

Course Title: Power and Politics in Organization

Areas: Organizational Behavior & Public Systems Group

Instructors: George Kandathil and Navdeep Mathur

PGP II Elective Slot IX-X

Course Description

Having a great idea and not having the political knowledge and skill to get it recognized and implemented is of course frustrating. Yet more frustrating could be the realization that what you achieved was not in your interest; rather more powerful others had shaped your interests and your thought -process to their advantage. This course addresses the afore-mentioned issues in two parts. The first part aims at improving your ability to diagnose the underlying distribution of power in the process of organizing (teams, groups, business and other social, cultural, political organizations) and enhance your effectiveness in exercising power in organizational settings towards better outcomes for those involved. It also helps understand power and politics in organizing the perspectives that govern our relationship with others at different levels.

Course Objectives

Over the past two centuries, networks of corporations, The State, and supra-national institutions have grown in their power to the extent that they have become more powerful than many individual governments and civil societies. To work in and with such powerful organizations mere skills to understand the political landscape of a corporation/State from a single standpoint and attempt to shape it to some ideal purpose are not sufficient. It calls for a deeper understanding of the ways organizations shape our thought and behavioral patterns which in turn limits and shapes the nature of our proposed interventions to bring change. Therefore, a key aim is to generate a grasp of the complex relationships between power, politics and knowledge in organizational settings. This is achieved through discussion of a range of theories of power, and re-visiting distribution and exercise of power in organizational settings and the importance of using power ethically.

Course Administration

The course will comprise 20 sessions of 75 minutes each. There will be a combination of cases, lectures, videos, exercises, guest speakers, group-work, guided large group discussions designed to illustrate the power dynamics in groups/organizing processes.

Evaluation

Individual Reflective journal (60%), Group project (20%), Group presentation (20%)

Course prerequisites : None

Restrictions on class size: 40

The course requires Video-Screening facilities. Attendance is mandatory.

Session outline

Session 1: Introduction: Three Faces of power

Read – a) Grassroots Policy Project. 2003. Power and Social Change:

http://www.strategicpractice.org/system/files/power_and_social_change.pdf

b) Boston.com 2.9.14. Ben Edelman, Harvard Business School Professor, Goes to War Over \$4 Worth of Chinese Food

<http://www.boston.com/food-dining/restaurants/2014/12/09/harvard-business-school-professor-goes-war-over-worth-chinese-food/KfMaEhab6uUY1COCnTbrXP/story.html>

Session 2: Power in Organisation: The Fourth Face

Read: a) Kearins, Kate. 1996. Power in Organisational Analysis: Delineating and Contrasting a Foucauldian Perspective. Electronic Journal of Radical Organisation Theory:

www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/Vol2_2/kearins.pdf

b) Schmidt J. 2000. Ideological Discipline – Chapter 2 In *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul Battering System that Shapes their Lives*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Session 3: Manufacturing Consent in Organizational Spaces:

Read: a) The Primacy of Attitude – Chapter 9 in Schmidt J. 2000. *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul Battering System that Shapes their Lives*. Rowman and Littlefield.

b) Kivel, Paul. 2000. Social Service or Social Change? Who Benefits from your Work?

Session 4: Organizational Power and Dissent

Read: a) Garry Emmons, 2007, Encouraging dissent in decision making, HBS:

<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/5746.html>

b) Subordination – Chapter 13 in Schmidt J. 2000. *Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul Battering System that Shapes their Lives*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Session 6 & 7: Gender and power

Read: Timmons, Heather. 2007. Telling India's Modern Women They have Power, Even Over Their Skin Tone, New York Times, 30 May

Film: Killing us softly

Session 8 & 9: Masculinity, Power and Social Control

Read: a) Bhasin, Kamla. Understanding Gender and b) Understanding Masculinity. Kali for Women. 2000.

c) Q, Jim. 2012. "HEY YOU": Orwellian Government Oppression and Never Ending Wars. Global Research.

Film: Ken Robinson – Paradigms in Education

Session 10 : Resistance to power

Read: a) Edward Fullbrook (Ed), 2006, The crisis in economics: The post-autistic economics movement: the first 600 days, Routledge. Chapter 1 & 2

b) <http://hpronline.org/harvard/an-open-letter-to-greg-mankiw/?mid=51>

with comments (Please go through all comments)

c) <http://www.thecrimson.harvard.edu/article/2011/11/2/mankiw-walkout-economics-10/>

Relationship of course with overall program objectives and related courses

Consistent with the program objectives, the course seeks to provide students with knowledge and awareness of practices of power and open pathways to new understandings about decision-making and managerial leadership both in corporations as well as in the public sphere. It seeks to inform and broaden the worldview of participants about the power laden-ness of theirs and others social positions with regard to their capacity for effecting change.

The course will build on the exposure they have received via Socio-economic Environment of Business, Organizational Behavior, Communications related courses, and Business Ethics.