

Choice Points: Readings on the Exercise of Power and Responsibility (15.268)

Spring Semester

Fridays, 10a.m. to 12p.m., E52-175

Robert B. McKersie
E52-503 (253-2671)
(rmckersi@mit.edu)

This course is about leadership, and the dilemmas and decisions that individuals confront in a range of stories, for the most part, classic drama and fiction.

This course has been in existence for many decades, and the current version draws extensively from the set of readings and approach presented so successfully by former dean Abe Siegel. The stories provide a depth and breadth of context often difficult to replicate in more typical management readings and case studies. Many of the readings are centuries old, but their relevance remains vital, and they permit us to discuss in their settings, some of the most difficult management challenges of our time, for example: the requirement for corporate responsibility in the broader society; the requirement for law and order versus matters of personal conscience; the challenges of appropriate behavior in cultures where values differ from our own; organizational pressures against personal honesty and integrity; balancing obligations to multiple constituencies in times of crisis; and the ethical dimensions of leadership.

Since partners of Sloan Fellows have participated fully in the course several of the readings highlight career and work family issues and concerns.

In examining these "great books", we will focus on choice points and choices -- on how problems are seen; on how power to act is legitimized and exercised; on how purposes and ultimate ends are balanced; and which actions are taken and why. And the decisions taken (or not taken) turn on a mix of values and virtues -- views on how one should live and how one should solve life's dilemmas.

The power of the course comes from the springboard that these stories provide for us to talk about our own experiences and perspectives. Abe Siegel uses the phrase "hop scotching around" -- meaning, the ability to carry analogies from the stories into our own lives.

For some of the stories we will use video segments from plays and films to dramatize the challenges that the main characters confront and manage.

The course is taken on a pass/fail basis.

The partners of Sloan Fellows are encouraged to attend all sessions and to participate actively in the discussions.

Choice Points: Readings on the Exercise of Power and Responsibility (15.268)

Spring Semester

Fridays, 10a.m. to 12p.m., E52-175

Robert B. McKersie
E52-503 (253-2671)
(rmckersi@mit.edu)

DATE	ORDER OF READINGS
February 8	<i>Antigone</i> (Sophocles)
February 15	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> (Achebe)
February 22	<i>Julius Caesar</i> (Shakespeare)
February 29	<i>Man for All Seasons</i> (Bolt)
March 7	<i>Enemy of the People</i> (Ibsen)
March 14	<i>Frankenstein</i> (Shelley)
April 4	<i>Billy Budd</i> (special purchase)
April 11	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> (Miller)
April 18	<i>Shall We Dance</i> (film)
April 25	<i>A Doll's House</i> (Ibsen)
May 2	<i>Waiting</i> (Ha Jin)
May 9	<i>The Little Prince</i> (St-exupery)