DHP P291

Power in Theory and Practice
Spring 2020

Professor Daniel Drezner
Cabot 611
7-4720
daniel.drezner@tufts.edu
Office hours: Wednesday 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM or by appointment
(Sign-up can accessed at http://bit.ly/DreznerOfficeHours)

OVERVIEW

Those who study international politics for a living are certain about two facts: power is the defining concept of the discipline, and each scholar’s idiosyncratic definition of power is superior to everyone else’s. This lack of consensus is a problematic state of affairs. The most widely-cited definition is Robert Dahl’s: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would otherwise not do.” As we shall see, however, most scholars cite Dahl’s definition only to criticize it. This problem has been compounded by the enormous gap between theoretical debates about power and efforts to develop concrete ways to measure and observe it.

The practical need for a better conceptual and empirical understanding of power should be obvious. In the decade after the 2008 financial crisis, there have been an extraordinary series of debates about whether the distribution of power has been rejiggered. Scholars and commentators have fiercely debated the relative power of the United States and China. Some argued that the 2008 financial crisis left the United States as still the most powerful actor in the world; others argue that it is now China. Public opinion polling shows that ordinary citizens are as divided as experts about these questions. Scholars and policymakers appear similarly split on Russia’s relative power. Others have argued that the nature of power itself has diffused so rapidly that no actor or concert of actors can credibly wield authority anymore.

The goal of this course is to confront these conceptual and empirical problems head-on, so as to get a better understanding of what power means, its myriad dimensions, how it is perceived over time, and how it is exercised by actors in world politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A note about the readings. This is a seminar course for Fletcher students. This means that I expect you to have done all of the readings in advance and that you are prepared to discuss them in class. Indeed, you will be required to email me discussion questions by 2
PM on the day of our class sessions. I place great importance on this: you will note that 40% of your grade is determined by your class participation. Read all of the assigned materials before class meets. I am aware that this is not the only course you will be taking this quarter, and I have really, really tried to keep the number of pages per week down. Scanning the syllabus, you will probably believe this claim to be insincere, but trust me, there is a lot that is being left out.

You will have two written assignments for this class. The first paper, due right before spring break, is a 1,500 word essay in which you review the power literature and offer your best effort at a conceptual definition and operationalization of power in international relations. The second paper, due the last day of reading period, is a 2,500 word analytical essay on a topic salient to the future of power that must be approved by me before you start it.

All told, your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with federal and state law, Tufts University provides reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. If you believe you require an accommodation, contact me after the first class session or e-mail accessibility@tufts.edu or Catherine.Flynn@tufts.edu.
THE READINGS

Required books


COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (1/14): Greetings and salutations and power and world politics


Week 2 (1/28): The definition and historiography of power


Lukes, Power: A Radical View, all.


Baldwin, Power and International Relations, chapters two and three.

Week 3 (2/4): Power and international relations theory


Baldwin, Power and International Relations, rest.
Week 4 (2/11): Power, hierarchy, and anarchy


Week 5 (2/18): The fungibility of power


**Week 6 (2/25): Power and time**


Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2008), chapter one.


**Week 7 (3/3): Operationalizing and measuring power**


Week 8 (3/10): Network and structural power


3/13, 2:00 PM: FIRST PAPER DUE IN SHERI CALLENDER'S OFFICE (CABOT 603).

Week 9 (3/22 – NOTE SPECIAL TIME): Military power


Week 10 (3/31): Economic power


Week 11 (4/7): Soft power


**Week 12 (4/14): Power, hegemony, and global order**


**Week 13 (4/21): Power and resistance.**


5/1, 2:00 PM: FINAL PAPER DUE IN SHERI CALLENDER’S OFFICE (CABOT 603)