of Business

MGMT 290

POWER AND POLITICS IN ORGANIZATIONS

SPRING 2020

Pat Reilly

<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/24054>

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Professor Bio



Patrick (Pat) Reilly is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Organization and Management area at The Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine. He has a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he specialized in organizational studies and economic sociology. He also holds an MA in Humanities and Social Thought from New York University and a BA in American Studies (summa cum laude) from Emory University.

Pat joined the faculty of The Paul Merage School of Business in 2017. He teaches multiple MBA courses, including Power and Politics in Organizations and Negotiations. In addition, he designed and taught numerous sociology courses at UCLA, which include Organizations in Society and seminars covering the mass media and entertainment industries.

The substantive focus of Pat's research is the entertainment industry. It primarily covers norm enforcement, career development, formal and informal team formation, and creativity in loosely structured and network-based fields. Pat employs both ethnographic and quantitative methods, and his work has examined the Hollywood film industry and stand-up comedy. His work has appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *Academy of Management Discoveries* and *Academy of Management Best Paper Proceedings*.

Pat has earned accolades for his teaching and research. In 2015, UCLA Academic Senate awarded him the Distinguished Teaching Award, which is the university's highest honor for instruction. He also received numerous awards for teaching from the UCLA Department of Sociology. For his research, Pat has earned numerous awards and honorable mentions from The Academy of Management and American Sociological Association.

Classroom Etiquette, Guidelines, & Policies

Academic Honesty

By enrolling in this course, you agree to be bound by the University of California, Irvine's policy on academic honesty (<http://senate.uci.edu/files/2015/12/Appendix-VIII-UCI-Academic-Senate-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.pdf>). This policy may also be found in your Graduate Student Handbook.

Attendance

Given current circumstances, this class will have a flexible policy concerning attendance. Please attend the Zoom sessions regularly and on-time. Our regular attendance ensures that we all have a dynamic class experience with great discussions where we can learn most and best. However, there might be times when this might be infeasible. If anything arises where you must miss class, please contact me. As you may face myriad demands and greater uncertainty, I will not make hard-and-fast distinctions between excused and unexcused.

Diversity & Inclusiveness Policy

The University of California, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities.

Contesting a Grade/Re-grading Policy

As your instructor, it is my duty to be meticulous and fair in the evaluation of your performance. This is a responsibility that I take very seriously. Therefore, your grades should be a correct representation of your work's quality. However, if you believe that I made an error in grading an assignment, please consult me in person. Requests for re-grades will involve me reassessing the entire assignment, not just a specifically chosen section. Therefore, you may risk receiving a decreased score if I discover points where I was overly generous.

Recordings

I will be recording the course sessions, and the videos will be available on Canvas. Therefore, you will not have to make your own recordings.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make proper accommodations.

Personal Note

I want to thank you for enrolling in this course. I consider it a great honor to teach and to have you as a student. I am committed to ensuring you have the optimal environment and support to develop your abilities and confidence as a manager. Therefore, if you have any comments or feedback about improving the course, do not hesitate to contact me. It will help me develop to be a better instructor and advisor. Good luck! I look forward to sharing this class with you.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are:

- You will be able to understand and evaluate the bases, sources, and uses of power in organizations, and develop a toolkit of concepts for thinking about power dynamics. This includes:
 - Understanding what power is and its effects, constructive and destructive
 - Being able to assess how the formal or informal structure of organizations shapes power dynamics.
 - Evaluating how your personal skills, disposition, and social position contributes to your potential to exercise power and influence
 - Ascertaining how power is relational and plays out through interactions
 - Determining how these various forms of power shape everyday action, decision-making, and outcomes within organizations
- You will develop confidence and skills in managing conflict, assessing situations, leading ethically, and grasping the formal and informal power dynamics within a given context to develop responsible strategies that achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.
- You will assess your own social networks and consider strategies for optimizing them to maximize your influence and ability to share knowledge and resources.
- You will reflect on your own experience with power, develop awareness of your strengths and deficits, and learn to leverage your experience for continued learning beyond this class.

Course Overview

This course surveys how to diagnose the power dynamics and political environment of organizations and to develop strategies for goal achievement. It investigates what power is and its effects upon decision-making, executing ideas, agenda setting, and personal legitimacy. This course explores the personal, structural, and relational dynamics of power. It also covers how your networks of relationships can provide resources, information, and support—thus expanding power potential. These relationships shape the political environment that can provide opportunities and obstacles for you, your teammates, and those you manage. Such principles are especially relevant for contemporary managers, as rapid technological change and increasingly flexible organizations require individuals to control and influence the environment beyond organizational boundaries and across diffuse networks. Furthermore, this course stresses forward-oriented strategies that prioritize collaboration, mutually beneficial outcomes, and sustainable relationships and alliances. Through engaging with academic theory and real-life case studies, this course will allow you to develop and master strategies for negotiating power effectively and ethically and to maximize your experience and preexisting abilities. This will allow you to confidently address the multiplex situations that you may encounter as a manager or team member.

