

**Western University**  
**Department of Psychology**  
Psychology 9650

**Power and Status in Organizations**  
**Winter 2024**

See Student Centre for course time and location

**Enrollment Restrictions**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Department of Psychology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

**Instructor Information**

Instructor: Dr. Alex Benson  
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**Course Description**

This course offers an overview of research on the function and structure of social hierarchies within organizations and groups. In this course, we will examine traditional and contemporary accounts on the nature of social rank, how power and status differences are established and regulated, and the consequences of social hierarchy for individuals and organizations. We will discuss a range of topics, including the bases of social hierarchy, the social neuroendocrinology of status and power, motives and individual differences related to status and power, and how social rank influences a range of outcomes.

**Course Format**

This is a seminar-style course that is organized around weekly readings of theoretical and/or empirical papers. Students are expected to attend and actively participate in the weekly discussions, submit weekly discussion questions, write two brief reflection papers, and prepare a final research proposal.

**Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives**

We will address these topics at multiple levels of analysis to understand the personal, interpersonal, and group implications of social hierarchy. Students will also learn about the methods used to study social hierarchy within group contexts and the challenges of research in this area. Students will learn contemporary theory, concepts, and methods relevant to the nature and consequences of social hierarchy in organizations.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

Learning Outcome	Learning Activity	Assessment
<p><i>Depth and Breadth of Knowledge.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate and describe contemporary theory and methods relevant to the emergence, maintenance, and implications of social hierarchy in organizations.</li> </ul>	<p>Weekly reading Conducting independent research for your proposal</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Class participation grades Research proposal and presentation</p>
<p><i>Knowledge of Methodologies.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to studying social hierarchy within organizations.</li> </ul>	<p>Weekly reading Discussion questions Reflection papers Class discussion</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Class participation grades Research proposal and presentation</p>
<p><i>Application of Knowledge.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply concepts and theories to novel examples of behaviours and situations.</li> </ul>	<p>Class discussion Discussion questions Reflection papers</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Class participation grades</p>
<p><i>Communication Skills.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conceptualize and summarize findings from the scholarly literature and communicate these orally and in writing.</li> </ul>	<p>Research proposal Class discussion</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Student-led discussion Class participation grades Research proposal and presentation</p>
<p><i>Awareness of Limits of Knowledge.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand constraints on the generality of findings based on the research context and target population.</li> <li>Understand the gap between theory and practice as it pertains to status and power in organizations.</li> </ul>	<p>Weekly reading Discussion questions Reflection papers Class discussion Research proposal</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Class participation grades Research proposal and presentation</p>
<p><i>Autonomy and Professional Capacity.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a research question that builds upon course material and propose a study to effectively address it.</li> <li>Effectively engage in collegial discussions, consider alternative viewpoints, and work effectively with others.</li> </ul>	<p>Discussion questions Class discussion Leading a class discussion Conducting independent research for your proposal</p>	<p>Discussion questions Reflection papers Class participation grades Student-led discussion Research proposal and presentation</p>

## Course Materials

The readings for this course consist primarily of journal articles and chapters, which will be made accessible via the ‘Course Readings’ tab on OWL. Please see the “Dates, Topics, and Readings” below for the tentative list of weekly readings. The reading list will be finalized at the start of the Winter semester.

## Methods of Evaluation

1. Class Participation (20%) – This is a seminar style course that relies on students to actively participate in class discussions. To facilitate these discussions, students are expected to come to class prepared with comments and questions about the readings that caught their interest and be prepared to respond to other students’ comments and questions. Student participation should reflect deep and critical

engagement with the weekly readings. Class participation will be evaluated based on the quality of contributions to the discussions.

2. Reflection Papers (10%) – Students are required to submit two brief reflection papers based on the weekly readings. Each reflection paper should strive to either pose new questions or perspectives, critique an existing theory or empirical finding, draw connections between the readings, or propose alternative conditions under which a theory may or may not apply. Students will choose which of the two weeks they will write and submit a reflection paper, but the reflection paper must be written in relation to the current week's assigned readings. Each reflection paper should be two pages (double-spaced; 12-point Times New Roman; 1-inch margins on all sides; worth 5% each) and is to be submitted through OWL under "Assignments" by Wednesday at 7pm. Thought papers will be evaluated based on insightfulness, quality of writing, and demonstrating an accurate understanding of the assigned readings.

3. Weekly Discussion Questions (20%) – Every week, students will be asked to submit two discussion questions to the discussion board located under "Forum" on OWL by Tuesday at 7pm. All students in the class will have access to the weekly submitted discussion questions. In addition, all students are responsible for reviewing the questions posted to OWL prior to Thursday's class to ensure that there is a collective understanding of the viewpoints and questions elicited by the readings. Excellent questions will demonstrate critical thought in relation to one or more of the assigned readings and should serve to stimulate a thoughtful and productive exchange of ideas.

4. Student-led Discussion (20%) – You and a partner will be responsible for leading and guiding the class discussion on the weekly readings on two separate occasions during the semester. Discussion leaders may start off the discussion period by very briefly summarizing the key points of the readings. To assist with this, it will be helpful to prepare PowerPoint slides to convey key points or highlight specific questions in relation to the assigned readings. Students are also welcome to incorporate additional research to offer complementary or distinct perspectives. Most of the class time should be spent exchanging ideas about the week's material. All students are expected to read the assigned articles, submit questions based on the readings beforehand, and actively engage in the discussion (see above). Though we may not have time to cover every specific question, it is the responsibility of the discussion leaders to pace the discussion and ensure a range of ideas, topics, and perspectives are covered during the class. We will develop a schedule for the student-led discussions during the organizational meeting on January 11, 2024.

5. Research proposal and presentation (20% written component + 10% verbal component) – The final research proposal will involve formulating a novel research idea and proposing a study to address it. The research question may relate to your main area of interest, but it must be sufficiently distinct from your thesis or dissertation topic. The final paper should (a) provide a brief literature review to establish the background and rationale for the proposed study, (b) outline the hypothesis (or hypotheses), (c) specify a method to examine the proposed research question, and (d) discuss implications and plausible alternative accounts of what the research may yield. The final paper should be 10-20 pages in length (a

maximum of 5000 words), not including references (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman; 1-inch margins on all sides; written in accordance with APA 7 guidelines) and is due April 10 by 11:55pm. There will be a 10% per day penalty for late submission of research proposal papers unless an extension is arranged with me beforehand.

Assignment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Class Participation	(see description above)	20%
Reflection Papers	(see description above)	10%
Weekly Discussion Questions	(see description above)	20%
Student-led Discussion	(see description above)	20%
Research presentation	Presentation schedule TBD	10%
Research Proposal	April 10	20%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### Course Timeline

\*\*\*Note that readings are subject to change. If necessary, a revised reading list will be provided no later than the first week of class.

### DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS

#### Week 1 (January 11): Organizational meeting

No assigned readings

#### Week 2 (January 18): An introduction to social hierarchy

Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Social Hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status. *Academy of Management Annals*, 2, 351-398.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520802211628>

Sapolsky, R. M. (2005). The influence of social hierarchy on primate health. *Science*, 308, 648-652.  
doi: 10.1126/science.1106477

Optional readings:

Van Kleef, G. A., & Cheng, J. T. (2020). Power, status, and hierarchy: Current trends and future challenges. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.011>

Xu, T., Evans, M. B., & Benson, A. J. (2023). The nature of status: Navigating the varied approaches to conceptualizing and measuring status. *Organizational Psychology Review*, Advance online publication: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866231220>

### **Week 3 (January 25): Personal implications of status and power**

Anderson, C., Hildreth, J. A. D., & Howland, L. (2015). Is the desire for status a fundamental human motive? A review of the empirical literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, *141*, 574-601. doi: 10.1037/a0038781

Guinote, A. (2017). How power affects people: activating, wanting, and goal seeking. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *68*, 353-381. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-010416-044153

#### Optional readings:

Friesen, J. P., Kay, A. C., Eibach, R. P., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Seeking structure in social organization: Compensatory control and the psychological advantages of hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *106*(4), 590–609. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035620>

Van Kleef, G. A., & Lange, J. (2020). How hierarchy shapes our emotional lives: Effects of power and status on emotional experience, expression, and responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *33*, 148-153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2019.07.009>

### **Week 4 (February 1): Social rank allocation**

Cheng, J. T., Tracy, J. L., Foulsham, T., Kingstone, A., & Henrich, J. (2013). Two ways to the top: Evidence that dominance and prestige are distinct yet viable avenues to social rank and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *104*, 103-125. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030398>

Cheng, J. T., Gerpott, F. H., Benson, A. J., Buckner, B., Foulsham, T., Lansu, T. A., ... & Tsuchiya, K. (2022). Eye gaze and visual attention as a window into leadership and followership: A review of empirical insights and future directions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *34* (6), 101654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101654>