Course Materials

The readings/resources for this course will come from four sources. Their location will be noted on the syllabus. You will be required to read or watch the week's resources ahead of the course session to ensure that you can effectively follow along and participate in the course discussions.

Power: Why Some People Have It-and Others Don't by Jeffrey Pfeffer (BOOK)

This book is an accessible survey of various perspectives and scholarly works concerning power within organizations. It is written by Jeffrey Pfeffer, who is a professor at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. He has researched and written about power in organizations extensively, and his original version of "Power

and Politics in Organizations” serves as the template for like courses at business schools all over the world—including this course. The books should be available at the bookstore. In the event that it is not, the book is sold at Amazon and most large chain or independent bookstores.

Course Reader (READ)

The online reader holds the case studies and most of the articles and book excerpts that we cover in this course.

Course Website (WEB)

I will post additional readings on the course website. A few of the required materials for the course will be available on course website, due to issues with licensing. Most of these materials will be films or podcasts. I will provide the links to purchase the rental rights for the films, but many of them will be available on streaming platforms that you may already subscribe to (e.g. Disney Plus or HBO Now). Renting the movies will not cost more than \$4 each. There will also be supplemental readings, which are meant to satisfy your curiosity if you wish to learn more about a given week’s topic and to provide the research substantiating the points that I make in lecture.

Grading

Your grade for this course will consist of your performance on the following assignments:

Response Papers	30%
Final Paper	35%
Attendance/Participation	20%
Opening Puzzle and Resolution	15%
TOTAL	100%

Response Papers (30%)

On *five* occasions during quarter, you will deliver a two-page, double-spaced response to a prompt that I will provide to you. There will be a minimum of six prompts that I will give throughout the course of the quarter. These prompts will ask you address concepts discussed during our class meetings and apply them to your own experience or phenomena you observe elsewhere, and I will draw these response prompts from the class discussion or your suggestions. These will be due on Canvas before the following week’s session. Your paper will be graded on a 4-point scale and will reflect your thoughtful consideration of the prompt, your integration of course content, and the clarity of your points.

Final Paper (35%)

You have two options for the general topic of your final paper, which will allow you another opportunity to apply the course concepts within a real-life example and to illustrate your mastery with them:

Option 1: Assessing the power and political needs in your current job

This option will give you an opportunity to start reflecting on your current position and your future directions from a power and social capital perspective. Your paper should consider the following general questions:

1. What is your assessment of the power dynamics of your current job?
2. What are your major goals concerning your career development within and/or outside your current firm?
3. What are the social networking and interactional skills necessary for you to be most effective in actualizing your career goals?
4. Do your current sources of power and social capital fit your career development goals?
5. What is your plan for developing the power-related attributes to be effective (1) in your current position, (2) in establishing an environment where you can best actualize your goals, and (3) once you realize your initial goals?
6. Given the situation, are there specific ethical dilemmas that you may encounter or you should be sensitive to? How can you realize your goals in an ethical fashion?

Option 2: Analysis of a real business situation

You can choose to analyze a real business situation in which power and political factors have a significant effect on the outcomes. As you have experience in the working world, you will write about a situation in which you were personally involved. Your paper should be written following the conventions of a case study. This should be a way that, hypothetically, students could understand a key concept(s) from the course. Your analysis should incorporate the following:

1. A brief description of the organization and the events
2. An identification of the key players, with a diagnosis of who has power and who does not, why that is the case, and the relevant sources of each respective actor's power
3. An identification of the events and forces that most shaped and explain the outcome
4. An identification of the key players' strategies and an analysis of their relevant strengths and weaknesses
5. What should have been done differently, and why?

As you will be covering an actual situation, you should use pseudonyms for the organizations, people, and projects that you cover. I will be the only one reading the paper, so you can be assured that your privacy will be maintained.

The paper should be ten pages, double-spaced (not including figures, tables, exhibits, or bibliography). You should use 12-point font (no Courier New or other space-eating typefaces) and 1-inch margins. You should consistently use some format for citations, but you can pick the one with which you are most comfortable. To ensure your best performance, start as early as you can to plan and execute the paper. Submit the paper in full by 9:00PM Pacific Time on xxx to Canvas.

Attendance and Participation (20%)

This portion will reflect your attendance and quality of participation during class sessions. I will evaluate your classroom participation based upon your considerate and constructive contributions to our discussions. This will allow me to know if you did the readings and analyzed the relevant cases. You will be graded for being an effective and supportive speaker and listener. This portion of your grade will reflect the quality rather than the quantity of your contributions. This will not be a penalty for shyness. Indeed, I may penalize students for regularly derailing the classroom discussion, making points that do not reflect thoughtful engagement with the readings or concepts, or speaking for its own sake.

Opening Puzzle and Resolution (15%)

During the first class, I will ask you to write down a puzzle or question that you have concerning power and politics. You will hand in the question to me, which will account for part of this grade. On Week 8, I will

hand it back to you in class. You will write a brief answer to this initial question, which will be due through Canvas on Week 10. This response should be one page in length, double-spaced.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (May 31)

Introduction: The Intricacies of Power and Politics

In this introductory session, we will arrive at a basic working definition of power and establish its connection to such concepts as influence, dependence, and authority. We will cover how power is rooted in the interplay between personal, interactional, and structural foundations. In addition, we will discuss how organizations are political structures. Lyndon Baines Johnson, the thirty-sixth President of the United States, is the subject of this week's case study. While we may perceive power as a quality of individuals—and Johnson was surely one of the most powerful figures ever to work on Capitol Hill—we will discuss how power is a much more complicated, expansive product.

Reading

Pfeffer, *Power*: Chapter 1 (BOOK)

Case Study: Lyndon Baines Johnson

Diane Countu. "Lessons in Power: Lyndon Johnson Revealed." *Harvard Business Review* (READ)

Washington Post Presidential Podcast. "Lyndon B. Johnson: Power" (WEB)

Week 2 (April 7)

Organizational Culture

In this session, we will cover how personal power depends on the culture of the organizational context you occupy. We associate attributes like charisma as being a source that grants individuals power or authority. We will discuss how the value of personal characteristics as sources of power relates to fit (or non-conformity) with an organizational culture. This is most evident in the case study, which focuses on Tony Hsieh of Zappo's. Here, the management of power and organizational culture are mutually constitutive, but this effective balance is threatened by a massive change. Furthermore, we will touch upon the interface between the personal and relational component of power by illustrating how the management of impressions within interactions acts an important arena of authority and legitimacy.

Readings

Pfeffer, *Power*: Chapter 7 (BOOK)

Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones. "What Holds the Modern Company Together?" *Harvard Business Review* (READ)

Case Study: Tony Hsieh (Zappos)

Noah Askin and Gianpiero Petriglieri. "Tony Hsieh at Zappos: Structure, Culture, and Change." *INSEAD Case Studies* (READ)

Week 3 (April 14)

Power, Corruption, and Lies

There is a commonly held negative perception toward power and politics. Power can be abused to exploit and denigrate others—especially those who are organizationally subordinate. This follows the commonly used (and misattributed or misquoted) observation by The Lord Acton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Individuals and entities can employ political maneuvers for ends that are highly damaging to others—whether manifesting through self-gain, grift, or negligent indifference of the consequences. This week we will look at a few cases to investigate the conditions in which these negative circumstances concerning power and politics manifest and discover ways to (a) prevent them and (b) exercise power and politics constructively. This will introduce themes that we will build upon throughout the rest of the course.

Examples:

This American Life. “Petty Tyrant.” November 12, 2010. Podcast (WEB)

Alex Gibney, director. *The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley* (WEB)

Kevin Connolly, director. *Big Shot* (WEB)

Week 4 (April 21)

Mentor/Protégé Relationships

Mentor and protégé relationships are thick and intense, whether formally or informally brokered, and can allow incumbents to share information and tacit knowledge. These bonds can also enable newer entrants to socialize effectively into the culture and day-to-day practice of an organization. However, these relationships are also valuable resources to expand social networks, gain legitimacy, spread influence, and reproduce values, goals, and prerogatives. The effects can endure far beyond the one’s initial career stages. Through the case of Michael Lewis, best-selling author and former bond salesman, we will investigate mentorships as vehicles of not just socialization, but to gain power.

Reading

Yan Shen, Richard D. Cotton, and Kathy E. Kram, “Assembling Your Personal Board of Advisors,” *MIT Sloan Management Review* (READ)

Case Study: Michael Lewis (Salomon Brothers)

Michael Lewis. “Adult Education,” in *Liar’s Poker* (READ)

Michael Lewis. “From Geek to Man,” in *Liar’s Poker* (WEB)

Week 5 (April 28)

Formal and Informal Networks

Your *social capital*—the quantity and quality of social bonds that you possess—shapes your authority, status, and power within organizations, which themselves could be envisioned as social networks. In this week’s session, we will discuss how you may harness your social networks to access or circulate information and resources. We will contrast the value of formal and informal networks—even the bonds you have with people with whom you have not contacted in a while. We will investigate these ideas through the case of Heidi Roizen, who constructed and consulted her social networks in Silicon Valley to shape her career and actualize key goals.