#### Optional readings:

Bai, F. (2017). Beyond dominance and competence: A moral virtue theory of status attainment. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *21*, 203-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868316649297>

Henrich, J., & Gil-White, F. J. (2001). The evolution of prestige: Freely conferred deference as a mechanism for enhancing the benefits of cultural transmission. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, *22*(3), 165-196. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138\(00\)00071-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138(00)00071-4)

Kilduff, G. J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2013). From the ephemeral to the enduring: How approach-oriented mindsets lead to greater status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *105*(5), 816. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033667>

### **Week 5 (February 8): Individual differences related to status and power**

Grosz, M. P., Leckelt, M., & Back, M. D. (2019). Personality predictors of social status attainment.

*Current Opinion in Psychology*, 32, 52-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2019.07.023>

Li, Z., Lynch, J., Sun, T., Rizkyana, A., Cheng, J. T., & Benson, A. J. (2023). Power motives, personality correlates, and leadership outcomes: A person-centered approach. *Journal of Personality*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12882>

Optional readings:

Anderson, C., Hildreth, J. A. D., & Sharps, D. L. (2020). The possession of high status strengthens the status motive. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(12), 1712-1723. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672209375>

Hamilton, L. D., Carré, J. M., Mehta, P. H., Olmstead, N., & Whitaker, J. D. (2015). Social neuroendocrinology of status: a review and future directions. *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*, 1, 202-230. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40750-015-0025-5>

### **Week 6 (February 15): The distinct effects of power and status**

Anicich, E. M., Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2015). When the bases of social hierarchy collide: Power without status drives interpersonal conflict. *Organization Science*, 27, 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.07.013>

Arnett, R. D., & Sidanius, J. (2018). Sacrificing status for social harmony: Concealing relatively high status identities from one's peers. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 147, 108-126. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2018.05.009

Optional readings:

Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2012). The destructive nature of power without status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 391-394. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2011.07.013

**Week 7 (February 22): Reading week. There will be no class meeting nor any assigned readings.**

### **Week 8 (February 29): Gender, Race, and Rank Dynamics**

Brescoll, V. L. (2011). Who takes the floor and why: Gender, power, and volubility in organizations.

*Administrative Science Quarterly*, 56(4), 622-641.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839212439994>

Rosette, A. S., Koval, C. Z., Ma, A., & Livingston, R. (2016). Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 429-445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.008>

Optional readings:

Ma, A., Rosette, A. S., & Koval, C. Z. (2022). Reconciling female agentic advantage and disadvantage with the CADDIS measure of agency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(12), 2115–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000550>

### **Week 9 (March 7): Status and power dynamics**

Yu, S., Kilduff, G. J., & West, T. (2023). Status acuity: The ability to accurately perceive status hierarchies reduces status conflict and benefits group performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(1), 114–137. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001024>

Anicich, E. M., & Hirsh, J. B. (2017). The psychology of middle power: Vertical code-switching, role conflict, and behavioral inhibition. *Academy of Management Review*, 42, 659-682. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0002>

Optional readings:

Bendersky, C., & Pai, J. (2018). Status dynamics. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 183-199. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104602>

Price, M. E., & Van Vugt, M. (2014). The evolution of leader–follower reciprocity: The theory of service-for-prestige. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8, 363. 10.3389/fnhum.2014.00363

Yu, S., & Kilduff, G. J. (2020). Knowing where others stand: Accuracy and performance effects of individuals' perceived status hierarchies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119, 159.

### **Week 10 (March 14): Team consequences of social hierarchy**

Greer, L. L., de Jong, B. A., Schouten, M. E., & Dannals, J. E. (2018). Why and when hierarchy impacts team effectiveness: A meta-analytic integration. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103, 591-613. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000291>

Aime, F., Humphrey, S., DeRue, D. S., & Paul, J. B. (2014). The riddle of heterarchy: Power transitions in cross-functional teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57, 327-352. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0756>

Optional readings:

Bunderson, J. S., Van Der Vegt, G. S., Cantimur, Y., & Rink, F. (2016). Different views of hierarchy and why they matter: Hierarchy as inequality or as cascading influence. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59, 1265-1289.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0601>

Anderson, C., & Brown, C. E. (2010). The functions and dysfunctions of hierarchy. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 30, 55-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2010.08.002>

### **Week 11 (March 21): Research presentations**

### **Week 12 (March 28): Research presentations**

### **Week 13 (April 4): Research presentations/Writing Day**

## **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

## **Health/Wellness Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

## **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic

accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.