Readings

Pfeffer, *Power*: Chapter 6 (BOOK)

Herminia Ibarra and Mark Hunter. "How Leaders Create and Use Networks." *Harvard Business Review* (READ)

Daniel Z. Levin, Jorge Walter, and J. Keith Murnighan. "The Power of Reconnection - How Dormant Ties Can Surprise You." *MIT Sloan Management Review* (READ)

Case Study: Heidi Roizen (SOFTBank Venture Capital)

Kathleen McGinn and Nicole Tempest. "Heidi Roizen." *Harvard Business School Case Studies* (READ)

Week 6 (May 5)

Coalitions

Forming coalitions can be a foundational strategy for correcting power imbalances, realizing goals, pooling resources, and establishing long-term, mutually beneficial alliances. However, coalitions are fragile. They are tough to maintain. With the clash of egos and conflicting goals, it is easy for them to fail and do far more harm than good. We will investigate how and in what key ways coalitions can enhance individual and collective power. Furthermore, we will discuss how "playing politics" can be constructive in allowing individual and others' goals to be realized and is not necessarily a pejorative. It all depends on our intentions and how we mutually act. We will explore this in the real-life case of John Dubinsky and the St. Louis Contractor Loan Fund, whose success depended upon the involvement of a diverse case of social actors.

Reading

Herminia Ibarra and Jennifer Suesse. "Building Coalitions." *Harvard Business School Case Studies* (READ)

Oliver James. "There's No Shame in Playing Office Politics." *The Independent* (READ)

Case Study: John Dubinsky and the St. Louis Contractor Loan Fund

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Frank Jerome Lanasa, and Ai-Ling Jamila Malone. "John Dubinsky and the St. Louis Contractor Loan Fund." *Harvard Business Case Studies*. (READ)

Week 7 (May 12)

Playing Politics

In this session, we will cover various strategies of managing power and influence when successfully realizing an organizational goal. These tactics of influence, collaboration, and persuasion require intense interactions between individuals in positions above, below, and at the same level as you. The readings and the case study about John Clendenin's project to develop a staff group to enhance the efficiency of Xerox's global logistics will allow us to understand some of the "games" and their effects. This will also provide us an opportunity to explore important issues concerning the ethical dimension of power and politics.

Reading

Phyllis Korkki. "The Win-Win Way to Play Office Politics." *New York Times*. (WEB)

Adam Grant. "The Office without Assholes." *TED: WorkLife with Adam Grant* (WEB)

Case Study: John Clendenin and Xerox

Russell A. Eisenstat. "Managing Xerox's Multinational Development Center." *Harvard Business School Case Studies*. (READ)

Week 8 (May 19)

Conflicts

Conflicts may evolve over resource struggles or conflicting agendas. Sometimes they become personal, and thus leaders face decisions that potentially compromise their ethics. Conflicts can act as an event to diagnose how power dynamics contribute to suboptimal outcomes or failures. We will assess how relationship conflicts emerge and talk about solutions. We will discuss ways in which conflicts can be avoided or could have constructive effects. We will explore this through the case of “The Montreal Screwjob” in the World Wrestling Federation, which shows how culture, animosity between cliques, incompatible agendas, and “time-honored traditions” can lead conflicts to explode into full-scale crises and produce unintended consequences.

Reading

Pfeffer, *Power*: Chapter 9 (BOOK)

Amy C. Edmondson and Diana McLain Smith. “Too Hot to Handle? How to Manage Relationship Conflict.” *California Management Review* 49:6-31. (READ)

Case Study: “The Montreal Screwjob”: Vince McMahon and Bret Hart of the World Wrestling Federation

Thomas Mannarelli and Christopher Baty. “The World Wrestling Federation (A): Vince McMahon vs. Bret “The Hitman” Hart.” *INSEAD Case Studies* (READ)

Paul Jay, director. *Hitman Hart: Wrestling with Shadows* (WEB)

Week 9 (May 26)

Responding to Failure and Power’s Hazards

In this final discussion, we will explore the thorny questions of personal and professional setbacks and how to survive them using power and politics. Furthermore, we will discuss how power can be contribute to possible liabilities. This case focuses on Al Gore’s career. Despite the promising course of his political career as a U.S. Senator and Vice President under a popular U.S. President, he encountered monumental failure during the 2000 Presidential election—where mismanagement and strange circumstances lead him to lose despite winning the popular vote. How did he redeem himself to achieve meaningful influence in the global arena—which culminated with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007?

Reading

Amy C. Edmondson. “Strategies for Learning From Failure.” *Harvard Business Review* (READ)

Optional Reading

Pfeffer, *Power*: Chapter 10 and 11 (BOOK)

Case Study: Al Gore

Frederic Godart. “Al Gore: Surviving Career Setbacks.” *INSEAD Case Studies* (READ)

Week 10 (June 2)

Class cancelled due to a conference that Pat must attend. The first-week question response is due through Canvas.